



# Informed choice?

Armed forces recruitment  
practice in the United Kingdom

David Gee

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The armed forces: ‘...no other group in society is required either to kill other human beings, or expressly sacrifice themselves for the nation.’<sup>1</sup>

General Sir Michael Rose, 1998

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<sup>1</sup> ‘How soon could our Army lose a war’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 April 1998, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 28



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# Outline

1. **A career in the armed forces brings opportunities and risks.** Benefits can include challenging work, discipline, physical fitness, self-development, a sense of belonging and global travel. Risks include bullying and harassment, career dissatisfaction, the ‘culture shock’ of changing to a military lifestyle, mental health and relationship problems, serious injury or death, social and economic disadvantages after discharge, and unexpected ethical challenges.
2. **Non-officer recruitment draws mostly on young people from 16 years of age living in disadvantaged communities, with many recruits joining as a last resort.** Whilst this group may gain from an armed forces career, they are generally most vulnerable to its risks.
3. **Career information provided to potential recruits and their parents is selective and often misleading.** Recruitment literature for the army glamorises warfare, poorly explains the terms of service and largely omits to mention the risks of the career. It is common for recruits to enlist without knowing the risks or their legal rights and obligations.
4. **The terms of service are complicated, confusing and severely restricting.** New recruits may discharge themselves within a few months of enlisting but otherwise have no legal right to leave regular service for up to six years in some cases; reserve service liability follows, usually lasting at least six further years. The restrictive terms exacerbate the effects of low morale and magnify the risks of a forces career.
5. **This report proposes improvements to recruitment practice in order to protect the rights of potential recruits more effectively.** These include: improving information for potential recruits; de-linking military outreach to children from recruitment activity; and relaxing and simplifying the terms of service. To achieve these changes, it would be necessary to: emphasise retention over recruitment by improving the service conditions of existing personnel; reduce the number of soldiers discharged for ‘service no longer required’; and reduce bullying and harassment. A new Armed Forces Recruitment Charter could codify best practice and lay out the state’s legal and moral responsibilities to potential recruits.
6. **The UK is increasingly at odds with the growing international consensus that minors should not be exposed to the risks of an armed forces career; existing safeguards for minors are only partially effective.** It might be possible to phase out the recruitment of minors without affecting staffing levels; a feasibility study is needed. While minors continue to be recruited, safeguards need to be improved; in particular, it should be a requirement for recruiters to involve parents in the recruitment process more fully.

# Executive summary

## Introduction

A career in the armed forces can provide young people with opportunities. It also involves significant risks and legal obligations that are unfamiliar in civilian life. It is therefore vital that potential recruits are empowered to make an informed choice about whether to enlist. This report assesses whether potential recruits and their parents are provided with an accurate and full description of a forces career, including its potential benefits and risks. The concluding section proposes changes to current policy in order to protect the rights of potential recruits more effectively. [See p. 135]

## 1. Meeting the 'trained requirement'

The UK is the world's largest military spender after the United States, yet the armed forces are among the most stretched in the world. To meet the 'trained requirement' of personnel, over £2 billion is invested each year in recruiting and training around 20,000 new personnel to replace those who leave.<sup>2</sup> [See p. 14]

The armed forces draw non-officer recruits mainly from among young people with low educational attainment and living in poor communities. A large proportion join for negative reasons, including the lack of civilian career options; a survey in the Cardiff area in 2004 found that 40% of army recruits were joining as a last resort.<sup>3</sup> [See p. 15]

The recruitment environment is becoming more challenging as the pool of potential recruits shrinks. Demographic changes, improvements in civilian education opportunities, and negative publicity from Afghanistan and Iraq are among the main barriers to recruitment. Efforts to attract young people to a forces career are intensifying and diversifying, particularly among those below recruitment age. [See p. 17]

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2 Outturn costs 2004-05: Navy: £351M Army: £961M RAF: £723M [Total: 2,035M]. MoD, 'Current Funding Position of the Training Regime', in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 235. Includes ongoing training.

3 Ministry of Defence: 'Analysis of socio-economic and educational background of non-officer recruits' [Memorandum to the House of Commons Defence Committee, 2004], cited in House of Commons Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, (Third Report of Session 2004-05), Vol 2, Ev 255-257.

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Meeting the trained requirement currently depends on attracting a large number of minors. The UK is the only European Union state to recruit from age 16; of those EU states that have traditionally recruited from age 17, some have phased this out or are doing so. By changing some existing policies, it could be possible to phase out the recruitment of 16 year-olds in all UK forces relatively easily without detriment to the current trained requirement of personnel. The phasing out of 17 year-old recruitment could then follow. [See p. 20]

## 2. Promotion and recruitment

Recruitment literature for army careers emphasises potential benefits: career interest and challenge, comradeship, the active lifestyle, travel and training opportunities. It omits to mention or obscures: the radical change from a civilian to a military lifestyle, ethical issues involved in killing, risks to physical and mental health, the legal obligations of enlistment, the state's legal and moral obligations to its armed forces personnel, and the right of conscientious objection. By suggesting that soldiers are highly satisfied with army life, the literature also glosses over the ambivalent attitudes of the majority. The omissions conspire against the potential recruit's right and responsibility to make an informed choice about whether to enlist. The literature also does little to enable parents to ask searching questions of their children and of recruiters in order to assure their children's best interests. [See p. 27]

The primary target group for armed forces marketing are children and adolescents. This involves schools visits, literature and internet resources, and local cadet forces. As the pool of potential recruits shrinks, outreach to children is expanding, including to those as young as seven years old. Key messages are tailored to children's interests and values: military roles are promoted as glamorous and exciting, warfare is portrayed as game-like and enjoyable, and outreach to the young is described as serving their personal growth and education. Children are introduced to the potential benefits of a forces career but not to its risks. [See p. 41]

It is policy that staff in recruitment offices 'explain the recruits' rights and responsibilities and the nature of the commitment to the Armed Forces'.<sup>4</sup> Recruiters commonly develop close relationships with potential recruits and experience a personal duty of care. However, there is a conflict of interest between the duty of care to potential recruits and the pressure on staff for new enlistments. Specifically, whilst staff are generally willing to answer questions honestly, information that might dissuade potential recruits from enlisting is not routinely volunteered. Direct contact with parents of minors is often minimal or absent and the applications process does not reliably ensure that applicants fully understand their legal rights and obligations. [See p. 49]

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Defence: *The Government's Response to the House of Commons Defence Committee's Third Report of Session 2004-05, on Duty of Care*, (Cm6620, July 2005), 4.

### 3. Terms of enlistment

On enlistment, recruits enter a legally binding agreement to serve for a minimum period, which can be up to six years in the case of minors joining the army as soldiers. Reserve liability follows regular service and usually lasts at least six further years. For a short period after enlistment recruits have the right to discharge themselves but this time usually falls during training and before they experience military operations. Some recruits who apply for discharge during this period report being pressured to change their minds. In the case of the army, the outflow data show that a disproportionate number of recruits leave as soon as their minimum term of service is over, suggesting that many recruits would have left earlier if they had not been legally obliged to remain. In 2006, an official, representative survey found that 20% of soldiers [c. 16,750 individuals] wanted to leave the army at the earliest opportunity.<sup>5</sup> [See p. 56]

In view of the significant risks and restrictive obligations of a forces career, the state has a special responsibility to support potential recruits' right of informed consent. It falls short in the following ways: the army in particular does not provide sufficient, accessible information about an army career; the state severely curtails the recruit's right freely to withdraw their consent to enlistment; and some recruiters apply persuasive pressure to potential recruits in order to meet enlistment targets. [See p. 62]

A large number of personnel, mostly soldiers, go absent without leave (AWOL) each year. The Ministry of Defence estimates that 2,300 [c. 2.5%] soldiers go AWOL every year,<sup>6</sup> of which around 126 will go to court martial and face a possible custodial sentence.<sup>7</sup> Besides malingerers, AWOL can also be precipitated by psychological problems, bullying, or conscientious objection, combined with an absence of faith in the established procedures for addressing these issues. [See p. 64]

The armed forces may discharge personnel at any time. The air force and navy discharge very few personnel in this way; the army discharges approximately 3% [c. 2750] of its soldiers every year, mostly those who have failed to progress up the ranks or have chosen not to do so. [See p. 66]

Safeguards to protect minors considering a forces career are limited. Minors cannot be assumed to be sufficiently mature, or adequately supported by others, to give informed consent to the far-reaching legal obligations that enlistment imposes upon them. The selective information provided to minors and their parents is often misleading, further undermining the right to informed consent. [See p. 67]

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5 Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), 'Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006', (nd), Q67b.

6 Ministry of Defence, cited in BBC Online: 'Army fails "traumatised" soldiers' [news article], 27 March 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6479769.stm>>, accessed 9 April 2007.

7 UK Army web site: 'Army court martial statistics 1997-2004', (nd), <[http://www.army.mod.uk/linkedfiles/combined\\_services\\_sport/c\\_m\\_stats\\_97\\_\\_\\_04.doc](http://www.army.mod.uk/linkedfiles/combined_services_sport/c_m_stats_97___04.doc)>, accessed 12 April 2007.

All personnel have the right of conscientious objection to military service. Recruits are not routinely informed about this and few can be expected to be aware of it. When personnel experience a conscientious objection, it will not be articulated as such if the term is unfamiliar. There is some evidence that conscientious objection in the armed forces is heavily under-reported, partly because many cases are dealt with informally and not recorded. It is possible that conscientious objection may become confused with post-combat mental health problems in some cases. Recognition of conscientious objection by the chain of command is uneven. [See p. 72]

#### 4. Risks: an assessment

Most personnel in the armed forces report being broadly satisfied with their career. However, there are significant risks related to career and lifestyle dissatisfaction, mental health and relationship problems, death and serious injury, bullying and harassment, ethical challenges, and post-discharge resettlement. The legal obligations of enlistment and the social context of forces life may compound the effects of these risks. [See p. 81]

##### 4.1 Army career satisfaction

An official, representative survey of soldiers in 2006 showed that the job satisfaction rate was fairly high (64%), although lower than that shown in surveys of civilians (76-78%).<sup>8</sup> Relatively few personnel resemble the highly satisfied soldier depicted in recruitment literature: 13% of soldiers reported being 'very satisfied' compared with 35-36% of civilians.<sup>9</sup> 5% of soldiers reported being 'very dissatisfied' [4,189 individuals at the time of the survey];<sup>10</sup> the legal restrictions on leaving the forces compound the effect of lifestyle dissatisfaction and may prompt soldiers to go absent without leave and/or precipitate mental health difficulties. [See p. 81]

Among soldiers there is considerable dissatisfaction with pay, although most believe that their financial package as a whole, including pension, compares favourably with a civilian career at the same level. Information in recruitment literature about some of the financial benefits of an army career is misleading, however. [See p. 85]

Some features of army life are particularly unpopular. These relate to limitations of personal development opportunities, heavy workload, lack of involvement in decision-making, losing leave, limitations to freedom and opportunity, and poor accommodation. [See p. 87]

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8 Work Foundation, The: *The good worker: A survey of attitudes towards work in the UK* (The Work Foundation, 2006), p. 7; British Social Attitudes Survey Report, p. 53, cited in *ibid.*, p. 9; Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), 'Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006', (nd), Q67b.

9 Ministry of Defence: 'Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006', Q67b.

10 *Ibid.*, Q67b.

## 4.2 Mental health and relationships

The work of armed forces personnel carries a relatively high risk of clinically significant psychological harm. Symptoms of psychological ill-health in the armed forces exceed those in the civilian population ‘by a large margin’, according to a British study undertaken in 2002.<sup>11</sup> [See p. 88]

A study of forces personnel before the Iraq war found a 2.5% incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms; a second study between 2004 and 2006 found a 4% incidence [equivalent to around 7,110 individuals]<sup>12</sup>, with higher rates for those in combat roles (6%) than in support roles (3%).<sup>13</sup> A US study in 2004 showed that the risk of PTSD increases in proportion to exposure to the stresses of warfare: the incidence of symptoms of PTSD rose to 19.3% among US troops who had been exposed to more than five firefights in Iraq or Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup> [See p. 90]

Male soldiers under 20 years of age face a 50% greater risk of suicide than those of similar profile in the civilian population; otherwise suicide rates in the armed forces are lower than among civilians. The disproportionately large number of suicides among discharged Falklands veterans suggests that the official statistics understate the true long-term suicide risk among combat troops. [See p. 93]

Levels of alcohol consumption in the armed forces are higher than in the civilian population; levels of smoking are similar. Alcohol consumption rises as symptoms of combat stress increase, and personnel with combat roles are significantly more likely than others to drink excessively. [See p. 97]

Military operations and exposure to combat increase the risk that personnel will commit domestic violence, according to some US studies. [See p. 98]

There is a stigma in the armed forces associated with psychological problems, partly due to a military culture that often views mental illness as a sign of personal and professional weakness. This increases the risk that personnel will take desperate measures to protect themselves, including going absent without leave. [See p. 100]

11 Jones, Margaret et al: ‘The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces’, *Occupational Medicine* 2006, 56(5): 322-328, <<http://ocmed.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/56/5/322>>, accessed 5 July 2007, 326.

12 Based on Defence Analytical Services Agency, ‘TSP 02 - UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Requirements at 1 April 2007’ [table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp2/tsp2tab.html>>, accessed 1 June 2007.

13 Jones et al: ‘The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces’, 326; Hotopf, Matthew et al: ‘The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study’, *The Lancet*, 16 May 2006, Vol 367: 1731-41, at <<http://download.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/0140-6736/PIIS0140673606686625.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2007, 1738. The higher rate for combat troops is partly due to their being of lower rank and younger age in general than troops in combat-support and service-support roles.

14 Hoge, Charles W et al: ‘Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mental Health Problems, and Barriers to Care’, in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 1 July 2004, 16.

### 4.3 Violent death and serious injury

The mortality rate for the armed forces as a whole is currently lower than that of the civilian population with a matched profile. However, this statistic could mask the relatively greater risks faced by those in combat roles. During a high intensity conflict such as the Falklands War, mortality rates are much higher than those of the civilian population. Fatality rates could also rise if the government continues an interventionist approach to national security as demonstrated in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the armed forces, the risk of serious injury is usually thought to be approximately three times greater than the risk of violent death. [See p. ]

### 4.4 Bullying and harassment

Many personnel enjoy close camaraderie with their peers, which some describe as unique to the armed forces. Against this, bullying and harassment are common and under-reported. In official surveys in 2006, 8% of soldiers, 8% of airmen/women and 12% of navy ratings reported having been bullied in the previous 12 months [equivalent to 13,093 individuals at time of survey].<sup>15</sup> There has been some success in reducing bullying and other inappropriate behaviours in armed forces training establishments since 2005. However, results of an official survey in 2006 show that army recruits during initial training were still approximately 40% more likely to report being ‘badly/unfairly treated’ than those in other armed forces training establishments.<sup>16</sup> The unusual social context of a forces lifestyle can compound the effects of bullying and harassment. A culture of bullying and harassment also risks affecting the treatment of detainees apprehended on operations. [See p. 104]

Sexual harassment is common in all branches of the armed forces. 15% of respondents to an official survey of female personnel in 2006 said that they had had a ‘particularly upsetting’ experience of unwanted sexual behaviour directed at them in the previous 12 months [equivalent to 2,700 individuals at time of survey].<sup>17</sup> The rate was higher for those aged 16-23 or those of low rank, each at 20%. The Ministry of Defence appears to be responding urgently to the problems revealed. However, a ‘macho’ culture impedes progress towards universal acceptance of women as equals with men in the armed forces.<sup>18</sup> [See p. 110]

15 Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Sep 2006-Jan 2007*, (nd), Q43; Royal Air Force, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Air Force 2006*, QG12; Royal Navy, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q34; personnel numbers based on Defence Analytical Services Agency: ‘TSP 02 – UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Trained Requirements at 1 October 2006’ [data table] [85,360 soldiers, 28,550 navy ratings, 35,470 airmen/women on trained strength]. Notes: the navy survey is not stratified and therefore not held to be representative of the full trained strength, although it is likely to be generally indicative; the navy and air force surveys are only distributed to trained personnel; the army survey does not specify whether it includes untrained personnel, hence personnel numbers given here are based on the trained strength only, and not personnel under training.

16 Extrapolated from Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI): *Better Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services: two years of progress* (Coventry, 2007), 33; and ALI: *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 27. The rounded rates for Phase 1 army training establishments visited by ALI were: ATR Bassingbourn, 11% [equivalent to 33 individuals out of 302]; ATR Lichfield, 6% [20 out of 326]; ATR Winchester, 11% [31 out of 280]; ATR Pirbright, 8% [71 out of 891]; AFC Harrogate, 12% [144 out of 1,202]; ITC Catterick, 10% [134 out of 1,343]. The average rate for these establishments was therefore 10%. The rate for all armed forces training establishments was 7%, according to the ALI.

17 Rutherford, Sarah; Schneider, Robin; Walmsley, Alexis: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces* [report], (Equal Opportunities Commission and the Ministry of Defence, 22 March 2006), 22. Personnel numbers based on Defence Analytical Services Agency: ‘TSP 02 – UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Trained Requirements at 1 October 2006’ [data table] [18,000 women on full-time strength including officers and other ranks].

18 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 9.

Those with ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely than others to be victims of harassment or bullying, according a study of armed forces training establishments by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2005. [See p. 113]

The ban on lesbian and gay people in the armed forces was lifted in 2000 following a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. It is now a disciplinary offence to discriminate against personnel on grounds of their sexual orientation. The navy (including marines) is the only force to ask personnel about attitudes to working with gay and lesbian colleagues. In official, unstratified surveys, 21% of navy ratings and 41% of marines disagreed with the statement, 'I don't mind serving alongside gay men or lesbians.'<sup>19</sup> [See p. 115]

The House of Commons Defence Committee's *Duty of Care* Report in 2005 concluded that the armed forces have a culture that 'discourages complaint'.<sup>20</sup> Among personnel there is a widespread lack of faith in the complaints system; many fear that complaining can jeopardise their career. [See p. 117]

#### 4.5 Ethical challenges

An armed forces career involves ethical questions associated with the justification of killing, the risk of civilian casualties and the political purposes of military action. In order to make a responsible choice about enlistment, all potential recruits need to have considered these issues before accepting the legal obligations of service, and to continue to do so during their career. In omitting to mention ethical dilemmas, the army recruitment literature and applications process fail to support potential recruits in making an informed decision about enlistment in this respect. [See p. 120]

#### 4.6 After discharge

The majority of those leaving the armed forces resettle into civilian life. A significant minority face difficulties. Socio-economic disadvantage, homelessness and unemployment are more common among ex-forces personnel than the general population. The risk of turning to crime appears to be lower among the ex-forces community, however. [See p. 127]

#### 4.7 Risks assessment summary – army recruits

This report summarises some of the principal risks that new army recruits face, together with their approximate probabilities based on academic studies and official surveys of personnel [see p. 131].

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19 Royal Navy, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q30e [714 respondents]; Royal Marines, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q30e [152 respondents].

20 House of Commons Defence Committee: *Duty of Care* (Vol 1), (London: The Stationery Office, 2005), 15-16.

## 5. Conclusions and proposals (for full details, see p. 135 onwards)

The evidence collected in this report points to a number of ethical shortcomings in armed forces recruitment practice in the UK. These include: failing to inform potential recruits sufficiently about the risks associated with a forces career; failing to inform potential recruits about vital rights and privileges; severely curtailing recruits' right to withdraw consent from their employment; depending upon those who are socially and economically vulnerable to enlist for negative reasons; and recruiting minors without adequate safeguards. It could be possible to move towards an ethical recruitment policy without detriment to staffing levels by making a number of progressive changes to recruitment and retention policy and practice. An improved recruitment policy could be codified in an Armed Forces Recruitment Charter setting out the state's responsibilities to potential recruits. [See p. 135]

Current recruitment materials do not seriously attempt to brief potential recruits on the character of a forces career. Whilst literature for potential recruits cannot fully describe forces life, it should include unambiguous information about: legal obligations; discharge options for minors; the need to consider ethical issues such as killing before enlistment; some of the principal risks of a forces career; the welfare and psychiatric support available; a description of the military covenant; the right, and its limits, of conscientious objection to military service; and the policy of exclusion of minors from hostilities. Literature for parents/guardians should also include advice about how to support their child by asking questions of recruiters and seeking independent advice. Literature should be more accessible to potential recruits with a low reading age. [See p. 136]

Marketing to children below recruitment age commonly glamorises warfare. Outreach to children and young people should be de-linked from recruitment activity and restricted to older children. While promotional activity continues in schools, children should have the right: not to attend, to hear from a speaker presenting an alternative view, and to have peace and disarmament education integrated into the curriculum alongside education about the military. [See p. 137]

Minors are especially vulnerable to joining the armed forces without due consideration of the risks. Existing safeguards to ensure that minors and their parents make informed choices about enlistment are deficient. A feasibility study into the sustainable phasing-out of the recruitment of minors, based on shifting the emphasis from recruitment to retention, could be commissioned. Raising the minimum age of recruitment to 17 and allowing minors to train as civilians, thereafter enlisting at 18, would be valuable first steps towards reducing the risks to minors. Direct contact between recruiters and a parent or guardian should be a requirement of the recruitment process for under-18s. [See p. 138]

The minimum term of service is unethical and counter-productive: relaxing it could encourage more people to enlist and improve morale among serving personnel. Changes to the legal obligations of enlistment can be phased in and need not affect recruitment targets. These could include allowing: all recruits under 18 years of age to leave as of right; all recruits in their first year of service to leave as of right; and all other personnel to transfer to the reserve at a year's notice. A short cooling-off period after signing the enlistment papers could be introduced. The chain of command should continue to use discretion to release genuinely unhappy recruits, of any age, before the end of their minimum service, using advice from welfare agencies where appropriate. [See p. 139]

The armed forces have a poor retention record. For every two 16-22 year-olds joining the army, one is leaving.<sup>21</sup> A portion of the £2 billion now used to attract, enlist and train new recruits might be better used to improve conditions for existing personnel. Valuable improvements could be made to: pay, accommodation, equipment, leave entitlement, workload, and welfare including psychiatric support. All these measures would also benefit recruitment. At the same time, the government must recognise that the sustained over-extension of the armed forces is having an impact on morale, retention and recruitment. [See p. 140]

Bullying and harassment remain major problems for the armed forces in their own right, and also adversely affect retention of personnel. The forces need to: acknowledge the problems, clarify to new recruits the policy on bullying, remove humiliating practices from all aspects of training, and restore faith in the complaints system by providing an independent complaints channel. Progress is being made in some of these areas. [See p. 141]

The right of conscientious objection (CO) is recognised unevenly across the armed forces. The situation could be improved by: improving the policy on CO, including an explanation of CO and the procedure for making a claim in materials given to new recruits, training officers to recognise CO in personnel, and commissioning research into the possible links between CO, post-combat mental health problems and absence without leave. [See p. 142]

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21 Based on intake and outflow of recruits aged between 16 and 22 in FY2005-06, when 10,230 non-officer recruits aged 16-22 years old joined the army and 5,310 in the same age range left. Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 1 – Intake to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2005-06 and Table 6 - Outflow from UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2005-06)' [data tables], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab1.html>> and <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab6.html>>, accessed 5 February 2007.

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# Introduction

A career in the armed forces can provide young people with opportunities. It also involves significant risks and legal obligations that are unfamiliar in civilian life. It is therefore vital that potential recruits are empowered to make an informed choice about whether to enlist. This report assesses whether potential recruits and their parents are provided with an accurate and full description of a forces career, including its potential benefits and risks. The concluding section proposes changes to current policy in order to protect the rights of potential recruits more effectively.

The report is divided into five sections. The first outlines the challenges to recruiters of meeting the required number of trained personnel to meet the UK's military commitments, and the emphasis placed on recruiting minors.

The second section evaluates armed forces recruitment literature, internet resources, outreach programmes to children and young people, and the work of Armed Forces Careers Offices.

The third section explores the terms of enlistment, including the minimum period of service, the effectiveness of current measures designed to protect minors from risk, and the right of conscientious objection.

The risks of a forces career are often denied, exaggerated or otherwise disputed. Therefore, the fourth section examines some of the significant risks that forces personnel face. Evidence is provided for each risk type in order to assess its severity and its approximate likelihood of affecting a new recruit.

The fifth section contains conclusions and recommendations aimed at improving support for potential recruits to make a responsible decision about whether to enlist.

The report pays closest attention to the situation of potential non-officer recruits into the army, and the infantry in particular. The army is the largest branch of the forces, and most of the risks outlined below are marginally greater for those recruited into the army than into the air force or navy. However, the majority of the report's conclusions apply to all three branches.

# 1 Meeting the ‘trained requirement’

## 1.1 British armed forces: an overview

The UK is the world’s largest military spender after the United States, yet the armed forces are among the most stretched in the world. To meet the ‘trained requirement’ of personnel, over £2 billion is invested each year in recruiting and training around 20,000 new personnel to replace those who leave.

The UK is the largest military spender in the world after the United States, accounting for 5% of global military spending for only 1% of the world’s population.<sup>22</sup> The British armed forces have some of the most difficult and widespread commitments to maintain. Major commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq co-exist with others from peacekeeping in Cyprus to patrolling the Falkland Islands.

To meet these commitments, an estimate is made of the required number of trained full-time personnel, known as the ‘trained requirement’. The actual number of trained personnel, known as the ‘trained strength’, is usually slightly less than requirement. As of 1 April 2007, the trained requirement stood at 183,610; the trained strength stood at 177,760, of which 99,280 were in the army, 34,940 in the navy and 43,550 in the air force.<sup>23</sup> In terms of personnel, the UK regular armed forces are about the third-largest in Europe after Germany and France.

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22 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, ‘The 15 major spender countries in 2006’ [table] (2006), <[http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex\\_major\\_spenders.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_major_spenders.pdf)>, accessed 31 August 2007.

23 Defence Analytical Services Agency, ‘TSP 02 - UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Requirements at 1 April 2007’ [table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp2/tsp2tab.html>>, accessed 1 June 2007.

In addition to the regular forces in Britain, there are around 200,000 reservists,<sup>24</sup> and the Ministry of Defence is also responsible for around 100,000 civilian employees, making it one of the country's largest employers.<sup>25</sup>

In FY 2005-06, 23,250 personnel chose to leave the regular armed forces, were dismissed, or reached the end of their engagement.<sup>26</sup> In the same year, 18,060 new personnel<sup>27</sup> were recruited at a cost of £145 million (before training).<sup>28</sup> The annual outturn costs of armed forces training establishments (delivering both initial and ongoing training) amount to just over £2 billion per year.<sup>29</sup> It costs in the order of £25,000 to recruit and train a non-officer recruit,<sup>30</sup> by comparison, it costs around £28,000 to train to degree level and register a nurse in the National Health Service.<sup>31</sup>

## 1.2 Recruitment pool

The armed forces draw non-officer recruits mainly from among young people with low educational attainment and living in poor communities. A large proportion join for negative reasons, including the lack of civilian career options; a survey in the Cardiff area in 2004 found that 40% of army recruits were joining as a last resort.<sup>32</sup>

No branch of the armed forces collects data systematically on the socio-economic backgrounds of recruits. However, the forces do record the educational attainment and employment status of non-officer recruits during the recruitment process. In the army's case, this indicates that most recruits are among society's most marginalised people.<sup>33</sup> In 2004, the Ministry of Defence explained:

While roughly 45% of all young people leave school with 5 GCSE subjects graded A-C only, 17% of all Army recruits in 2003–04 had English at A-C level, with the figure for Maths at about 10%. On average Army recruits have 0.9 of a GCSE at grade A-C. ... Records also show that 24% of all Army applicants in 2003–04 were unemployed for a significant period before applying.<sup>34</sup>

24 Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'TSP 07 – Reserve Forces (Table 1 - Strengths of All Services Reserves and Cadets)', 1 April 2006', [table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp7/tsp7tab1.html>>, accessed 1 June 2007.

25 Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'CPS 01 – Civilian Personnel Statistics (Level 0 MoD civilian workforce by grade equivalence and budgetary employing area, 1 January 2007)' [data table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/cps1/cps1tab1.html>>, accessed 5 February 2007.

26 Ibid., 141.

27 MoD, *Annual Report and Accounts 2005-06*, 139.

28 National Audit Office: *Ministry of Defence: Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces (November 2006)*, 31

29 Outturn costs 2004-05: Navy: £351M Army: £961M RAF: £723M (Total: 2,035M). MoD, 'Current Funding Position of the Training Regime', in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 235.

30 National Audit Office: *Ministry of Defence: Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces (November 2006)*, 3

31 Hansard, HC: 22 March 2007: Col 1134W, (Health Professions: Training).

32 Ministry of Defence: 'Analysis of socio-economic and educational background of non-officer recruits' [Memorandum to the House of Commons Defence Committee, 2004], cited in House of Commons Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, (Third Report of Session 2004-05), Vol 2, Ev 255-257.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

The army's own research suggests that up to 50% of recruits have literacy and numeracy skills at Entry Level 3 (equivalent to those of an average 11 year-old) or Entry Level 2 (equivalent to an average 7 year-old).<sup>35</sup> The average reading age of trainees at the Infantry Training Centre at Catterick is 10, according to Lynn Farr, an independent provider of welfare support to personnel who has frequent discussions with senior staff at the Centre on welfare issues.<sup>36</sup>

A survey of the personal backgrounds of 500 recruits joining from 1998 to 2000 in the Cardiff catchment area revealed that:

- 69% of recruits were found to have come from a broken home;
- 50% were classified as coming from a deprived background;
- 16% had been long-term unemployed before joining;
- 35% had had more than eight jobs since leaving school (nearly all on a casual basis);
- just over 60% had left school with no academic qualifications;
- 40% were joining the army as a last resort; and
- 14% had more than five GCSEs at grades A-C.<sup>37</sup>

The MoD claimed without evidential support that 'roughly 30%' of the same recruits were 'exceptionally motivated and qualified young people who had wanted to join the Army for a long time'.<sup>38</sup>

In the army, infantry regiments are thought to have a higher proportion of recruits from deprived backgrounds.<sup>39</sup>

The Ministry of Defence states that the forces 'do not target deprived areas of the UK; recruiting is a country-wide activity covering all sections of society regardless of background.'<sup>40</sup> There is some evidence that the forces do target poorer areas. Using information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, Welsh Assembly Member Leanne Wood showed that the army was 50% more likely to visit schools in the most deprived areas of Wales than to visit those in less deprived areas.<sup>41</sup> According to senior army recruitment staff, resources are deployed to those towns that are most likely to produce new recruits.<sup>42</sup>

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35 MoD, 'Analysis of socio-economic and educational background of non-officer recruits', in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 256.

36 Personal communication, November 2007

37 MoD, 'Analysis of socio-economic and educational background of non-officer recruits'

38 Ibid.

39 See, for example, Mora Antrobus, Senior Operations Manager, Women's Royal Voluntary Service Services Welfare, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 70.

40 Ministry of Defence, 'Armed Forces engagement with schools', *Defence News Daily*, [official daily news briefing on UK defence and the armed forces], <<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/DefencePolicyAndBusiness/DefenceNewsDaily.htm>>, 8 February 2007 – accessed 12 February 2007 via Google cache.

41 IcWales: 'Army "targeting deprived areas for recruits"' [Wales web site], <<http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk>>, accessed 4 December 2006.

42 Personal communication, November 2007.

The Ministry of Defence and the House of Commons Defence Committee both emphasise the contribution that the armed forces can make to young men and women who might lack career options as civilians. The Duty of Care report concluded:

There is no reason why those who join the Services as ‘a last resort’ should not find it a satisfying and rewarding career. ... We acknowledge that, for many youngsters, particularly from deprived or disadvantaged backgrounds, the Armed Forces provide an opportunity that may have been denied them in civilian life.<sup>43</sup>

It is true that an armed forces career can benefit those for whom it is well suited; some of the potential benefits are travel, self-development, discipline, a sense of belonging, and physical fitness. However, a forces career also brings significant risks that deter people with more privileged backgrounds from enlisting. The data from Cardiff showing that 40% of recruits were joining as a last resort suggests that many would not have chosen a forces career if they had had meaningful civilian career options. The countervailing view — that the armed forces offer opportunities to marginalised youth — glosses over the injustice of young people being forced by circumstance to make career choices from a position of socio-economic weakness. It also suggests that defence of the realm depends on the existence of a socio-economic underclass.

## 1.3 Recruitment pressures

**Although the armed forces meet most of their recruiting targets, the environment is becoming more challenging. Recruitment efforts are intensifying and diversifying as the pool of potential recruits shrinks.**

Each year, between 5% and 6% of trained forces personnel choose to leave before the end of their contracted engagement.<sup>44</sup>

It has been particularly difficult to meet targets for recruits into close combat roles (the infantry and the marines) and specialist technical roles. For example, there was a 17% under-achievement in infantry recruitment in 2005.<sup>45</sup>

The National Audit Office (NAO) report, *Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces* (2006) highlighted a number of growing challenges for recruiters. These reduce the pool of potential recruits and draw increasing numbers of existing personnel back into civilian life.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 5-6.

<sup>44</sup> Defence Analytical Services Agency, ‘TSP 05 – Trained Outflow to Civil Life (Graph 10b – Total Other Ranks by Service 12 Month Voluntary Outflow Exit Rate as Percentage of Average Trained Strength, October 1996-October 2006)’ [graph], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp5/tsp5graph6.html>>, accessed 5 February 2007.

<sup>45</sup> NAO, *Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 3, 31, 32, 54.

- a) *The changing demographic profile of the population* means that there are fewer younger people and therefore fewer potential recruits;
- b) *The relative good health of the economy* means that young people now have more good civilian career options than in the past. This report highlights Ministry of Defence statistics showing that many recruits join the armed forces as a last resort. However, low unemployment means that fewer young people are choosing military careers.
- c) *Youth obesity* has further reduced the potential recruitment pool. In 2006, the army was forced to relax the entry requirements on obesity in order to widen the pool of potential recruits.
- d) *The legal obligations of enlistment* are increasingly at odds with societal attitudes to life-long careers. Army recruits enlist to serve until they are 40 or more years old. Recruits may not usually leave the forces at all during the first four to six years of service after an initial discharge window lasting a few months; thereafter, they are required to give 12 months' notice if they wish to return to civilian life. This is discussed in detail later.
- e) *Government education policies* are persuading more school-leavers to proceed to further and higher education. After college, very few young people are attracted to a career in the forces except as an officer. The Ministry of Defence is concerned about the growing number of those who might have joined the armed forces but instead go on to higher education.
- f) *Negative publicity* for the armed forces is turning away many young people. Main causes include the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, the abuse of Iraqi detainees by some UK forces personnel, and the controversial deaths of four army trainees at Deepcut barracks. Parents and 'gate-keepers' such as teachers are also affected by the bad publicity: 42% of parents say they are less likely to encourage their children to enlist because of it.

The Ministry of Defence's own view of the challenges of recruitment are similar to those outlined in the NAO report.<sup>47</sup> In response, recruitment activity is intensifying and marketing budgets are being increased. Marketing costs increased sharply in FY2004-5 to 'counter the difficult recruiting environment', as shown in Table 1. Most of the marketing budget is used for high-profile advertising (£27.8 million was spent on advertising only in FY2005-06)<sup>48</sup>

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47 MoD, *Annual Report 2005-06*, 139

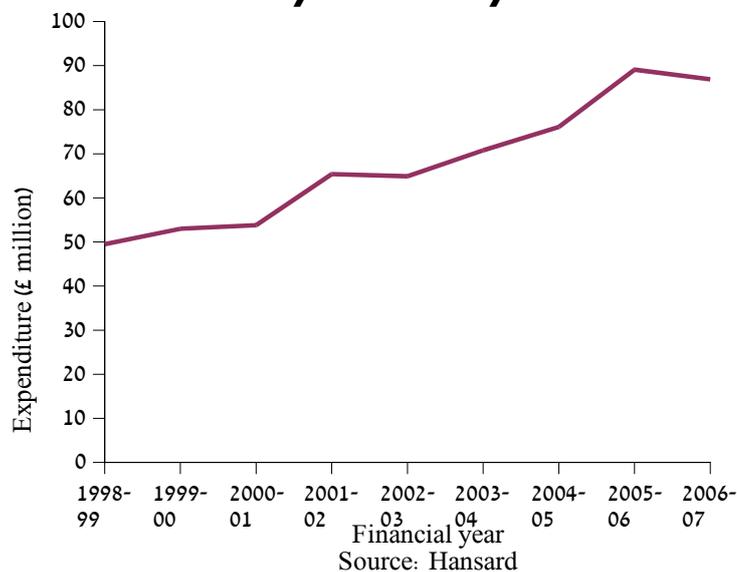
48 Extrapolated from Hansard, HC, 28 March 2006. Cols 899W-900W, Defence (Advertising Campaigns)

**Table 1**  
**Cost of marketing the armed forces to potential recruits (excluding staff costs)<sup>49</sup>**

Financial year	Expenditure (£ million)
2002–03	20.5
2003–04	20.3
2004–05	33.2

Graph One shows the increase in the army's recruitment budget since 1998.<sup>50</sup> Reflecting difficulties attracting recruits to the infantry, in 2006 a special infantry recruitment campaign was run at a cost of £5.25 million.<sup>51</sup> The Navy runs specific campaigns to recruit marines, another shortage group.

**Graph One**  
**Army recruitment budget**  
**by financial year 1998-2007**



<sup>49</sup> Hansard, HC, 15 November 2005: Col 1085W, Defence (Army Recruitment).

<sup>50</sup> Hansard, HC, 11 July 2007: Col 1475W, Defence (Armed Forces: Recruitment).

<sup>51</sup> Hansard, HC, 28 November 2006: Cols 628W-629W, Defence (Recruitment).

## 1.4 Recruitment of minors

Meeting the trained requirement currently depends on attracting a large number of minors, against the grain of a growing international consensus that minors should not be exposed to the risks of a forces career. The UK is the only European Union state to recruit from age 16; of those EU states that have traditionally recruited from 17, some have phased this out or are doing so. By changing some existing policies, it could be possible to phase out the recruitment of 16 year-olds in all UK forces relatively easily without detriment to the current trained requirement of personnel. The phasing out of 17 year-old recruitment could then follow.

### 1.4.1 Current dependence on minors

Currently, the long-term sustainability of the UK armed forces depends on the recruitment of large numbers of minors every year.<sup>52</sup> In order to reduce this dependency, more adults would need to join, there would need to be fewer recruits leaving, or the trained requirement would need to be revised downwards.

There is an argument for reducing the trained requirement. The UK extends itself more than most states across a range of demanding military commitments worldwide. Reducing these commitments could allow a reduction in the number of personnel needed to staff the armed forces. However, this section of the report focuses on how recruitment of minors might be phased out without detriment to the trained requirement.

The proportion of those joining the armed forces as minors has fallen slightly in recent years, as Graph Two<sup>53</sup> shows.

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52 Throughout this report, a 'minor' refers to a person under the age of 18, in harmony with the legal definition of 'child' in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

53 Extrapolated from Defence Analytical Services Agency data tables entitled 'TSP 19 - UK Regular Forces Intake And Outflow By Age' for Financial Years 1999/00-2006/07: Tables 4 and 5, eg <[http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/pdfs/tsp19\\_1999\\_2000.pdf](http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/pdfs/tsp19_1999_2000.pdf)>, accessed 5 September 2007. See bibliography for full list of tables used.

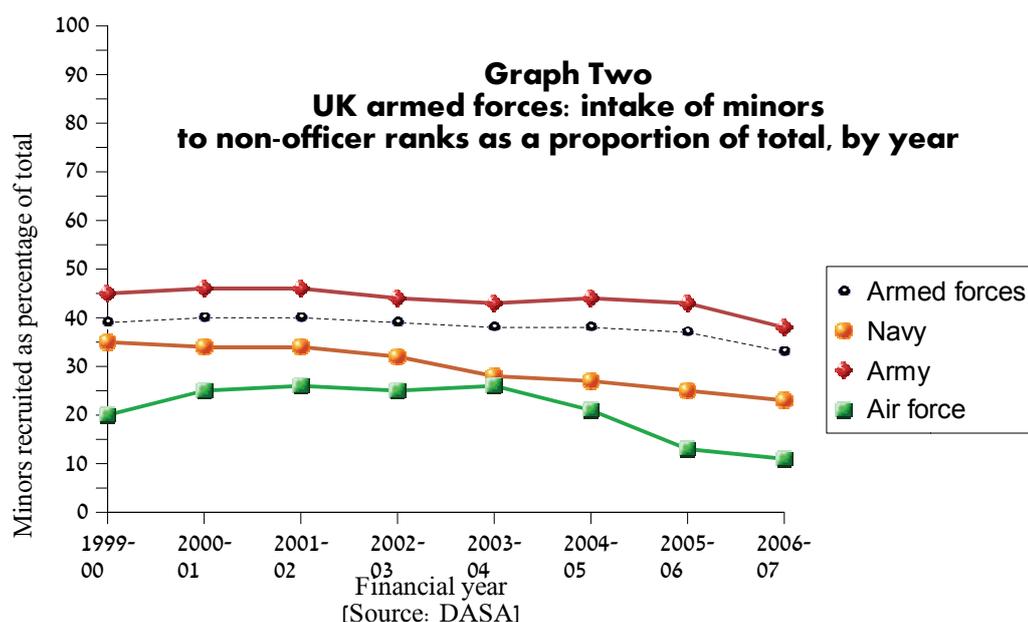


Table 2 shows that in the year FY2006-7, there were 5,810 new non-officer recruits to the armed forces under 18 years of age, accounting for 33% of new recruits. As usual, the army recruited a higher proportion of minors (38%), than the navy (23%) or air force (11%).

	Navy	Army	Air force	All
Intake, under 18 years of age	785	4,865	155	5,810
Intake, all ages	3,425	12,950	1,440	17,820
Proportion of intake under 18	23%	38%	11%	33%

In 2005, the House of Commons Defence Committee noted:

Concerns have been raised about the appropriateness of recruiting under 18 year olds into the Armed Forces. We recommend that MoD examine the potential impact of raising the recruitment age for all three Services to 18.<sup>55</sup>

The Ministry of Defence responded:

<sup>54</sup> Extrapolated from Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 4 - Intake of Male Other Ranks to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2006-07)' [data table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab4.html>>, and 'TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 5 - Intake of Female Other Ranks to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2006-07)' [data table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab5.html>>, both accessed 1 September 2007.

<sup>55</sup> House of Commons Defence Committee: *Duty of Care* (Vol 1) (London: The Stationery Office, 2005), 7

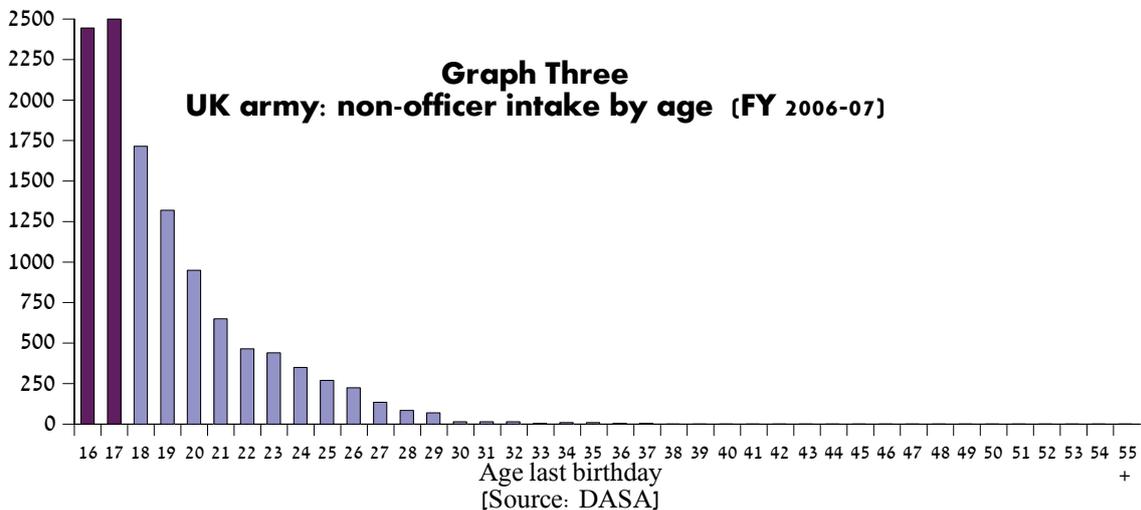
The Services need to attract those under 18 in order to compete effectively in an increasingly competitive employment market, and any move to increase the minimum recruiting age would have an acute impact on the Services' ability to meet their recruiting targets and hence operational commitments. We also believe that by recruiting from this age group, the Services provide valuable and constructive training and employment to many young people.<sup>56</sup>

The Ministry continued:

Once individuals attain the age of 18 years they are more difficult to attract as recruits. By that time they fall into two broad categories: those who have continued in academic study and whose aspirations tend towards officer entry, and those who have already entered employment. Given the very different nature of Service life and commitment, we wish to recruit people before they have made other lifestyle choices.<sup>57</sup>

There are several other reasons why fewer adults might choose a forces career. One is that adults, with more life experience, are more likely than minors to be aware of the risks of a forces career and to be able to balance these carefully against the potential benefits. Another is that younger people are more impressionable than adults in general. To a large extent, recruitment literature capitalises on this, as discussed later in this report.

Graph Three of army non-officer recruits' ages shows that the prospect of a forces career appeals progressively less as potential recruits grow into adulthood.<sup>58</sup>



56 Ministry of Defence. *The Government's Response to the House of Commons Defence Committee's Third Report of Session 2004-05 on Duty of Care* (Cm6620, July 2005), 1.

57 *Ibid.*, 4.

58 Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 4 - Intake of Male Other Ranks to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2006-07 and Table 5 - Intake of Female Other Ranks to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2006-07' [data tables], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab4.html>> and <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab5.html>>, accessed 8 June 2007.

## 1.4.2 Recruitment of minors in the European context

In Europe, the United Kingdom is unusual in its heavy reliance on 16- and 17-year-olds to staff its armed forces. It is the only state in the European Union to recruit 16 year-olds.<sup>59</sup> Of the 53 states in the Europe and Eurasia area,<sup>60</sup> in 2004 the UK was one of three to provide for military recruitment of 16 year-olds and probably the only state practising it.<sup>61</sup>

Historically, most European states have met their recruitment targets in one of two ways. The first has been to conscript young people for a period of compulsory military service, usually from 18 years of age; the second has been to take voluntary recruits from 17 years of age. The general trend in the EU in recent years has been one of phasing out conscription and raising the minimum age of voluntary recruitment to 18, further isolating the UK.

Table 3 shows which EU states recruit under-18s. Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Poland are the only EU states apart from the UK likely to have any under-18s as part of their trained strength, and then only in lower numbers.

In 2004, only two EU states relied wholly on volunteers over 18 years of age; by 2007, the number had risen to 11.<sup>62</sup> Italy recruits under-18s only for training and France recruits from 17½, which is usually too late for recruits to complete their training before turning 18. In effect, therefore, 13 EU states neither conscript nor use under-18s as part of their trained strength. There is no obvious demographic reason why the UK should not be able to do the same, for almost all of the 13 states maintain armed forces larger than those of the UK as a proportion of their population.

The government argues that it is common for states without compulsory military service to set the minimum age for recruitment at the school leaving age.<sup>63</sup> This is untrue. In the EU, with the exception of Belgium and Poland, education is not compulsory beyond the age of 16, yet no state apart from the UK recruits at that age.

Arguably, the main reason that the armed forces have to recruit so many minors each year is that so many existing personnel leave or are discharged. If efforts were diverted from recruiting new personnel to improving conditions for existing personnel, dependence on recruiting minors could be reduced or eliminated.

<sup>59</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers: *Child Soldiers: Global Report 2004*, 17 November 2004,

<sup>60</sup> Andorra, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Holy See, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of), Malta, Monaco, Portugal, Moldova (Republic of), Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Kingdom, Armenia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Albania, Belarus, Cyprus, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

<sup>61</sup> The other states were Serbia & Montenegro (which have since become two states) and Russia. There was no evidence in the *Child Soldiers: Global Report 2004* that Serbia actually recruited 16 year-olds, despite the legal provision to do so (p. 271). According to Derek Brett, author of *Conscience and Peace Tax International: Military Recruitment and Conscientious Objection: A Thematic Global Survey*, Russia recruits 16-year olds for academic military training only [personal communication, August 2007].

<sup>62</sup> States that neither conscript nor recruit minors are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

<sup>63</sup> For example, see Foreign and Commonwealth Office: 'Explanatory Memorandum on the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (Cm5759, February 2003), <<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029396041&a=KArticle&aid=1046180177986>>, accessed 19 May 2007.

**Table 3**  
**Recruitment of under-18s into the armed forces of European Union member states, 2007<sup>64</sup>**

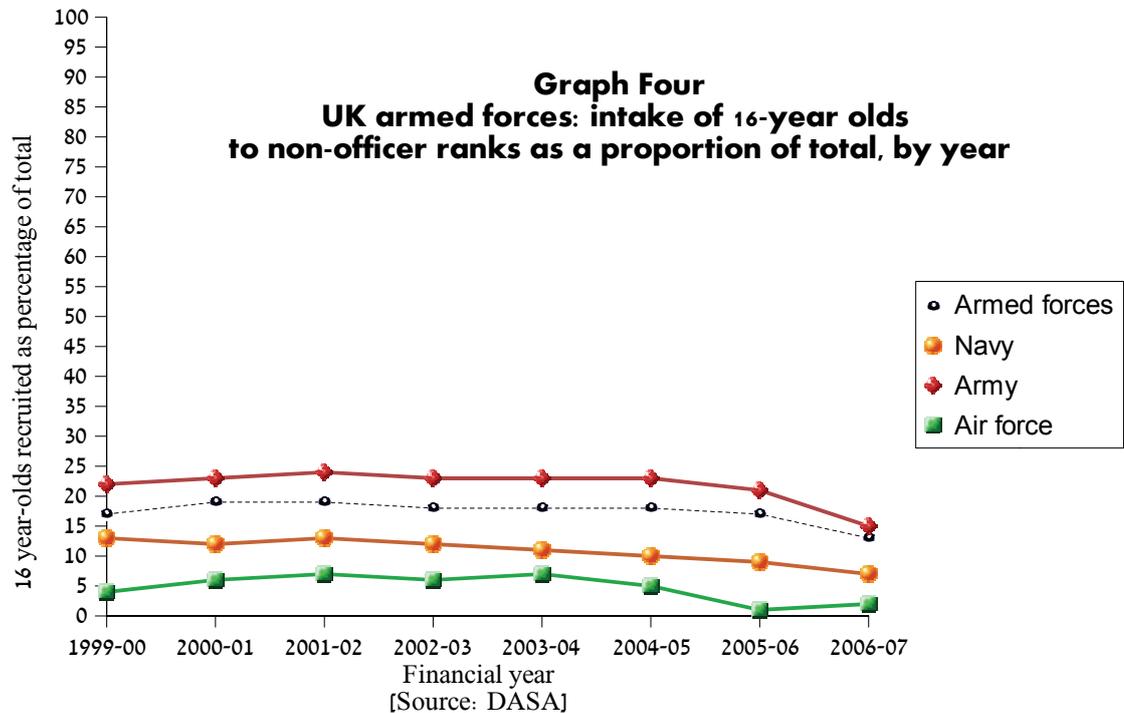
EU state	Military personnel as % of population <sup>65</sup>	Compulsory service practised	Recruitment of under-18s practised	Under-18s participation in hostilities permitted
Austria	0.42%	Yes	From 17, low numbers	No
Belgium	0.39%	No	No	No
Bulgaria	0.66%	No	No	No
Cyprus	1.33%	Yes	From 17, training only	Unknown
Czech Republic	0.56%	No	No	No
Denmark	0.42%	Yes	No	No
Estonia	0.41%	Yes	No	No
Finland	0.52%	Yes	No	No
France	0.41%	No	From 17½	No
Germany	0.34%	Yes	From 17, training only	No
Greece	1.60%	Yes	No	No
Hungary	0.33%	No	No	No
Ireland	0.25%	No	From 17	No
Italy	0.34%	No	From 17, training only	No
Latvia	0.21%	No	No	No
Lithuania	0.37%	Yes	No	No
Luxembourg	0.20%	No	From 17	No
Malta	0.53%	No	No	No
Netherlands	0.33%	No	From 17	No
Poland	0.43%	Yes	From 17	No
Portugal	0.43%	No	No	No
Romania	0.45%	No	No	No
Slovakia	0.41%	No	No	No
Slovenia	0.33%	No	No	No
Spain	0.35%	No	No	No
Sweden	0.31%	Yes	No	No
United Kingdom	0.35%	No	From 16	No (with exceptions)

<sup>64</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers: *Child Soldiers: Global Report 2004*, 17 November 2004, <<http://www.child-soldiers.org/library/global-reports>>, accessed 5 June 2007; updating information provided by Conscience and Peace Tax International: *Military Recruitment and Conscientious Objection: A Thematic Global Survey* [report], May 2006, <[http://www.cpti.ws/cpti\\_docs/brett/recruitment\\_and\\_co\\_A4.pdf](http://www.cpti.ws/cpti_docs/brett/recruitment_and_co_A4.pdf)>, accessed 13 October 2007, pp. 30-33, with additional up-to-date information provided by the report's author, Derek Brett, in personal communication, August 2007.

<sup>65</sup> Extrapolated from Eurostat: 'Total Population' [table – data for 1 January 2005], <<http://tinyurl.com/zzasn>>, accessed 5 June 2007; and Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers: Global Report 2004*, 17 November 2004, <<http://www.child-soldiers.org/library/global-reports>>, accessed 5 June 2007.

### 1.4.3 The feasibility of phasing out the recruitment of minors

Raising the minimum recruitment age of recruitment to 17 would be a valuable measure in its own right and would bring the UK closer to European norms. In FY2006-07, 2,275 new non-officer recruits were 16 years of age, accounting for 13% of the total.<sup>66</sup> See Graph Four.



The navy and air force could phase out 16-year old recruitment relatively easily; only 7% of navy and 2% of air force recruits in FY2006-07 were 16.<sup>67</sup> Phasing out army recruitment of 16 year-olds, which made up 15% of the new intake of soldiers in FY2006-07, would require careful compensatory measures in recruitment and retention policy. These could include the following:

**a) Ensure that potential recruits have realistic expectations before enlisting.**

Currently large numbers of personnel are recruited in order to meet intake targets, only for many to leave as soon as it becomes possible to do so, their career having fallen short of expectations. For every two people aged 16-22 joining the armed forces, one is leaving.<sup>68</sup> Such a high turnover is costly in terms of wasted marketing, recruitment and training. If potential recruits were more aware of the ‘down-sides’ of the career, they would be less likely to leave during training. This would mean recruiting fewer people overall, easing pressure to recruit 16 year-olds.

<sup>66</sup> Extrapolated from Defence Analytical Services Agency: ‘TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 4 - Intake of Male Other Ranks to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2006-07)’ [data table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab4.html>>, and ‘TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 5 - Intake of Female Other Ranks to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2006-07)’ [data table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab5.html>>, both accessed 1 September 2007.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Defence Analytical Services Agency, TSP 19 (FY2005-06; Tables 1 and 6).

**b) Focus resources on meeting the needs of existing personnel.** For every soldier who chooses not to leave the army, £25,000 is saved from recruiting and training his or her replacement.<sup>69</sup> That saving could be used to improve conditions of serving personnel and so reduce the number of soldiers wanting to leave at the earliest opportunity.

**c) Reduce personnel discharged for ‘service no longer required’.** The army discharges more personnel because their service is no longer wanted than it accepts new 16 year-old recruits.<sup>70</sup> Most of these are personnel who have not progressed up the ranks. Currently, the army prefers to discharge these personnel and replenish the lower ranks with new recruits, believing that older personnel are not fit enough for front-line work.<sup>71</sup> This policy is unusual in the EU context and expensive: the cost of recruiting and training new recruits to replace all those discharged in 2006 for service no longer required would be around £69,375,000.<sup>72</sup>

The Ministry of Defence or National Audit Office could conduct a study into whether a shift in emphasis from recruitment to retention could facilitate the sustainable phasing-out of recruitment of 16 year-olds in the first instance, with a view to phasing out 17-year olds subsequently.

If parliament enacts government proposals to make part-time training or education obligatory up to the age of 18, this could affect military recruitment of minors. Military training and the basic skills courses given to new recruits might satisfy the criteria for education within the meaning of the new Act. This would still complicate matters for the armed forces, however, for it would be difficult to provide ongoing education and training for all recruits up to the age of 18, especially if posted abroad.

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<sup>69</sup> National Audit Office: *Ministry of Defence: Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces (November 2006)*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> In 2006, the army discharged 2,775 personnel for service no longer required; in FY2006-07, it accepted 2,005 new 16 year-old recruits. Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 5 October 2007; and also Defence Analytical Services Agency, ‘TSP 19 - UK Regular Forces Intake And Outflow By Age For Financial Year 2005/06: Tables 4 and 5’ [data tables], 18 May 2006, <[http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/pdfs/tsp19\\_2005\\_2006.pdf](http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/pdfs/tsp19_2005_2006.pdf)>, accessed 5 September 2007

<sup>71</sup> Senior army recruiter, personal communication, November 2007.

<sup>72</sup> Based on the estimated cost of recruiting and training new personnel, at £25,000 per person (cited in National Audit Office: *Ministry of Defence: Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces (November 2006)*, 3) and 2,775 soldiers discharged for service no longer required in 2006.

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## 2 Promotion and recruitment

### 2.1 Recruitment literature – army

Recruitment literature for army careers emphasises potential benefits: career interest and challenge, comradeship, the active lifestyle, travel and training opportunities. It omits to mention or obscures: the radical change from a civilian to a military lifestyle, ethical issues involved in killing, risks to physical and mental health, the legal obligations of enlistment, the state's legal and moral obligations to its armed forces personnel, and the right of conscientious objection. By suggesting that soldiers are highly satisfied with army life, the literature also glosses over the ambivalent attitudes of the majority. The omissions conspire against the potential recruit's right and responsibility to make an informed choice about whether to enlist. The literature also does little to enable parents to ask searching questions of their children and of recruiters in order to assure their children's best interests.

In December 2005, the army released a series of new recruitment guides covering the range of army jobs. Enquirers via the army web site [www.armyjobs.mod.uk](http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk) would be directed to a special infantry section by default. If enquirers asked for more information by post, a brochure entitled *Infantry Soldier* and two DVD videos about the regular and territorial army would be sent out. Although the army now sends out different material to enquirers by default, *Infantry Soldier* remains current.

In April 2007, the army updated its main recruitment materials. Enquirers via the army web site are now sent a new publication, *One Army – Regular and Territorial: The Guide*, and a re-edited version of the 2005 video on a single DVD, combining information about the regular and territorial army.

A guide for parents and guardians is also routinely given out at Armed Forces Careers Offices to potential recruits who are under 18.

### 2.1.1 *Infantry Soldier* [brochure]

*Infantry Soldier* is a full-colour, 12,000 word document running to 36 pages. The content is broadly typical of army recruitment publications. It '[tries] to give you as much information as possible on a career in the Infantry...' and describes a uniquely rewarding and exciting career for those who are willing to work hard. Among other attractions, the potential recruit is promised:<sup>73</sup>

a. *Excellent opportunities for self-development.* This includes developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy; becoming mentally and physically tough; being stretched and challenged; excelling in sports; being able to deal with 'any situation' in army and civilian life; becoming resourceful and self-reliant; becoming responsible; and embodying values such as courage and integrity. The prospect of self-development is the brochure's most emphasised reward of an Infantry career.<sup>74</sup>

b. *A sense of belonging.* The effective soldier will feel: integral to their unit; needed; and able to rely on others as equals.<sup>75</sup>

c. *Relative imperviousness to danger and the expectation of defeating the enemy.* The brochure mentions and cursorily outlines life-threatening situations that a soldier might encounter. It implies that these, however, are not cause for serious concern, for the new recruit will be prepared for 'every eventuality' and have 'the confidence and instinct to make the right judgement and protect [themselves and their] colleagues'.<sup>76</sup>

d. *Extreme and exotic experiences and the end of boredom.* Potential recruits are promised the exhilaration of exercises, adventurous training, and sporting opportunities, often in exotic and extreme locations that 'few can imagine'; 'there will never be time to get bored'. Exercises and operations will push recruits 'to the absolute limit' and give them a 'real buzz'.<sup>77</sup>

73 Ministry of Defence: *Army Career Guide to Infantry Soldier*, (London: Army Recruiting Group, December 2005 — still current on 7 August 2006), p. 33.

74 Ministry of Defence: *Infantry Soldier*. 'Join the army and we will develop you into someone who can take their place alongside people for whom courage, honesty and integrity are all in a day's work.' p.4 '...if you put in the graft, you can reach your full potential.' p.5 '...you'll learn combat skills and boost your physical and mental toughness.' p.4 'You'll be able to move around the army a lot more, picking up new skills, qualifications and experiences along the way.' p.4 'You'll never stop learning during your time in the Army.' p.5 'We will help you, but in the end it's down to you.' p.8 'It's a great feeling to pass the test.' [serving soldier's testimonial] p.11 'It's a unique lifestyle that allows you to stretch yourself in just about any way you choose.' p.16 '...the emphasis is on mentally and physically stretching yourself. p.16 'If you want to be an Olympic world-beater or simply push yourself that little bit harder than you have before, your regiment will be there to support you.' p.16 '...gives you the ability to deal with any situation you come across in civilian life.' p.34.

75 Ibid. 'When we work, we work together. From day one you'll be part of a team...' p.4 '...unique sense of togetherness...' p.6 'You make really good friends — it unites you and you look out for each other.' [serving soldier's testimonial] p. 29.

76 Ibid. 'Soldiering can be dangerous work — no-one in the Army would deny that. But your training will prepare you for every eventuality that you're likely to face.' p.4 '...if a difficult situation arises, you will have the confidence and instinct to make the right judgement and protect yourself and your colleagues.' p.4 '...from the battle of Blenheim to the liberation of Basra, the Infantry's primary role has remained the same: winning wars by defeating the enemy in close combat.' p. 6 'It sounds quite hairy out there [in Iraq], with all the insurgency, but we've been well trained for any eventuality and it's our job, so there's nothing to worry about.' [serving soldier's testimonial] p.12.

77 Ibid. 'Few Army jobs can match the sheer adventure and excitement that comes with being an infantry soldier ... there will be few days where you won't feel the thrill of pushing yourself to the absolute limit and fulfilling a vital role.' p.3 'From wild, frozen wastes to searing desert heat, members of the Army experience every extreme.' p.4 '...you'll see a world few can imagine.' p.4 '...you will perform an extremely versatile range of tasks, so there will never be time to get bored.' p.4 'Ok, we have to work hard — but we play even harder.' [serving soldier's testimonial] p.13 'Armed Forces sporting facilities ... include watersports centres in such tempting locations as the Caribbean and Mediterranean.' p.16 'Overseas exercises provide opportunities to try out new activities, from white-water rafting in Canada to scuba-diving in Cyprus and freefall parachuting in Kenya.' p.16 'It can be intense, with a lot going on, but you get a real buzz...' [serving soldier's testimonial] p.24 'The opportunity to parachute appealed to me.' [serving soldier's testimonial] p.29 'If you're warfighting and there's a scale of

e. *Remaining a free agent.* Despite the demands made on soldiers, ‘there’s no danger of losing touch’ with friends and family, the brochure says. Weekends are free and there are plenty of opportunities for the same kind of relaxation and social life that a civilian would enjoy.<sup>78</sup>

f. *A feeling of pride in being British, special and the best.* The British army has ‘a unique and glorious history’ and is second to no other army in the world. It ‘is respected worldwide’ for fulfilling a role that ‘no-one else can handle’, the brochure states.<sup>79</sup>

g. *A part in a moral quest for the greater good.* The British army is always on the side of the good, whether it’s ‘fighting a war, keeping the peace ... or saving lives by delivering aid’. It safeguards democracy from terrorism and helps other countries to defend themselves.<sup>80</sup>

### 2.1.2 One Army – Regular and Territorial: The Guide [DVD video]

This interactive, 2hr 40min DVD video, released in April 2007, is a re-edit of a video released in 2005 that cost £1,372,000 to produce.<sup>81</sup> It is divided into sections on army careers, including a 20 minute section on combat roles, as well as information about life in the army. Each section cuts between footage of soldiers on exercise, on-camp and off-duty, and serving soldiers’ testimonials of the rewards of an army career.

The video promises the same personal rewards for recruits as does the *Infantry Career* brochure, describing the army as a supportive environment that helps recruits to reach their potential. Tutors ‘are great with you; down-to-earth; work hard for you’, one soldier says. The image of a ‘big Sergeant-Major screaming at you’ is out-of-date, says another.

The section on combat is based on footage of the army on exercise. This shows an infantry assault platoon storming a building where terrorists are holding hostages, who are evacuated unharmed. It also shows helicopters and tanks attacking a village held by an unspecified enemy force. Soldiers describe how the various assault tasks are accomplished and talk about the power of their weaponry, from the SA80 rifle to the Apache attack helicopter and Challenger 2 main battle tank. The sequence is accompanied by dramatic, tense music, resembling an action movie.

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aggression from one to five, you go straight to five...’ [serving soldier’s testimonial] p.29.

78 Ibid. ‘...there’s no danger of losing touch with your existing friends and your family.’ p.5 ‘Weekends are usually free so there’s plenty of time to relax with your colleagues or catch up with the outside world.’ p.16 ‘...you are also free to go off-camp and use local amenities.’ p.16 ‘...there’s no shortage of facilities and opportunities for the kind of relaxation you might be used to as a civilian.’ p.16.

79 Ibid. ‘...the British Army is respected worldwide for its ability to fulfil a role no-one else can handle.’ p.4 ‘...the quality of soldiers in the British Army is second to none.’ p.4 ‘...a unique and glorious history...’ p.27.

80 Ibid. ‘Whether it’s fighting a war, keeping the peace in one of the planet’s hotspots or saving lives by delivering aid...’ p.4 ‘The British Army has a job to do all over the world from fighting terrorism, to protecting British citizens and helping other armies defend their own countries.’ pp.18-19 ‘...to protect democracy.’ p.19.

81 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

The 2007 version of the video no longer includes the ten minute section for parents that had been part of the 2005 version.<sup>82</sup>

### 2.1.3 *One Army – Regular and Territorial: The Guide* [brochure]

This is the generic guide to army careers that is currently given to anyone enquiring about army jobs over the internet or at an Armed Forces Careers Office. It runs to 76 pages and contains around 22,500 words, mostly in dense type. It is divided into sections on the character of army life, pay and perks, and short descriptions of 112 army jobs.

The brochure portrays an army career as similar to a civilian one. In particular, readers are told that there is ample free time and personal freedom, that there are several financial advantages over a civilian career, and that there are many opportunities for personal and professional development. Soldiers are described as having a lot of fun, enjoying their jobs and enjoying material comforts.

The document reveals very little about the nature of combat operations. Descriptions of soldiers' experiences on operations are minimal, despite a large number of testimonials on other matters from serving personnel.

### 2.1.4 *The British Army: A Guide for Parents and Guardians* [brochure]

Routinely given out to recruits and their parents, this brochure runs to 8,000 words over 22 pages. It is divided into sections on careers, benefits of army life, recruitment process, training, education opportunities, enjoyment, and further questions.

The cover shows a photograph of a crowd applauding a passing out parade. The photograph appears at first to be genuine, but each of the twenty faces in the crowd has been superimposed separately onto the background. The result is a richer mix of ethnicities, genders and ages among the crowd, apparently intended to portray the passing out day as more representative of the British population than it actually was.

Although most of the text is dedicated to promoting army careers, it gives more information about the entry process and levels of pay, as well as the welfare support available to soldiers for problems such as depression, debt, drugs and relationship problems. It forewarns parents of the homesickness and culture shock that many new recruits experience, and it mentions that the Army has obligations of care to recruits.

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<sup>82</sup> This had been filmed on the day of a passing-out parade at the end of initial training. Against this backdrop, several parents' testimonials described the pride that mothers and fathers can take in the successes of their children as 'boys become men'. The video sought to show that concerns about the army were understandable but unfounded: if a problem arose, it would be sorted out straight away, one parent said.

The brochure is essentially a promotional document intended to encourage parents to support their children to choose an army career. *A Guide for Parents* is only marginally more forthcoming than other literature on the risks that recruits may face; parents have to read carefully to find mention of these amid the many ringing endorsements of a military career.

The *Guide for Parents* briefly mentions the contracted period of enlistment. Again, it is difficult to find this information unless the reader is looking for it: it appears near the end of the brochure in the ‘Any Further Questions?’ section. The text states vaguely that recruits may leave the army only if they ‘...indicate that they want to leave within six months of joining if under 18, and within three months if aged 18 or over’.<sup>83</sup>

The document stresses in several places that the Army does not tolerate bullying. It poses the candid question, ‘Are there any bullies in the army?’ In the army’s own representative survey of soldiers in 2006, 8% [c. 6,828 individuals] said that they had been bullied in the previous 12 months<sup>84</sup>, but the answer given in the brochure is evasive:

...most potential bullies don’t make it into the Army. However, in case bullying does occur, the Army has important safeguards in place to deal with those responsible, including both informal and formal complaints procedures.<sup>85</sup>

### 2.1.5 Army jobs web site

The main army jobs web site is at [www.armyjobs.mod.uk](http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk).<sup>86</sup> It has 296 web pages and includes promotional films, information about life in the army, an online aptitude test and job profiles. A section for parents answers questions about welfare provision and the prospect of bullying and homesickness and a facility is offered for chatting live to recruiters over the web.

## 2.2 Limitations of the literature

The House of Commons Defence Committee’s *Duty of Care* report of March 2005 specifies that a person visiting an Armed Forces Careers Office,

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 21. This is misleading information: the three/six month period is determined by the recruit’s age at enlistment, not their age when applying to leave as the brochure implies.

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy): ‘Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006’, (nd), Q39. Personnel numbers based on Defence Analytical Services Agency: ‘TSP 02 – UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Trained Requirements at 1 October 2006’ [data table] [85,360 soldiers on trained strength].

<sup>85</sup> MoD: *The British Army: A Guide for Parents and Guardians*, 21.

<sup>86</sup> Last accessed 15 September 2007.

will expect to receive an honest description of life and work in the Armed Forces; and an honest description of the standards that they will need to reach and maintain in order to enter, and flourish in a Service career.<sup>87</sup>

It may be added that they are entitled to a description of the armed forces' legal and moral obligations to their recruits.

Government policy is that the recruitment procedures for under-18s should involve,

clear and precise explanation of the nature of duties involved in military service to both the individual and their parent(s)/guardian(s); as well as explaining the demands of military life to the individual volunteer and establishing that he/she remains a genuine volunteer.<sup>88</sup>

It behoves staff in recruitment offices to inform potential recruits as fully as possible about an armed forces career, including aspects that might be dissuasive. However, the pressures of meeting recruitment targets and the varying personalities of recruiters both mean that relying wholly on staff to provide an accurate picture of a forces career would be unrealistic. It is therefore vital to provide concise information to enquirers and their parents/guardians in a clear written form. The DVD and brochures are promotional literature and can be expected to emphasise advantages of a forces career. They must nevertheless also serve to brief potential recruits who want and need an honest description of a forces career in order to make a responsible choice about enlistment. Whilst the recruitment materials do not lie, they risk misleading potential recruits by omitting vital information that they need.

Currently the recruitment materials do describe themselves as briefing documents rather than merely promotional literature. For example, the *Infantry Soldier* brochure states that it '[tries] to give you as much information as possible on a career in the Infantry...'<sup>89</sup> but does not mention the words 'kill' or 'risk'. The *One Army* brochure carries an 'Any Questions?' section promising to tell the reader what army life is really like but does not include questions with potentially dissuasive answers.<sup>90</sup> The brochure also carries a prominent section called 'Telling It Like It Is' in which soldiers describe the challenges and benefits of a forces career. Again, this is not a genuine attempt at briefing; the document poses only one potentially controversial question to one soldier: 'What's the toughest test you've faced?' to which the soldier replies, 'Being taught to ride a horse...'<sup>91</sup>

87 House of Commons Defence Committee, *Duty of Care* (Vols 1 and 2) (London: The Stationery Office, 2005), 35.

88 Foreign and Commonwealth Office: 'Explanatory Memorandum on the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (Cm5759, February 2003), <<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029396041&a=KArticle&aid=1046180177986>>, accessed 19 May 2007.

89 Ministry of Defence: *Army Career Guide to Infantry Soldier*, (London: Army Recruiting Group, December 2005 — still current on 7 August 2006), p. 33.

90 Ministry of Defence, *One Army. Regular and Territorial: The Guide*, (London: Army Recruiting Group, April 2007), 9.

91 *Ibid.*, 3.

The Adult Learning Inspectorate's review of armed forces training establishments in 2005 found that some recruits were not given an accurate picture of life in the forces before enlisting. The ALI report recommended that armed forces recruitment involve '[g]reater care in ensuring that a realistic picture of service life is presented...'.<sup>92</sup> The ALI's follow-up review in 2007 reported that recruit materials 'sometimes mislead' and that army recruits in particular 'have very mixed experiences' of information supplied by Armed Forces Careers Offices.<sup>93</sup> The following observations show that literature for the army falls far short of portraying forces life realistically.

### 2.2.1 Culture shock

The army training programme, especially for the infantry, involves a tough regime of discipline. Trainees face relative isolation from family and friends for several months and can then be posted to active service overseas immediately after training. The armed forces are aware of the potentially traumatic 'culture shock' of this rapid change of lifestyle<sup>94</sup> but army recruitment literature minimises the differences between military and civilian lifestyles.

Lieutenant-General Anthony Palmer, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel), told the House of Commons Defence Committee in 2004 that '...a lot of people who start the training process are not sufficiently robust to deal with it'.<sup>95</sup> According to staff at the Infantry Training Centre (ITC) in Catterick, the main reasons for recruits failing to complete the training course include homesickness (especially among minors but also up to around 25 years of age); loss of freedom (especially among the first six weeks); and the demands of military discipline.<sup>96</sup>

Recruitment literature tells its readers that trainees have to work hard but it does not explain the character of military discipline, including the sanctions that it can involve. The *One Army* brochure emphasises that the freedoms enjoyed in civilian life are also enjoyed in the army, but loss of freedom is a major factor leading to early discharges during training.

Homesickness is very common and can be debilitating for a new recruit, especially during the first few weeks and if he or she feels that they are the only person in their group experiencing it. Recruitment literature tells parents but not potential recruits that trainees normally feel homesick and can find separation from family and friends difficult. Giving evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee in 2004, a representative of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service that counsels new recruits remarked:

92 Cited in Adult Learning Inspectorate: *Better Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services: two years of progress* (Coventry, 2007), 14.

93 *Ibid.*, 3, 73; see also 85, 87.

94 See, for example, Ministry of Defence: 'Care for Service Recruits and Trainees', in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 232; and Adult Learning Inspectorate: *Better Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services: two years of progress* (Coventry, 2007), 14.

95 Lieutenant-General Anthony Palmer, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel), cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev17.

96 Army Recruiting Group Headquarters, 'Soldier Recruiting Convention 2004 Post Exercise Report', 11 November 2004, p. 2, obtained by the author from the Ministry of Defence under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 5 October 2007.

I think [homesickness] takes [the new recruits] as much by surprise as anybody else. They are just not prepared for the fact they are going to be that home sick.<sup>97</sup>

This report discusses the relatively high levels of mental health problems among young people in the army, with a relatively high number of suicides among young recruits when compared with the navy, the air force or the civilian population. The transition to military life is inevitably potentially traumatic; recruits who are less aware about this in advance are less likely to cope with its effects. This unnecessarily increases the risks to their psychological well-being and also increases the probability that they will drop out during training. It is therefore both counter-productive and unhelpful for recruitment literature to imply that there are few differences between military and civilian lifestyles.

### 2.2.2 'Killing'

The infantry soldier's core role — 'defeat the enemy in close combat' — involves killing people, yet the word 'kill' or its permutations do not occur in the 12,000-word *Infantry Soldier* brochure. Killing is de-personalised and obscured using euphemisms such as 'decisive strikes', 'engage an enemy' or 'surprise hits on enemy weak spots'.<sup>98</sup>

The Army Jobs web site contains 296 pages. It contains the word 'enemy' on 36 of these but does not contain the word 'kill', 'killing' or 'killed'.<sup>99</sup>

The *One Army* brochure also does not use the word 'kill' or its permutations in its 22,500 words. It also very rarely mentions fighting, warfare or combat. The information in the document does not help readers to imagine what life might be like on operations.

In the *One Army* video's two hours and forty minutes of running time, the word 'kill' is mentioned just once, and only in passing: the viewer has to watch carefully to notice it. This occurs towards the end of the section on combat, in which a serving soldier's testimonial includes:

Obviously we're trained to kill but then there's the other side of us when we're compassionate and we treat people [i.e. civilians, such as hostages] with a bit of dignity and provide a secure and safe environment for them and it feels good.<sup>100</sup>

97 Mora Antrobus, Senior Operations Manager, Women's Royal Voluntary Service Services Welfare, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 66.

98 Other euphemisms for killing appearing in the document are: 'fighting a war' p.4 'counter unexpected threats' p.4 'you'll learn combat skills' p.4 'Your main job is to defeat the enemy through close combat...' p.8 '...the Mortar Platoon engages the target.' p.10 '...defeat insurgents and terrorists...' p.19.

99 For example, see <[http://www.google.co.uk/search?num=100&hl=en&rlz=1B3GGGL\\_enGB205GB206&q=site%3Awww.armyjobs.mod.uk+kill&btnG=Search&meta=>](http://www.google.co.uk/search?num=100&hl=en&rlz=1B3GGGL_enGB205GB206&q=site%3Awww.armyjobs.mod.uk+kill&btnG=Search&meta=>)>, accessed 15 September 2007.

100 Ministry of Defence: *Regular Army and Territorial Army Information Pack* [DVD video].

At this point, the video shows not killing but an exercise in which soldiers lead rescued hostages across a battle zone to safety. The juxtaposition of footage and commentary portrays killing as an heroic means of saving life but conceals the act of killing itself. Elsewhere in the video, many euphemisms for killing are used: ‘suppress the enemy’; ‘bomb the hell out of everything’, ‘clear things out with more precision’; ‘clear those stragglers’; ‘destroy all the enemy’; ‘bang right onto the position and sort it all out’; ‘fix them’. In the twenty-minute combat section of the video there are 16 references to killing, of which 15 substitute a euphemism for the word ‘kill’.<sup>101</sup> These euphemisms risk misleading potential recruits in the view that killing is easy, impersonal and even enjoyable.

In order to make an informed choice about enlistment the potential recruit must consider whether he or she could kill another person. The general absence of the word ‘kill’ in the literature suggests a policy decision to avoid it, thus misleading by omission and failing to support the potential recruit to inform their own decision in this important respect.

### 2.2.3 Personal risk

The literature rarely refers to the dangers of combat and never mentions the risk of being killed, seriously injured or chronically traumatised. There is also no suggestion in either the brochures or the video of the fear that many soldiers feel when going into battle.<sup>102</sup> The *One Army* video’s section on medical careers in the army shows a reconstruction of a soldier being treated calmly for a minor injury caused by a fall: there is no pain, blood or possibility that the patient could die or be maimed.

The *Infantry Soldier* brochure makes vague allusions to personal risk, which it sets in the context of a reassurance that the modern soldier can cope with all eventualities.

The *One Army* brochure contains many quotes from serving soldiers but none is quoted mentioning the risks of warfare, despite the high proportion of serving personnel who have deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq since 2001. Seven soldiers mention briefly and with positive comments that they went to, or are going to, Afghanistan or Iraq. Besides these few passing mentions, Afghanistan and Iraq are not discussed in the brochure’s 22,500 words about army careers. The reader is given the impression that army jobs have little connection with warfare.

The *Guide for Parents* is the only publication under review here that uses the word ‘risk’, which it does once in the introduction:

101 Ibid. Other euphemisms for killing include: ‘knock any known tank off the battlefield’; ‘deliver onto the right position’; ‘clear certain pockets of enemy’; ‘done with maximum aggression’.

102 For examples, see Martin Middlebrook, *Task Force: The Falklands War 1982* (Revised Edition), (London: Penguin, 1987); Hugh Tinker (ed.), *A Message from the Falklands: The Life and Gallant Death of David Tinker, Lieut. R.N. from his Letters and Poems*, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1983); Ken Lukowiak, *A Soldier’s Song*, (London: Phoenix, 1999 – first pub. 1993); Dan Hallock, *Bloody Hell: The Price Soldiers Pay*, (Robertsbridge, Sussex: Plough, 1999) ; www.liveleak.com [web site of footage made by serving personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan].

We can't deny that it's a dangerous job at times, but we do our utmost to minimise that risk with a military training programme that is second to none.<sup>103</sup>

The brochure then goes on to relativise the presence of risk with the exaggerated claim:

The Army ensures that everyone sent on operations is fully equipped with the skills and knowledge required to handle any situation.<sup>104</sup>

The Army Jobs web site briefly mentions 'danger' once in its 296 pages, at the bottom of a page about soldiers' pay; the user has to scroll down to read:

Also, you may be entitled to an Operational Allowance in recognition of the danger and enduring nature of some operations that you may be deployed on.<sup>105</sup>

## 2.2.4 Legal obligations

Many recruits do not fully understand their legal obligations, including the minimum term of service, not least because the terms are highly complex (see p. 56 onwards).

A soldier is legally obliged to serve for at least four years and three months (or up to six years in the case of under-18s) with no right to leave once three months have passed since enlistment (or six months in the case of under-18s). This is omitted from the *Infantry Soldier* brochure and the video. In fact, in 2006 the *Guide for Parents* was the only army recruitment publication to mention this, which it does only cursorily.<sup>106</sup> In view of the importance to potential recruits of the legal obligations of enlistment, and given the length of the DVD video and *Infantry Soldier* brochure, this was an astonishing omission.

The *One Army* brochure produced in April 2007 mentions the required period of service after enlistment but it does so briefly and ambiguously. It does not make clear that this is a legal obligation nor does it state the differential terms of service for minors and adults. The potential recruit would be unlikely to understand from this that he or she would be refused permission to leave the forces during the mandatory period of service and that any attempt to leave would be punished by law.

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103 MoD: *The British Army: A Guide for Parents and Guardians*, 4.

104 *Ibid.*, 7.

105 'Soldier: Pay' [web page], April 2007, <<http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk/Benefits/Pay+Pensions+and+Allowances/Soldier+Pay.htm>>, accessed 15 September 2007.

106 Under the Freedom of Information Act, the author made the following request to the Ministry of Defence: 'Please supply all documents that are routinely given to POTENTIAL army recruits, in which the right to, and conditions for, leaving the army are expressly stated.' The department responded: 'Please find enclosed a copy of The British Army, A Guide for Parents and Guardians, this is routinely given to potential Army recruits and provides lots of useful information including how recruits may leave the army.' Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

The Army Jobs web site [www.armyjobs.mod.uk](http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk) mentions the minimum service requirement cursorily and ambiguously in box text ('Min Service: 4 years') on the web pages for each trade.<sup>107</sup> These pages are found on the fourth level of the web site hierarchy so are difficult to find, and there is no explanation to show that 'minimum service' is a legal obligation.<sup>108</sup>

However, the web site does include clearer details about 'Your contract', although this is near the bottom of a long page on the fourth level of the site hierarchy and is difficult to find.

#### Your contract

The length of your Army contract depends on your age when you enlist. If you enlist under the age of 18, your contract lasts until the day before your 22nd birthday. If you're over 18, your contract time is four years and three months. To leave after this point, you need to give 12 months prior notice in writing of your intention.

Alternatively, if you'd like to remain in the Army, your career is now open for a maximum of 22 years, which you can terminate at any time after the minimum contract by giving 12 months notice in writing.

#### Discharge options

Once you enlist you have to serve 28 days in training. After the 28<sup>th</sup> day you can apply in writing to leave the Army. If you're under 18 when you enlist, you have six months to let the Army know your decision and three months if over 18. Once this time has passed you are committed to serve your contract.<sup>109</sup>

Again, the information given is not fully clear.<sup>110</sup> However, it is broadly correct and provided in substantially greater detail than anywhere else in the recruitment literature. If similar information were included in the brochures, confusion among many potential and actual recruits about the terms of contract could be avoided at the outset.

### 2.2.5 'Military covenant'

The term 'military covenant' refers to a notional claim commonly made by senior military commanders — mostly in the army — about the relationship that ought to exist between 'the nation' and its armed forces. In essence, it assumes a common understanding that 'the nation' should recognise the risks and restrictions of an armed forces career and compensate military personnel accordingly.

107 For example: 'Army Air Corps Soldier' [web page], at <http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk/Jobs/JobDetail.htm?armyjobid=AAC101A%2f109A&category=1>, accessed 15 September 2007.

108 For example, Home page => Jobs => Browse by Job Group (Combat) => Army Air Corps Soldier.

109 <http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk/How+do+I+Join/Application+and+Selection/Regular+Soldier.htm>, accessed 26 September.

110 The legal obligations are not a contract. The 28 days' compulsory service is included in, not excluded from, the three/six month period for Discharge as of Right.

The term appears to be a recent invention; it has no formal status and is not defined, and it assumes without foundation that there is general consent for its terms among the public, government and military personnel. Despite this, the military covenant is often reported in the media as if it has a formal status; it is also gaining currency as a concept.

The Army Jobs web site contains a short reference to the military covenant; it is the only recruitment resource reviewed here to do so:

#### Military Covenant

Soldiers are bound by service. The nature of service is inherently unequal: soldiers may have to give more than they receive. Ultimately, they may be called upon to make personal sacrifices - including death - in the service of the nation.

In putting the needs of the Nation, The Army and others before their own, they forgo some of the rights enjoyed by those outside the Armed Forces. So, at the very least, British soldiers should always expect the Nation and their commanders to treat them fairly, to value and respect them as individuals, and to sustain and reward them and their families.<sup>111</sup>

This expression of the military covenant is problematic. There is no such covenant commanding the consent of the public at large; a covenant between ‘the nation’ and the armed forces therefore does not exist in any meaningful sense. However, the concept is potentially useful for describing the appropriate relationship between national government, which determines foreign and security policy, and the armed forces, which assume the risk of implement it. Implicit in the covenant are two reasonable claims: first, that military personnel face significant and unusual risks and do not share all the same rights as other citizens; second, that military personnel have the right to be respected and rewarded in return.

It is doubtful that it is possible fully to compensate military personnel for — and thus justify — the risks that they face and the obligations they accept at enlistment. However, the military covenant includes a laudable aspiration to recognise the moral rights of personnel in respect of the obligations made of them, and in this respect could be developed. A carefully worded expression of the military covenant would make a valuable addition to the rest of the recruitment literature.

## 2.2.6 Right of conscientious objection

In 1998, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights noted that ‘persons performing military service may develop conscientious objections’ and affirmed

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111 Army Jobs web site, ‘Core Values and the Military Covenant’, (nd), at <<http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk/How+do+I+Join/Roles+and+Ranks/Core+Values.htm>>, accessed 15 September 2007.

the importance of the availability of information about the right to conscientious objection to military service, and the means of acquiring conscientious objector status, to all persons affected by military service.<sup>112</sup>

Conscientious objection is not mentioned in the army recruitment literature under review here. The terms ‘conscientious objection’, ‘conscientious objector’ and ‘conscience’ are absent from the Army Jobs web site. They are also absent from the Ministry of Defence main web site, except for occasional mentions in the lists of Freedom of Information requests and the official listing of non-departmental bodies, which includes the Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objectors.<sup>113</sup>

According to the Ministry of Defence, ‘There are currently no documents given to new army recruits in which conscientious objection is mentioned.’<sup>114</sup> The procedures for claiming a conscientious objection in each branch of the armed forces are not freely available in the public domain or to military personnel.

The lack of information can leave those personnel who later develop a conscientious objection confused and at risk. This is discussed later (see p. 72).

## 2.2.7 Soldiers’ experiences of army life

The literature’s upbeat description of armed forces life is unsurprising but simplistic in the context of widespread disquiet among soldiers about important features of the career. A large proportion of young recruits find that army life does not match their expectations. Ministry of Defence data show that for every two people coming into the army aged 16-22, one is leaving.<sup>115</sup> In the army’s own survey in 2006, 46% of soldiers said that army life was worse than they expected it to be and over half ‘often [thought] about quitting’.<sup>116</sup>

Large numbers of soldiers choose to leave the army during the short period between 28 days’ and three months’ service (or six months for under-18s), during which time they may exercise their Discharge as of Right. Of the 11,690 new army recruits in FY2004-05,<sup>117</sup> 18.5% exercised their right of discharge,<sup>118</sup> equivalent to 2,162 soldiers.

112 United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, ‘Conscientious Objection to Military Service’ [Resolution 1998/77], 22 April 1998, <<http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/5bc5759a53f36ab380256671004b643a?Opendocument>>, accessed 13 October 2007.

113 See, for example, <[http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=site:www.armyjobs.mod.uk+conscientious+objection&sourceid=navclient-ff&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1B3GGGL\\_enGB205GB206](http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=site:www.armyjobs.mod.uk+conscientious+objection&sourceid=navclient-ff&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1B3GGGL_enGB205GB206)> and <[http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=site:www.mod.uk+conscientious+objection&num=100&hl=en&rlz=1B3GGGL\\_enGB205GB206&filter=0](http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=site:www.mod.uk+conscientious+objection&num=100&hl=en&rlz=1B3GGGL_enGB205GB206&filter=0)>, accessed 13 October 2007.

114 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

115 In FY2005-06, for example, 10,230 people aged 16-22 joined and 5,310 left. Defence Analytical Services Agency, TSP 19 (FY2005-06, Tables 1 and 6).

116 MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*: Qs 27g, 27i, 67a, 70.

117 Defence Analytical Services Agency, ‘TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 1 – Intake to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2004-05)’ [data table], <[http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/pdfs/tsp19\\_2004\\_2005.pdf](http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/pdfs/tsp19_2004_2005.pdf)>, accessed 8 June 2007.

118 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

Against this, most soldiers who do not leave the army report being broadly satisfied with their career, although few fit the image of the delighted soldier portrayed in recruitment literature: the army survey found that only 13% of non-officer soldiers reported being ‘very satisfied’ with their job in general.<sup>119</sup> By comparison, 35% of civilians described themselves as ‘very satisfied’ with their work, according to a Work Foundation survey in 2006.<sup>120</sup>

Some features of army life are widely unpopular: strain on family life; poor standard of much accommodation; loss of annual leave due to operational commitments; limits of freedom and opportunity; lack of involvement in decision-making; and heavy workload. These are discussed later in this report.

The literature lays great stress on opportunities for personal development, education and promotion as major advantages of an army career. While many soldiers reported being satisfied with these opportunities, between a quarter and a third were not satisfied.<sup>121</sup>

### 2.2.8 Support for parents

The *Guide for Parents* encourages and reassures but fails to offer advice. Without diminishing the encouragement to parents, the brochure should also inform them of the type of commitment that recruits make, including the obligatory term of service in more detail.

The literature does not encourage parents to take part in the recruiting process, asking searching questions of their child, as well as of army recruiters, in order to support their child’s decision-making. This should be a vital safeguard for minors considering an army career.

The *Guide for Parents* could urge parents to help their children to work through some of the ethical and personal dilemmas involved in becoming a soldier. It would also be improved as a briefing document if it suggested that parents seek advice from independent sources such as friends and school teachers. Advice such as this in the *Guide* would build parents’ trust that recruiters have their child’s best interests at heart, and would support the potential recruit in making an informed choice about enlistment.

Without detriment to the promotional character of the brochure, answers to the following questions would be of interest of many parents and guardians, and could have been included in the ‘Any Further Questions?’ section:

- How many trainees drop out?  
Answer: About 11-14% choose to leave during initial training.<sup>122</sup>

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119 MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*: Q1a.

120 The Work Foundation, *The Good Worker*, 7.

121 MoD: *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*, Qs 27g, 27i.

122 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007. 14.3% of trainees exercised their right to leave [Discharge as of Right] in the financial year 2004/05; 11.3% exercised the right in FY 2005/06.

- Do most soldiers enjoy their choice of career?  
Answer: Yes. About two thirds report being satisfied, one fifth neutral and one sixth dissatisfied.<sup>123</sup>
- Can my child leave the army if he or she finds it difficult to continue with a clear conscience?  
Answer: Yes, there is a right of conscientious objection to military service if your child can give evidence for it.
- Will my child be required to kill?  
Answer: Not necessarily but yes, if ordered to do so; the army is a fighting force.
- Is mental illness a problem in the army?  
Answer: Most soldiers have good mental health. There is an increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorder and some other disorders, though, for those in combat roles.

The *Guide for Parents* is marginally more forthcoming on the risks that recruits face. It is incongruous to inform parents of some of the risks of enlistment without informing the potential recruits themselves.

## 2.3 Youth strategy

The primary target group for armed forces marketing are children and adolescents. This involves schools visits, literature and internet resources, and local cadet forces. As the pool of potential recruits shrinks, outreach to children is expanding, including to those as young as seven years old. Key messages are tailored to children's interests and values: military roles are promoted as glamorous and exciting, warfare is portrayed as game-like and enjoyable, and outreach to the young is described as serving their personal growth and education. Children are introduced to the potential benefits of a forces career but not to its risks.

A 2006 National Audit Office report on recruitment and retention in the armed forces notes that the '...Services are developing their youth strategies in order to raise awareness at an earlier age to secure similar levels of recruitment from a smaller target population'.<sup>124</sup> The youth section of the Ministry of Defence web site states that the department is 'keen that young people see the armed forces and the MOD civil service as a first choice option when they think about careers'.<sup>125</sup> Ministry of Defence policy explicitly links youth outreach work with the aim 'to create the conditions in which recruiting can flourish'.<sup>126</sup>

123 MoD: *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*, Q1a.

124 NAO: *Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces*, 52.

125 Ministry of Defence: 'MoD Youth Activities' [briefing], 8 February 2006, at <<http://www.schools.mod.uk/public/youthact/activities.html>>, accessed 16 February 2007.

126 Ministry of Defence (Directorate of Reserve Forces and Cadets): 'Strategy for Delivery of MOD Youth Initiatives' (April 2005),

The recruitment strategy focuses mainly on youth in their early teens but also overtly targets children as young as eight.<sup>127</sup> At a stage in their development when they are less likely to consider material presented to them with a critical mind, children and young people are introduced to the potential excitement of a forces career but not its risks.

In February 2007, the head of army recruitment strategy, Colonel David Allfrey, was quoted in an article by Stephen Armstrong for *The New Statesman*:

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 on the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip.<sup>128</sup>

A common tactic is to emphasise the game-playing character of battle to attract children by blurring the boundaries between fantasy and reality. On the internet, for example, children have been encouraged to fly a virtual fighter plane around the screen as part of an RAF advertising campaign; on army and air force youth web sites, children are invited to drive a tank or fly a fighter jet, firing at targets using the three-dimensional realism of first-person perspective; the Army Cadet Force web site also carries free-to-use online warfare games, and cadet forces themselves carry out militarised activities in a game-playing setting. The placing of free-to-use war games on military web sites risks misleading children and young people in a view that warfare itself is a harmless and enjoyable game.

### 2.3.1 Schools outreach

The Ministry of Defence has stated that the armed forces do not recruit in schools. For example:

The Army does not recruit in schools, but seeks to raise awareness of the Army and its place in a democratic society while building interest in the Army and its careers.<sup>129</sup>

The Ministry of Defence youth policy contradicts this, describing military curricular activities in educational establishments as a ‘powerful tool for facilitating recruitment especially if the skills developed through curricular activities have a direct bearing on military requirements’.<sup>130</sup>

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at <[http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdoonlyres/DCA0B266-5CA4-47AA-8172-85DA92892C52/0/drfc\\_modyouthstrat.pdf](http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdoonlyres/DCA0B266-5CA4-47AA-8172-85DA92892C52/0/drfc_modyouthstrat.pdf)>, accessed 25 October 2007; for example, see paragraph 15d.

127 The RAF’s Altitude web site, hosted on the RAF careers web site, is targeted at young people aged 8-18. An RAF internet-based advertising campaign in 2006 was targeted at children aged 11-15. *Camouflage*, the army’s youth web site, is aimed at 13-17 year-olds. Cadet forces are open to those aged 12-18. These are discussed separately later.

128 Armstrong, Stephen: ‘Britain’s Child Army’, *The New Statesman*, 5 February 2007.

129 MoD spokesman cited in BBC Online: ‘Army “targeting poorer schools”’, 4 December 2006, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/6199274.stm>>, accessed 23 November 2007

130 Ministry of Defence (Directorate of Reserve Forces and Cadets): ‘Strategy for Delivery of MOD Youth Initiatives’ (April 2005), at <[http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdoonlyres/DCA0B266-5CA4-47AA-8172-85DA92892C52/0/drfc\\_modyouthstrat.pdf](http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdoonlyres/DCA0B266-5CA4-47AA-8172-85DA92892C52/0/drfc_modyouthstrat.pdf)>, accessed 25 October 2007, paragraph 11.

There is no doubt that armed forces careers are marketed through work with schools, and according to Colonel Allfrey, 'The army careers advisers who operate in schools are skilled salesmen.'<sup>131</sup> The MoD 2006 Annual Report also implies that schools outreach does serve a recruitment purpose. Referring to the RAF, it states:

The Service therefore concentrated much of its outreach effort on those not yet of recruitment age, to ensure that interest in a career in the Royal Air Force is maintained for when the recruiting requirement rises again.<sup>132</sup>

Martin McGing, a former school visit team member for the army, told a BBC Panorama programme that his team would take SA80 rifles into school to excite children about the soldier's role. Many children were attracted by the prospect of free driving lessons and getting their licence for large motorbikes and goods vehicles before the usual age of 21.<sup>133</sup> 'Kids loved it,' he said, but he felt that the teams' approach was 'wrong' and 'not honest'.<sup>134</sup>

Not all school students welcome the military presence. Lorna McKinnon, 14, from Bellahouston Academy in Glasgow, told the Sunday Herald in 2007:

I thought school was the one place you could get away from the horror of the Iraq war, so I was shocked to go into the playground one day and see a helicopter and 20 army guys trying to recruit us.<sup>135</sup>

The group School Students Against War (SSAW) is 'very concerned at the drive by the military to attempt to use schools as recruiting grounds for the armed services'.<sup>136</sup> SSAW demands

that no military force should be allowed into any school at any time. If spokespeople for the military are allowed in to our school we demand that all students are informed in advance, have the right not to attend the event and that there should be a right of reply from an anti war military parent or a speaker from the anti-war movement.<sup>137</sup>

Besides schools visits, the Ministry of Defence provide curriculum materials for schools to use. The schools section of the Ministry's web site at [www.schools.mod.uk](http://www.schools.mod.uk) includes around 20 web pages, which include online warfare games and conclude with a list of telephone numbers for further information, including recruitment helpline numbers.<sup>138</sup>

131 Armstrong, 'Britain's Child Army'.

132 MoD, *Annual Report 2005-06*, 139.

133 See Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, 'Military Drivers' [web page], <<http://www.dvla.gov.uk/drivers/militarydrivers.aspx>>, accessed 6 November 2007.

134 BBC Panorama: 'Soldiers on the run' [television documentary], 26 March 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6479769.stm>>, accessed 9 April 2007.

135 Forrest, Adam: 'Secondary pupils join forces against army recruitment missions in Scots schools', *The Sunday Herald*, 1 September 2007, <<http://www.sundayherald.com/misc/print.php?artid=1658594>>, accessed 10 September 2007.

136 School Students Against War, 'Troops out of our schools' [leaflet], (nd), <<http://files.pcadvance.co.uk/ssaw/uploads/armed%20forces%20le.doc>>, accessed 19 May 2007.

137 Ibid.

138 See <<http://www.schools.mod.uk/modinfo/conclusion.html>>, accessed 4 October 2007.

The armed forces also invite schools groups for day sessions at barracks. In early 2007, the journalist Stephen Armstrong joined one such group, mainly 14-16 years old, for their away-day at Fulwood Barracks in Preston. A Warrant Officer greeted the children. ‘Within minutes he has the children doing rifle drill...,’ Armstrong writes, and by the end of the session, at least two children had decided to join the army, including a 14 year-old.<sup>139</sup>

Away-days such as this are tailored to the National Curriculum. Children who complete the session at Fulwood get a certificate reading, ‘Congratulations on successfully completing the one-day Army Personal Development Course,’ and signed by the Lieutenant Colonel responsible for recruitment in the region. ‘On the back are a list of recruiting offices,’ Armstrong notices, ‘and it comes with a DVD, recruiting brochures and a glossy teen magazine called *Camouflage*.’<sup>140</sup>

### 2.3.2 Literature and internet resources for children and young people

*Camouflage* is an Army Recruiting Group programme aimed at 13-17 year-olds and designed to ‘nurture teenagers ... who have shown an interest in the Army’, ‘delivering first class recruits’.<sup>141</sup> The material consists of a free pack sent out by post, a regular magazine and a web site featuring downloadable screen savers and an interactive tank shooting game, for which users must register (provide personal details) to access. The web site is the major part of the programme and contains a section with advice about joining the army.<sup>142</sup> According to Stephen Armstrong, *Camouflage* subscribers get a Christmas card from their local recruiting officer and, when they leave school, are invited to the armed forces careers office for a chat.<sup>143</sup>

By mid-2007, the *Camouflage* programme had enrolled 250,000 young people and aimed to attract another 70,000 during the year.<sup>144</sup> The army claims that some 15% (around 2,000) of new enlistments are first involved through the *Camouflage* programme.<sup>145</sup> In FY2004-05, 345 new recruits were registered *Camouflage* web site subscribers out of a total of 10,005 subscribers.<sup>146</sup>

The *Camouflage* web site includes the statement: ‘If you decide the Army’s not for you, you can leave, as long as you give an appropriate notice period depending on your age at joining.’<sup>147</sup> This is untrue and its implication that leaving is easy to do is misleading.<sup>148</sup>

139 Armstrong, ‘Britain’s Child Army’.

140 Ibid.

141 Army Headquarters Recruiting Group, ‘Camouflage SitRep for Recruiters’, Spring/Summer 2007.

142 ‘Camouflage’ web site.

143 Armstrong, ‘Britain’s Child Army’.

144 Army Headquarters Recruiting Group, ‘Camouflage SitRep for Recruiters’, Spring/Summer 2007.

145 Ibid.

146 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

147 ‘Camouflage’ [army promotional web site for 13-17 year-olds] (2005), <<http://www.mycamouflage.mod.uk/pages/joining.asp?pageid=9.7#soldier>> (2005), accessed 5 February 2006.

148 The notice period is 14 days during the period for Discharge as of Right and then 12 months once the term of minimum service has elapsed.

The *Camouflage* magazine encourages its readers to consider an army career based on glamorous and trivialised descriptions of warfare, for example:

There's nothing quite like watching a Challenger 2 tank fire live ammunition. Even on a training exercise, with proceedings cloaked in the highest level of safety, the excitement is immense. The tank's mere presence feels like a threat; it reeks of power.<sup>149</sup>

The spring/summer 2007 edition of the magazine carries a feature on the Falklands War. The text builds up to the bloody battle for Wireless Ridge, only to describe the event in a cursory and misleading manner:

At 9.15pm, with 2 Para ready for their assault, the artillery bombardment of Argentine positions begins. Over 6,000 rounds beat down [from various British sources, listed] ... Despite the minefield, the Paras close in rapidly. The enemy retreat, leaving behind their weapons, equipment and in some cases even their boots.

‘It was a brilliantly fought battle,’ recalls Major General Thompson. ...<sup>150</sup>

This casual, sanitised description of the battle cynically misleads its young readership. Ken Lukowiak, a veteran of 2 Para, describes the aftermath of the artillery bombardment as follows:

I passed the Argentine casualties of war ... We found the two I had to see. They were lying on their backs shoulder to shoulder. One of them had no head, the other no legs. ... We left the headless, legless Argentines and made our way around the position of trenches they had lost their lives defending. There were many other twisted corpses scattered around, littering the ground. Once again we were struck by how young most of them appeared. ...<sup>151</sup>

The *Altitude* web site is the RAF equivalent to *Camouflage*. This is aimed at youth from 8 to 18 years of age ‘who want a taste of life in the RAF’:<sup>152</sup>

The latest aircraft, fantastic sports and activities, the history of the RAF, new technology, great games and downloads and exciting careers — they're all here along with news of upcoming air shows and events plus much, much more.<sup>153</sup>

*Altitude* includes several free-to-use warfare games, in which the user controls fighter aircraft in ‘realistic’ first-person perspective. In one game, *Typhoon Quest*, the user flies a Typhoon jet fighter over a photo-realistic landscape firing its canon and missiles at enemy targets such as air defence installations.

The RAF won a New Media Age award in 2006 for the best recruitment advertising initiative using new media, aimed at 11-15 year-olds:

149 *Camouflage* magazine [army promotional careers magazine for 13-17 year-olds]: Issue 22, spring/summer 2007, 25.

150 *Ibid.*, 49

151 Lukowiak, Ken: *A Soldier's Song* (London: Phoenix, 1999 – first pub. 1993), 147-8.

152 Royal Air Force, *Altitude* [web site] home page, at <<http://www.rafcareers.com/altitude>>, accessed 4 October 2007.

153 *Ibid.*

The RAF recruitment campaign had two objectives: to position the RAF as an exciting brand that the younger target audience could identify with and consider for a dream career, and to portray the wide range of challenging careers the RAF offers. ... Dialogue DLKW [the advertising agency] created engaging interactive ads that represented turning children's career dreams into reality. The creative vehicle used fighter jet doodles drawn on the pages of a school exercise book. These sketches would then come to life, lift off the page and transform into real jets that the user could engage with and fly around the screen. ... The campaign was seen across key targeted youth sites such as monkeyslum.com and mykindaplace.com. ... Of the 85,214 [mouse] clicks from the online advertising, over 79% spent a significant period on the RAF Web site. The judges said it was a well targeted campaign that reached its audience via a fun and novel execution.<sup>154</sup>

### 2.3.3 Cadet forces

At over two thirds the size of the regular armed forces, the cadet forces are 'at the core of MOD's youth policy'.<sup>155</sup> As of 2006, there were around 125,000 members of cadet forces at around 3,345 centres in the UK.<sup>156</sup>

Each military branch has its corresponding cadet force: the Sea Cadet Corps, the Army Cadet Force and the Air Training Corps. Each cadet force is controlled and funded by the parent regular force, although the Sea Cadet Corps enjoys a measure of independence. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) is a schools-based system mostly for those suitable for officer entry into the armed forces; in 2006, there were 245 CCF centres in British schools.<sup>157</sup>

The minimum age of entry into the cadet forces is 12.<sup>158</sup> The Army Cadet Force and Combined Cadet Force have been growing since 1999; membership of both the Air Training and Sea Cadet Corps has been falling.<sup>159</sup>

The founding intention of the cadet forces was to supplement the regular forces with a trained force of children and young people at a time of national emergency, initially during the Crimean War in the 1850s and later in the Second World War. The cadet movement also provided pastoral support and training for children whose fathers were killed in war.<sup>160</sup>

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- 154 New Media Age Effectiveness Awards 2006: RAF Recruitment [web page], (nd), <<http://www.nmaawards.co.uk/Winners2006.aspx?CatID=58d419b8-38ff-4526-946f-a50413e4a590>>, accessed 6 July 2007.
- 155 Ministry of Defence (Directorate of Reserve Forces and Cadets): 'Strategy for Delivery of MOD Youth Initiatives' (April 2005), at <[http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/DCA0B266-5CA4-47AA-8172-85DA92892C52/0/drfc\\_modyouthstrat.pdf](http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/DCA0B266-5CA4-47AA-8172-85DA92892C52/0/drfc_modyouthstrat.pdf)>, accessed 25 October 2007.
- 156 Ministry of Defence: 'MoD Youth Activities'.
- 157 Ibid.
- 158 Ministry of Defence: Army Cadet Force web site; Ministry of Defence: *About Defence: The Combined Cadet Force — a unique educational partnership*, <<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/ReserveForcesandCadets.htm>>, accessed 10 October 2007.
- 159 Derek Twigg, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, cited in Hansard, HC: 22 March 2007: Col 1032W, Defence (Armed Forces: Cadets) and Hansard, HC: 3 May 2007: Col 1849W, Defence (Armed Forces: Cadets); Defence Analytical Services Agency, *UK Defence Statistics 2007*, 'Table 2.8: Strength of UK Regular Forces by age and rank at 1 April each year', <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/ukds/2007/c2/table215.html>>, accessed 11 October 2007.
- 160 'The Cadet Corps originated from a letter sent by the War Office on 12th May 1859 to Lord Lieutenants asking them to raise Rifle Volunteer Battalions for Home Defence. As a result, a number of schools formed units in 1859 which were attached to these battalions.' Ministry of Defence: 'About Defence: History of the Combined Cadet Force' [article] (nd), at <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/ReserveForcesandCadets/DRFC/HistoryOfTheCombinedCadetForce.htm>>, accessed 26 October 2007. See also Ministry of Defence: 'About Defence: The Combined Cadet Force — a

Despite their name, cadet forces are no longer part of the armed forces and cannot be mobilised in a time of war.<sup>161</sup> In other respects, cadet forces are similar to the regular forces: their activities are based on military training and exercises, including the use of weapons and other military equipment; and there are a hierarchy, a uniform and a regime of discipline resembling those in the armed forces. Cadets are taught that they represent the Queen and regiment.<sup>162</sup> There are also trips to barracks, ships and airfields where the cadets can, for example, ride in a military helicopter and meet serving personnel. The armed forces provide all uniforms, weapons and ammunition, training for adult volunteers, and loans of equipment.<sup>163</sup>

The successful cadet learns how to be effective in a military context, including how to work with others to avoid or defeat an enemy. The cadet forces are also major providers of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and arrange adventurous training and expeditions that may or may not have a military flavour. Through these activities, the cadet forces aim to develop the good character of young people.

Army cadets learn to strip down and fire standard-issue SA80 rifles and some enjoy the feeling of power that handling weapons can bring. One army cadet writing on the internet describes the handling weapons as ‘feeling like Mrs Rambo’.<sup>164</sup> Another former cadet, now an adult, said that he found it both disturbing and intoxicating that he was expected to shoot at a target with a lethal weapon.<sup>165</sup>

Combined Cadet Force membership in schools is sometimes compulsory, as in the case of the largest in the country at Arnold School in Blackpool.<sup>166</sup> Reportedly, its head teacher Barry Hughes would be ‘uncomfortable’ if a child objected to membership of the CCF on grounds of conscience and he would seek to dissuade him or her, although this has yet to happen at the school.<sup>167</sup>

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unique educational partnership’, ‘About Defence: History of the Cadet Forces’, ‘About Defence: History of the Sea Cadet Corps’, ‘About Defence: History of the Army Cadet Force’ [articles] (nd). See bibliography for full references.

161 In 1957, ‘the purpose of the Army’s Cadet Forces was altered from a direct HM Forces support role to that of a national youth organisation sponsored by the MOD.’ Ministry of Defence: ‘About Defence: History of the Army Cadet Force’ [article] (nd), <<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/ReserveForcesandCadets/DRFC/HistoryOfTheArmyCadetForceacf.htm>>, accessed 26 October 2007.

162 HotBlonde [web alias], ‘Mean in Green — We’re fighting machines’ [review of the Army Cadet Force by an army cadet], at Ciao [web site], <[http://www.ciao.co.uk/Army\\_Cadet\\_Force\\_Review\\_5437681](http://www.ciao.co.uk/Army_Cadet_Force_Review_5437681)>, accessed 8 October 2007.

163 Ministry of Defence: *About Defence: The Combined Cadet Force — a unique educational partnership*, <<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/ReserveForcesandCadets.htm>>, accessed 10 October 2007.

164 HotBlonde [web alias], ‘Mean in Green — We’re fighting machines’ [review of the Army Cadet Force by an army cadet], at Ciao [web site], <[http://www.ciao.co.uk/Army\\_Cadet\\_Force\\_Review\\_5437681](http://www.ciao.co.uk/Army_Cadet_Force_Review_5437681)>, accessed 8 October 2007.

165 Personal communication, October 2007.

166 Morris, Sophie: ‘Combined Cadet Force: Corps skills for Civvy Street’, *The Independent*, 25 October 2007.

167 Ibid.

Where membership of cadet forces is voluntary, many children and young people who would not otherwise be attracted to a military environment join for social reasons,<sup>168</sup> especially where the group provides the only opportunity to meet friends in the community or to go on adventure holidays. Bournemouth School CCF, for example, arranges an adventurous expedition every term, thereby incentivising all schoolchildren to get involved; the CCF is the school's most popular club, described on its web site as a 'must-do'.<sup>169</sup> A further incentive is that the cost of being a cadet, including uniform, equipment, food and the adventure holidays, is either entirely borne by the Ministry of Defence or heavily subsidised, giving it a significant financial edge over other youth movements like the Scouts and the Woodcraft Folk.

Officially, the cadet forces are a community and youth development movement and are no longer recruiting organisations for the armed forces.<sup>170</sup> The cadet forces can help young people to develop, but the mission of the Ministry of Defence is national security. It is thought that £97.6 million was allocated to cadet forces from the defence budget in 2006, not including a large amount of assistance in kind such as the loan or gift of military equipment.<sup>171</sup> There would seem to be little purpose for the Ministry of Defence (rather than the Department for Children, Schools and Families, for example) to fund a youth development programme as heavily as it does if none of its participants later joined the armed forces.

Unofficially, the cadet forces are seen as an important means to stimulate interest among young people in forces careers. Local cadet forces and the cadets themselves recognise this. The web site of Bournemouth School CCF, for example, states:

Military training is also designed to demonstrate why defence forces are needed, how they function and to stimulate an interest in a career as an officer in the service.<sup>172</sup>

An army cadet writes:

The government have now totally recognised that children today in the cadet forces are more likely [to] join the regulars. Recent surveys have shown that a good 75% do join up. The Army realising these figures now donate extremely large amounts of weapons, kit and local support on training.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>168</sup> For example, see Ministry of Defence: *About Defence: The Combined Cadet Force — a unique educational partnership*.

<sup>169</sup> Bournemouth School CCF, 'Introduction to Bournemouth School Combined Cadet Force', 15 January 2004, <<http://www.bsccf.co.uk/intro/intro.htm>>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>170</sup> For example, see Derek Twigg, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, cited in Hansard, HC: 22 May 2007: Col 1183W, Defence (Cadets: Recruitment).

<sup>171</sup> Extrapolated from Hansard, HC: 18 April 2007: Col 98WH [debate], Sea Cadets.

<sup>172</sup> Bournemouth School CCF, 'Introduction to Bournemouth School Combined Cadet Force', 15 January 2004, <<http://www.bsccf.co.uk/intro/intro.htm>>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>173</sup> HotBlonde [web alias], 'Mean in Green — We're fighting machines' [review of the Army Cadet Force by an army cadet], at *Ciao* [web site], <[http://www.ciao.co.uk/Army\\_Cadet\\_Force\\_Review\\_5437681](http://www.ciao.co.uk/Army_Cadet_Force_Review_5437681)>, accessed 8 October 2007.

The Army Cadet Force is closely associated with the regular army's recruitment organisation, the Army Recruiting Group (RG). The ACF is advertised in Army Careers Information Offices and in the RG's *Camouflage* magazine intended to encourage 13-17 year-olds to consider an army career;<sup>174</sup> the RG also produces all the state-of-the-art army cadet recruitment materials.<sup>175</sup>

The official, representative survey of army personnel in 2006 revealed that 46% of officers and 27% of soldiers were in the cadets as children.<sup>176</sup> The government said in 2007 that 22% of all navy personnel also had a cadet background.<sup>177</sup> Figures for the air force are not published.

## 2.4 Recruitment process

It is policy that staff in recruitment offices 'explain the recruits' rights and responsibilities and the nature of the commitment to the Armed Forces'.<sup>178</sup> Recruiters commonly develop close relationships with potential recruits and experience a personal duty of care. However, there is a conflict of interest between the duty of care to potential recruits and the pressure on staff for new enlistments. Specifically, whilst staff are generally willing to answer questions honestly, information that might dissuade potential recruits from enlisting is not routinely volunteered. Direct contact with parents of minors is often minimal or absent and the applications process does not reliably ensure that applicants fully understand their legal rights and obligations.

### 2.4.1 Application procedure – army

The minimum age for non-officer entry into the regular armed forces is 16;<sup>179</sup> those under 18 require the signed consent of a parent or guardian. The application process may be started, and signed parental consent given, before the applicant's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. The procedure for non-officer recruitment into the armed forces typically takes three months, although can take much longer or as little as about four weeks. The process for the army, which is broadly similar to that of the navy and air force, is as follows.

174 For example, The Strand office, London; Army Recruiting Group *Camouflage* programme [army careers promotional resources for 13-17 year-olds]: *Camouflage* magazine, Issue 22, spring/summer 2007, 64.

175 For example, see Army Recruiting Group: *Army Cadet Force: Be the Difference (Adult Instructor)* [DVD video], October 2004 [current at November 2007]; Army Recruiting Group: *Army Cadet Force: Make your Mark* [leaflet for potential cadet recruits], September 2005 [current at October 2007]

176 Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006*, nd, Q75a.

177 Hansard, HC: 18 April 2007: Col 98WH [debate], Sea Cadets.

178 Ministry of Defence: *The Government's Response to the House of Commons Defence Committee's Third Report of Session 2004-05, on Duty of Care*, (Cm6620, July 2005), 4.

179 The statutory minimum age of recruitment for the air force is 16; there is no statutory minimum age of recruitment into the army or navy but this is also 16 in practice; the UK became bound not to recruit those younger than 16 when it ratified the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2003, discussed later.

On visiting an Armed Forces Careers Office,<sup>180</sup> the potential recruit is given an initial informal interview and fills out a form to collect basic personal information. This can also be done on the Army Jobs web site. At this stage, the recruitment brochures described above are usually provided together with an application form. If the enquirer wants to know more about army careers, he or she can attend an ‘Insight Course’, designed to give participants a taste of army life.

The application form is identical for the army, navy and air force. A referee must be specified and should be the candidate’s head teacher if he or she is still in school or left within the last 12 months. For candidates under 18 years of age, a parent or guardian must countersign the application form in order to allow the application to proceed. At this stage, the applicant is under no obligation.

Once the application form has been completed, the candidate sits a formal interview to identify his or her motivation for joining the army. The candidate’s eligibility for entry is determined and their identity verified.

There follows a battery of automated touch-screen tests to assess the candidate’s intelligence and aptitude. Provided that the candidate meets the standard of Entry Level 2 (numeracy and literacy of an average seven year-old),<sup>181</sup> the computer produces a print-out of suitable army trades. The careers advisor explains these and invites the candidate to specify a list of three in order of preference. The advisor may recommend one job group to the candidate over another.

The candidate also sits a basic medical with his or her GP, which the army then checks.

If the candidate remains eligible, he or she is allocated a place on a two-day course at a recruit selection centre. There, level of fitness is tested, attitude evaluated, and a full army medical performed. The complex legal obligations regarding length of service are outlined on a video. If the applicant passes all the tests to the required standard, a personnel selection officer makes a job offer, which may or may not be the candidate’s first choice.

If the candidate wishes to accept the job offer and is under 18, their parents or guardian must sign a short form to give their consent; this is usually done at home. The parents’ signatures affirm the following:

1. The applicant [named above] is my/our son/daughter/ward
2. The applicant has read the Notice Paper setting out the terms and conditions of enlistment and understands it.
3. Having also read the Notice Paper and understood it, I/we consent to the enlistment of the applicant and those terms and conditions.<sup>182</sup>

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180 Or Army Careers Information Office.

181 Entry requirements for the navy and air force are more stringent..

182 Ministry of Defence: ‘Armed Services: Consent of Parent(s) or Guardian to Enlistment under the age of 18’ [form] [MoD Form 486 (Revised 1/90)]

The parental consent form must be witnessed by ‘someone of standing in the community’ who is not related to the applicant’s family.<sup>183</sup>

The applicant must sign a form known as a Notice Paper to affirm that they understand their terms of service. This is done at the careers office with the officer responsible for enlistments, who must have the rank of at least Major.

The candidate then ‘attests’, which involves a ceremony of swearing an oath of loyalty or making a solemn declaration to the same effect. Parents usually attend but are not required to do so. The attestation ceremony is a source of great job satisfaction for recruiters.<sup>184</sup> The act of attestation marks the first day of the recruit’s service and the point at which he or she becomes subject to military law. Army recruits usually attest and sign the Notice Paper at the careers office before leaving for training after a few days of unpaid leave, navy and air force recruits normally sign the Notice Paper at the careers office and then attest on their first day of training.<sup>185</sup>

## 2.4.2 Remarks on the application form and guidance notes

The application form is 24 pages long but clearly set out and comes with detailed guidance notes. The notes include important information for potential recruits that is absent from other documentation. A boxed ‘cautionary statement’ on the first page includes the following important, if vague, statement:

Applicants must bear in mind that joining the Armed Forces may lead to them serving in an armed conflict in any part of the world with the risks and responsibilities involved. You may also have to take life in the act of protecting life.<sup>186</sup>

The section on religion warns candidates that their faith must not interfere with their operational duties, including the phrase:

...it must be clear [to those of religious faith] that you may be required to use aggression and/or to take life during your career within the Armed Forces.<sup>187</sup>

A section entitled ‘Conditions of Standards and Behaviour’ tells candidates:

In joining the Armed Forces you will be entering a disciplined organisation that has different requirements from civilian life. There will be times when the requirements of the Service take priority over personal needs; for example, you will be liable for duty at any time of the day or night, seven days a week. In addition, you may be required to serve in any part of the world.<sup>188</sup>

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183 Ibid.

184 Senior recruitment staff, personal communication, November 2007.

185 At the time of writing, the army is about to change their practice to reflect that of the navy and air force.

186 Ministry of Defence: *Application to serve in the Armed Forces: Guidance notes* [AFCO Form 5 Joint August 07 (Interim)], 1.

187 Ibid., 4.

188 Ibid., 2.

The section also explains that it is possible to be disciplined and punished for such behaviours as disobeying an order or being untidily dressed. It also explains that bullying, harassment and unlawful discrimination are unacceptable.

As the above excerpts show, the guidance notes contain some limited but important information about some of the radical differences between civilian and military lifestyles. The text is mostly clear but runs to eight pages of dense type. It is doubtful that many candidates of a low reading age could understand them without careful help, and it seems likely that the cautionary information is often missed or quickly passed over. Some of the information in the guidance notes would be a welcome addition to recruitment literature, which currently risks misleading potential recruits in the view that military life has much the same freedoms and requirements as civilian life.

### 2.4.3 Remarks on the careers office

In 2004, Lieutenant General Anthony Palmer, responsible for armed forces personnel, told the House of Commons Defence Committee that

...from the moment somebody walks into an Armed Forces Careers Office... an attempt is made to make sure that they understand exactly the nature of the commitment they are making.<sup>189</sup>

The Ministry of Defence stated in 2005:

Recruiting staffs from all three Services and current recruiting literature make every effort to explain the recruits' rights and responsibilities and the nature of the commitment to the Armed Forces.<sup>190</sup>

During careers office visits to research this report, recruiters were emphatic that candidates are not encouraged against their will to fill shortage trades.<sup>191</sup> 'It's absolutely their [the potential recruit's] choice,' one said. Recruiting staff, many of whom are parents themselves, feel a personal duty of care to potential recruits and want to ensure that they enter army life understanding as fully as possible their prospective career with its attending legal obligations. Job satisfaction is found in 'seeing a soldier come through the door of the office saying that the army is brilliant and they just love it', said one recruiter. Throughout the process, recruiters get to know candidates and, where possible, their families, and enjoy witnessing the positive change that can take place between enlistment and the passing-out parade.

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189 HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 35.

190 Ministry of Defence: *The Government's Response to the House of Commons Defence Committee's Third Report of Session 2004-05, on Duty of Care*, (Cm6620, July 2005), 4.

191 All evidence and quotations in this section are derived from personal communication with recruiting staff at junior and senior levels, November 2007, unless otherwise stated.

The national target for recruitment is divided between recruiting regions and, in turn, to careers offices within each region. If offices fail to meet their assigned targets, there are no sanctions taken against them and if they succeed, no rewards. Even so, the personal pride that recruiting staff teams take in their work means that there is sometimes ‘tribal rivalry’ between offices as each tries to recruit more effectively than the others. There is also evidence from serving personnel and their families that persuasive pressure is applied to some potential recruits (see p. 62).

Recruitment staff often encourage under-18 recruits making their initial enquiry to bring their parents along on their next visit but there is no written instruction to do so and it is unclear how consistent this is nationwide. One senior member of recruiting staff admitted that they never meet the parents of most potential recruits, although he stressed that recruiters generally ask under-18s what their parents think of their interest in an army career. Most potential recruits want to exclude their parents from the process, it was reported.

This is alarming; a parent who does not visit the careers office even once is unlikely to sift the complex legal obligations of enlistment to ensure that their children are aware of the commitment that they are making. It would be helpful if recruiters were obliged to meet parents of potential recruits under 18 years of age, even if only at home, in order for the application process to proceed. Failing this, it ought to be documented best practice for all recruiting staff to contact parents directly by phone and talk through the issues. A recruit who begins training without the active support of his or her parent or guardian, and who may have no other non-military adult support, is especially vulnerable. A recruit without active parental support may also be more likely to exercise their right of discharge at an early stage.

Senior staff in the Army Recruiting Group explained that national recruitment policy no longer seeks to enlist as many recruits as possible; it is considered more effective to select recruits who are least likely to exercise their right of discharge at an early stage. Currently, recruitment targets are based on the number of recruits who enlist, whether or not they then exercise their right of discharge soon afterwards. Soon, the effectiveness of recruitment offices will be measured by the number of recruits who complete Phase 1 training; effectiveness of Phase 1 training will be measured by the number of recruits who go on to complete Phase 2. This is a positive change insofar as it removes an incentive for recruiters to enlist as many people as possible without regard for whether the army is likely to be suitable for them.

Although staff promise to answer questions as honestly as possible, this is only helpful insofar as potential recruits know which questions to ask. The shop floor staff interviewed for this report said that most questions from enquirers concerned the application process; questions about the legal obligations or ‘down-sides’ of a forces career are less common. However, a common question currently is whether a new recruit is likely to be posted to Afghanistan or Iraq, to which the answer given is yes, depending on the corps or regiment joined.

Asked what the ‘down-sides’ of a forces career were, a recruiter said that it is physically very tough; soldiers might have to carry very heavy packs up to 100kg. When asked whether there were other risks, he did not say, asking instead for a more specific question. Asked how recruiters respond to the question, ‘What’s it like on operations?’ potential recruits are shown a display of photographs from Afghanistan, although there is no hint of danger portrayed. When a recruiter was asked whether he had ever been shot at or had to kill anyone, he said that he had been shot but avoided the second part of the question despite some further prompting. Recruiters gave the impression of a general willingness to answer questions honestly but with some reluctance to give out potentially dissuasive information. ‘You have to tell the truth.... to a degree,’ said one member of shop floor staff.

Recruiters are responsible for ensuring that applicants understand the complex terms and conditions of service; staff must sign to affirm that they have explained them to new recruits before they enlist. The officer responsible for enlisting recruits at one group of careers offices emphasised that he takes them through the Notice Paper ‘line by line, making absolutely sure that they understand it’. This is evidently good practice but relies on the conscientious character of staff; there appears to be no way to hold staff to account if they should make a mistake or rush the process to achieve the enlistment.

When asked to explain the terms of service, it emerged that the officer had been inadvertently misinforming new recruits. Specifically, he had been telling new recruits that their discharge window began at the end of the first 28 days’ compulsory service, when in fact it is measured from the beginning.<sup>192</sup> This is a serious mistake, for it gives recruits the impression that they have a longer period to exercise their right of discharge before being bound by law to serve for several years. The failure is systemic, resulting from terms of service that are evidently so complicated as to confuse even those whose professional responsibility is to explain them to others.

Staff have to balance their duty of care to potential recruits with their effectiveness in recruitment; this gives rise to a conflict of interest. Many recruiting staff undoubtedly overcome the conflict by conscientiously carrying out their roles. This is nonetheless an insufficient guarantee that the desire or pressure to recruit new personnel never undermines the moral right of potential recruits to make an informed choice about enlistment. The following two proposals are aimed at overcoming this conflict:

- a) Establish an Armed Forces Recruitment Charter. This would set out recruiters’ legal and moral obligations to potential recruits and enable the recruiting organisation to demonstrate openness and accountability in its processes.

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192 From *The Army Terms of Service Regulations 1992* (Statutory Instrument 1992 No 1365), as amended [italics added].

Right of recruit to determine service

7(1) Subject to the following provisions of this regulation, a recruit shall have the right to determine his service by giving not less than 14 days’ notice in writing to his commanding officer.

(2) If the recruit had not attained the age of 18 years at the date of his attestation, the notice referred to in paragraph (1) shall not have effect unless it is given after the recruit has completed 28 days’ service *and before the expiration of the period of 6 months beginning on the date he first reported for duty following his enlistment.*

(3) If the recruit had attained the age of 18 years at the date of his attestation, the notice referred to in paragraph (1) shall not have effect unless it is given after the recruit has completed 28 days’ service *and before the expiration of the period of 3 months beginning on the date he first reported for duty following his enlistment.*

b) Provide accessible written information about risks of a forces career. This would help to ensure that potential recruits are as fully informed as possible before beginning the application process, and as prepared as possible for the potentially traumatic shock of initial training, during which some 18% of new recruits currently exercise their right of discharge.<sup>193</sup>

It is positive that senior army recruitment staff are now considering these two proposals.

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193 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

# 3 Terms of enlistment

## 3.1 Minimum period of service

On enlistment, recruits enter a legally binding agreement to serve for a minimum period, which can be up to six years in the case of minors joining the army as soldiers. Reserve liability follows regular service and usually lasts at least six further years. For a short period after enlistment recruits have the right to discharge themselves but this time usually falls during training and before they experience military operations. Some recruits who apply for discharge during this period have reported being pressured to change their minds. In the case of the army, the outflow data show that a disproportionate number of recruits leave as soon as their minimum term of service is over, suggesting that many recruits would have left earlier if they had not been legally obliged to remain. In 2006, an official and representative survey found that 20% of soldiers [c. 16,750 individuals] wanted to leave the army at the earliest opportunity.<sup>194</sup>

### 3.1.1 Terms of service for non-officer recruits

Statutory instruments set out the regulations for joining and leaving the armed forces as a non-officer (i.e. soldier, airman/woman, navy rating, marines commando).<sup>195</sup> The rules, summarised below, are highly complicated.

Army recruits commit to serve for 22-24 years, depending on their age at attestation; navy recruits commit to serve for 18 years or until the age of 40, whichever is later; and air force recruits sign up for nine years in the first instance.

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<sup>194</sup> Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), 'Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006', (nd), Q67b.

<sup>195</sup> The Army Terms of Service Regulations 1992 (Statutory Instrument 1992 No 1365), as amended; The Royal Air Force Terms of Service Regulations 2007 (Statutory Instrument 2007 No 650); The Royal Navy Terms of Service (Ratings) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No 2918), all accessible via <<http://www.opsi.gov.uk>> [Office of Public Sector Information web site].

New recruits may not leave during the first full 28 days' service (excluding any leave). Once this has elapsed, there is a period of a few months during which recruits may discharge themselves as of right (DAOR) at 14 days' notice. Army recruits under the age of 18 at attestation, and all air force and navy recruits regardless of age, may exercise DAOR within six months of their first day of duty (i.e. normally the first day of initial training). Army recruits over 18 may exercise DAOR within three months of their first day of duty. The right of discharge may be withdrawn at a time of imminent national danger.

Once the period allowed for DAOR has passed, recruits are bound by law to serve in the regular forces for a minimum term, the duration of which is specific to each force. In the case of the army, recruits under 18 have no legal right to leave regular service until their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday; the minimum term for those over 18 at attestation is four years and three months — see table below. In the air force, the minimum term is three years from the end of initial training and in the navy, three years and six months from the end of initial training. Minimum regular service is extended by any time spent absent without leave or in detention.

Recruits in all forces may be required to consent to serve longer than the statutory minimum term if they undertake a course of education or training beyond initial training. In this case, they must either sign a form waiving their right of discharge for a specified period or forego the course. The period of extension of service is not specified in the navy regulations. In the case of the army and air force, the extension is up to three years for a course of three months or less; for longer courses, the extension can be up to five years in the air force and six years for the army. Personnel may also be required to extend their service in order to receive 'any other benefit or advantage'. In this case, the service extension period specified for the army and air force is up to six years; periods for the navy are not specified in law, although they are likely to be similar in practice. If an army recruit gives consent, before reaching 17½ years of age, to extend their minimum service, they may withdraw it if notice is given in writing within 28 days of turning 18; navy and air force recruits have no such right.

Once the minimum term of service has elapsed, recruits may leave their regular force and be transferred to the reserve, provided that 12 months' notice has been given in the case of the soldiers and navy ratings, and 18 months for airmen/women. The right to transfer to the reserve can be withdrawn at a time of imminent national danger.

Once personnel leave the regular forces, they join the reserve and are not legally discharged from the armed forces until their term of reserve service is over. The period of reserve liability depends on the force. In the army, it is six years from the end of regular service or up to 22 years from the beginning of adult service, whichever is sooner. In the navy, reserve liability persists for the remainder of the term of service for which the recruit enlisted, which is 18 years or up to the age of 40, whichever is later. In the air force, reserve service lasts for six years or until 22 years after attestation, whichever is sooner.

Personnel on reserve service may be called up in case of national emergency or when, in the opinion of the Defence Secretary, ‘warlike operations are in preparation or progress’.<sup>196</sup> The Defence Secretary can also call up reservists to serve on operations abroad ‘for the protection of life or property ... [or] ... in time of disaster...’<sup>197</sup>. The army, unlike the air force or navy, also reserves the state’s right to call up reservists ‘to train anywhere in the world’ for any reason at the behest of the state for up to 16 days on aggregate in the year.<sup>198</sup>

For the purposes of this report, there are two notable exceptions to the rules above:

1. Minors may ask to leave if they are ‘genuinely unhappy’; permission is said to be granted normally but this is a privilege extended at the discretion of the state, not a legal right. If unconvinced of the permanence of the recruit’s unhappiness, the commanding officer may delay departure.
2. In practice commanding officers may recommend discharge of unhappy adult personnel. This discretion is not formally allowed for in the statutory regulations and is exercised unevenly, depending on the personality of the commanding officer.

From 1 January 2008, the army is changing the terms of service, mainly to extend the maximum period of service.<sup>199</sup> Table 4 sets out the current conditions for minors and adults joining the army as soldiers.<sup>200</sup> For the sake of simplicity, the table assumes that the date of attestation is the same as the first day of duty, although there is normally a few days’ gap.

<b>Table 4: Legal obligations (minimum period of service) of non-officer army recruits</b>		
<b>Time since attestation/first day of duty</b>	<b>Over-18s</b>	<b>Under-18s</b>
<b>Up to 28 days</b>	May not leave	May not leave
<b>Up to 3 months</b>	May leave at 14 days’ notice (DAOR)	May leave at 14 days’ notice (DAOR)
<b>Up to 6 months</b>	May not leave	
<b>Up to 4 years and 3 months if over 18 at attestation, otherwise up to age 22</b>		May not leave
<b>From 4 years and 3 months if over 18 at attestation, otherwise from age 22</b>	May transfer to the reserve if 12 months’ notice has been given.	May transfer to the reserve if 12 months’ notice has been given.

<sup>196</sup> For example, see Royal Air Force, Notice Paper, Regulation 4(1), Schedule 2, RAF Form 60 (Revised 03/07).

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Army Notice Paper [B 271W (11/99)].

<sup>199</sup> Hansard, HL: 19 December 2006. Col WA271, Defence (Army: Maximum Service).

<sup>200</sup> Ministry of Defence, ‘Comparison of eligibility criteria for entry into the Armed Forces’, in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 239-242.

### 3.1.2 Remarks on the terms of service

Effectively, after the first 28 days' service, recruits about have five months to exercise their discharge as of right (DAOR) (with the exception of adult recruits to the army — see below). The DAOR window usually ends before recruits experience military operations, which can radically alter the experience of forces life.

The terms of service for army recruits are particularly restrictive. Unlike the navy and air force, adult recruits to the army effectively have only two months after the initial 28 days' compulsory service to exercise their DAOR.<sup>201</sup> In addition, those joining the army as minors must serve a longer minimum period of service: although they have six months from the date of attestation to exercise their DAOR, their minimum term of four years is only reckonable from their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. A recruit joining on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday who does not exercise DAOR therefore has no legal right to leave regular service for six years, and then transfers to the reserve for a further six years. In its 2002 report, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child commented: 'The Committee is deeply concerned ... that those recruited [to the army] are required to serve for a minimum period of four years rising to six years in the case of very young recruits.'<sup>202</sup>

According to the independent armed forces advice service At Ease, there have been cases of army recruits facing intense pressure to change their minds during the 14-day notice period for DAOR. Some recruits have been physically bullied by peers as a result of their decision, possibly because drop-outs are deemed to reflect badly on the group at the passing out parade, At Ease reports.<sup>203</sup> It seems likely that this is not a widespread problem, however, for about 18% of new army recruits use their DAOR.<sup>204</sup>

Although it is thought that no request to leave from a minor has been refused to date under the discretionary 'unhappy minors' provision<sup>205</sup>, it is unclear how many recruits are aware that this option to leave exists: it is omitted from recruitment literature and the Notice Paper for each force. Unless the government wishes to make this option difficult for recruits to take, there seems no reason to omit it from the formal papers or the recruitment literature. If, as the government claims, all requests to leave are being granted, then there also seems no reason not to allow minors the legal right to leave.

201 From the end of the first 28 days of duty to the date three months after attestation. This assumes that the date of attestation and the first day of duty are within a few days, which they usually are.

202 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on UK's second periodic report', para 51, 19 (September 2002), cited in UK Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers: Memorandum to the HC Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 2006, in Armed Forces Bill Select Committee, *Special Report of Session 2005-06, Minutes of Evidence*, Ev178.

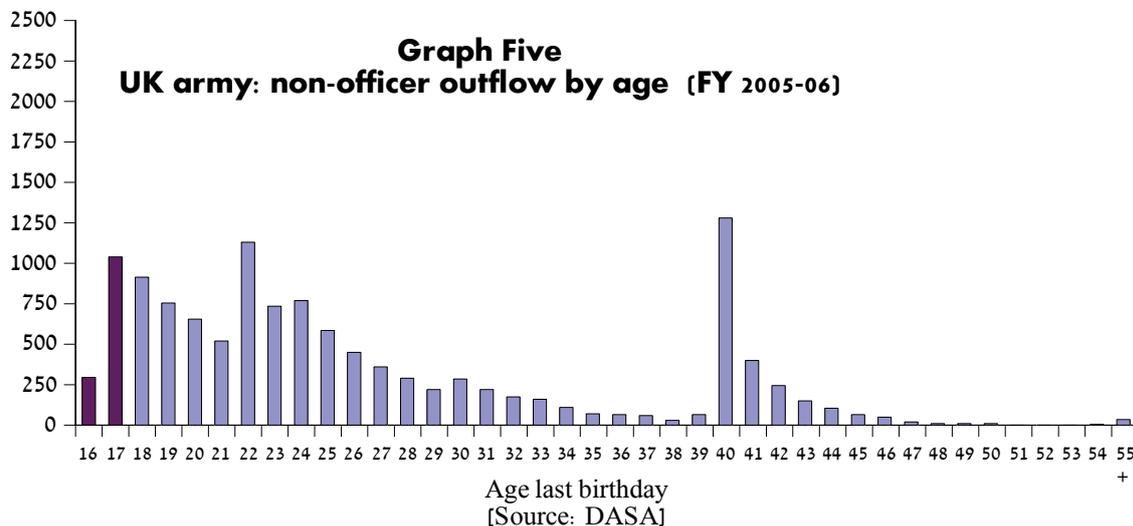
203 At Ease, personal communication, October 2007.

204 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

205 Des Browne MP, Secretary of State for Defence, letter to Andrew Smith MP, 31 August 2006.

Recruiters claim wrongly that soldiers who have missed their DAOR window are routinely released from service on the grounds that it is counter-productive to retain them against their will. Queen's Regulations for the Army do allow for releasing personnel in this way at the discretion of the state.<sup>206</sup> However, whilst some recruits may be released in this way, most are not and many more are not aware that they can seek permission. The most common callers to the confidential helplines run by SSAFA Forces Help and At Ease are recruits querying their terms and conditions of employment and finding themselves unable to leave the forces due to their legal obligations.<sup>207</sup>

In the case of the army, there is evidence that many recruits find their contractual obligations more onerous than they had expected. That many soldiers would leave before their minimum term is over is suggested by the sharp rise in outflow at 22 years of age, when the minimum term comes to an end for 16, 17 and 18 year-olds (see Graph Five).<sup>208</sup>



The House of Commons Defence Committee's *Duty of Care* report of 2005 criticised the contractual obligations on recruits as 'unnecessarily restrictive' and 'counter productive'.<sup>209</sup> The Committee also called on the Ministry of Defence to improve information for potential recruits to ensure that they are aware of the commitment required of them. The Ministry of Defence accepted this<sup>210</sup> but no significant changes appear to have been made.

The context for the restrictive terms of enlistment is the difficult environment for armed forces recruitment. The long minimum period of service forcibly retains recruits in order to meet the trained strength requirement and sits uneasily with the promises in recruitment literature of a career that the recruit would gladly and freely pursue.

<sup>206</sup> See Queen's Regulations for the Army, 9.41403.

<sup>207</sup> Commodore Paul Branscombe, Deputy Controller, Service Support, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 109; Personal communication with At Ease, January 2007.

<sup>208</sup> Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 9 - Outflow of Male Other Ranks from UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2005-06 and Table 10 - Outflow of Female Other Ranks from UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2005-06)' [data tables], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab9.html>> and <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab10.html>>, accessed 8 June 2007.

<sup>209</sup> HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 53, 54.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 40; MoD, *The Government's Response to HC Defence Committee's Duty of Care Report*, 4.

### 3.1.3 Remarks on the Notice Paper

The Notice Paper is the form new recruits sign before attestation in order to affirm their understanding of their legal obligations. It is the only document given to potential recruits that sets out the terms of service in any detail. Each force has its own version of the Notice Paper. The navy and air force give copies to potential recruits early in the recruitment process; the army only provides it shortly before attestation unless it is requested earlier.

No version of the Notice Paper mentions that recruits under 18 may ask for permission to leave at the discretion of the Secretary of State, nor does any version mention the right of conscientious objection to military service. Once the recruit signs the form and swears the oath, he or she becomes subject to military law but there is no explanation of how this differs from the law applicable to civilians. It means, for example, that personnel have no right to: associate as a trade union, take part in political life, go on public demonstrations, or communicate their experience to anyone outside the military without permission, including to authors of reports like this one.<sup>211</sup>

The terms of service are difficult for any person to understand, their practical implications more so. The Notice Paper is a legal document that is particularly difficult to digest; the army and air force versions set out the terms of service over four sides of A4 in dense type. The navy version is shorter but not substantially simpler. The army's research suggests that up to half of new recruits have literacy and numeracy skills at up to Entry Level 3, equivalent to those of an average 11 year-old.<sup>212</sup> Accordingly, recruiting staff are expected to ensure that potential recruits fully understand the terms of service before they enlist. Evidently and unsurprisingly they often fail, according to helplines run by At Ease and the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association. This is well understood within the military itself: one senior officer at the Infantry Training Centre at Catterick told an army recruitment conference in 2004 that many new recruits do not fully understand the terms of service.<sup>213</sup>

Confusion about the terms of service allows recruits and their families to make misconceived assumptions about their rights and obligations. At Ease reports that many parents think their children will be invited to sign a fresh contract when they reach 18 and may therefore choose not to do so but this is not the case.<sup>214</sup> The following ambiguous sentence in the army Notice Paper is potentially misleading in this respect:

5. If you are aged under 18 at enlistment you will be enlisted on the Open Engagement which entails service until your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and then for a full career of 22 years. Your service with the Colours [= regular army] until reaching your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday will not count towards the 22 year period of your engagement.<sup>215</sup>

211 See, for example, Queen's Regulations for the Army, c.12, J12.016c, 'Activities Involving the Use of Official Information or Experience' [applies also to navy and air force personnel].

212 MoD, 'Analysis of socio-economic and educational background of non-officer recruits', in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 256.

213 Army Recruiting Group Headquarters, 'Soldier Recruiting Convention 2004 Post Exercise Report', 11 November 2004, p. 2, obtained by the author from the Ministry of Defence under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 5 October 2007.

214 At Ease, personal communication, January 2007.

215 Army Notice Paper [B 271W (11/99)].

Another common misconception is that army recruits can buy themselves out. In reality, this option is only available to those who enlisted before 1991.

### 3.1.4 Consent

**In view of the significant risks and restrictive obligations of a forces career, the state has a special responsibility to support potential recruits' right of informed consent. It falls short in the following ways: the army in particular does not provide sufficient, accessible information about an army career; the state severely curtails the recruit's right freely to withdraw their consent to enlistment; and some recruiters apply persuasive pressure to potential recruits in order to meet enlistment targets.**

Article 23(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right 'to free choice of employment'. The European Convention on Human Rights and the UK Human Rights Act 1998 echo this.

The Human Rights Act stipulates that 'no one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour', although exempts from this 'any service of a military character'. It is common for domestic and international human rights law to exempt military personnel from some rights or limit their extent; the result is that the principle of universality of human rights does not fully apply to the armed forces. Few new recruits to armed forces in the UK or any other country would be aware that on enlistment they surrendered certain of their human rights under law.

Arguably, the moral right to choose how to live is so fundamental to the dignity of a person that all countervailing legal obligations must be deficient, including those reserved for military personnel for the effective defence of the nation state. Even were it conceded that military personnel ought to be obliged to surrender certain civil freedoms in order for a military force to function, the obligations of enlistment in the UK appear to be wholly disproportionate to need. Nevertheless, UK law is such that military recruits, once the short period for exercising right of discharge has elapsed, must remain in regular and reserve service for at least ten years;<sup>216</sup> any breach of this obligation is punishable by imprisonment.

In this light, it is imperative that a person's choice to accept the far-reaching implications of enlistment be fully informed, carefully considered and freely made. In view of this, the armed forces have a special responsibility to explain the risks as well as the potential benefits of a forces career, otherwise enlistment amounts to exploitation by the state and recklessness by the recruit. Minors, who account for around a third to a half of all new recruits every year, are especially vulnerable in this respect and safeguards to protect them are weak (see p. 67).

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<sup>216</sup> For example, adult recruits to the army must serve for four years and three months in the regular army followed by six years' service in the reserve.

Consent can be said to be ‘informed’ when its probable consequences are predictable. A person who accepts the obligations of enlistment must therefore know themselves well and understand the operational roles and lifestyle of a forces career. Forces life brings radically novel experiences: no new recruit can know reliably how military discipline, an institutional regime and experience of operations will affect them. This applies *a fortiori* to recruits who are teenagers at enlistment: few can know with confidence that a forces career would still match their career hopes three or four years hence.

It is therefore doubtful that recruits’ consent to enlistment, however much information may be provided about it, can be described as sufficiently informed to justify the legal obligations made of them. Even so, the state has a responsibility to potential recruits to support them in coming to a decision about enlistment by providing full information and refraining from applying persuasive pressure. In the case of the army, it falls short principally in three ways:

a) *Deficient information provided to enquirers.* It is vital that potential recruits are made aware of the contractual obligations of enlistment at an early stage. However, as discussed above, in all literature routinely given to potential army recruits, the legal restrictions on leaving are either omitted (e.g. *Infantry Soldier* brochure, *One Army* video) or mentioned cursorily and ambiguously (e.g. *One Army* brochure, *Guide for Parents* brochure). The terms of service are confusing for any person to understand and the Notice Paper is a particularly convoluted exposition of them. Further, this report has indicated that recruiters do not freely volunteer information about the risks of a forces career and are sometimes evasive when answering questions (see p. 52).

b) *Refusing the right to withdraw consent.* The terms of enlistment severely limit the recruit’s moral right to withdraw consent to their choice of employment and lifestyle. The period for Discharge as of Right (DAOR) is an inadequate safeguard to ensure that those wishing to leave are able to do so: it is short and tends to fall during training, which is quite different from regular forces life. There is also anecdotal evidence that recruits expressing doubts within the discharge window are sometimes urged to ‘soldier on’ for a while, without it being pointed out to them that there is an absolute deadline for DAOR.<sup>217</sup>

c) *Persuasive pressure.* Pressures on recruiters and trainers to meet targets also conspire against the new recruit. In an assessment of training establishments, instructors and staff were found to have ‘applied pressure to recruits to dissuade them from leaving, as this reflected on success rates and wastage targets’.<sup>218</sup> There is also evidence that some army recruits are pushed into a specific corps in order to meet recruiting targets for that area. The Adult Learning Inspectorate’s reviews of training establishments in 2005 and 2007 found many cases of this, mostly in the army. Its report noted that many recruits,

believe that the choice of career offered reflects the Army’s need to fill trades rather than the recruits’ aptitudes and abilities.<sup>219</sup>

217 At Ease and others, personal communication, October 2007.

218 DOC (1), cited in House of Commons Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 53.

219 Cited in Adult Learning Inspectorate: *Better Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services*:

One soldier's mother, Janette Mattin, expressed to the *Duty of Care* Inquiry:

Not all young recruits are without talent and intelligence. Why were [my son] Mark's abilities to speak several languages and his artistic achievements not taken into account when he joined? Why was he pushed into the infantry?<sup>220</sup>

### 3.1.5 Absence without leave (AWOL)

A large number of personnel, mostly soldiers, go absent without leave (AWOL) each year. The Ministry of Defence estimates that 2,300 [c. 2.5%] soldiers go AWOL every year,<sup>221</sup> of which around 126 will go to court martial and face a possible custodial sentence.<sup>222</sup> Besides malingerers, AWOL can also be precipitated by psychological problems, bullying, or conscientious objection, combined with an absence of faith in the established procedures for addressing these issues.

The army appears to have the greatest AWOL problem of all three branches of the forces. Information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act shows that, as of 20 February 2007, there were 165 army personnel on the run, and only four navy and two air force personnel.<sup>223</sup> Between the beginning of the Iraq war and March 2007, there were more than 11,000 incidents of soldiers going absent without leave.<sup>224</sup>

AWOL and desertion are the subject of more army courts martial than any other category of offence except violent crime. 20-25% of all army courts martial from 2001 to 2004 inclusive were for charges of absence without leave or desertion: an average of 126 cases per year.<sup>225</sup> If an absentee without leave intends to avoid a period of active service, all custodial sentences up to and including life imprisonment are available to a court martial; otherwise, the maximum penalty is two years' imprisonment.<sup>226</sup>

Many factors prompt personnel to go on the run. These can include malingering and a lack of discipline among some personnel, but post-combat stress, depression and bullying are also precipitants of AWOL.

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*two years of progress* (Coventry, 2007), 73, see also 14. See also Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Safer Training*, 77; other anecdotal evidence expressed to the author in personal communication supports this.

220 HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 163 (footnote).

221 Ministry of Defence, cited in BBC Online: 'Army fails "traumatised" soldiers' [news article], 27 March 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6479769.stm>>, accessed 9 April 2007.

222 UK Army web site: 'Army court martial statistics 1997-2004', (nd), <[http://www.army.mod.uk/linkedfiles/combined\\_services\\_sport/c\\_m\\_stats\\_97\\_\\_\\_04.doc](http://www.army.mod.uk/linkedfiles/combined_services_sport/c_m_stats_97___04.doc)>, accessed 12 April 2007.

223 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

224 Ministry of Defence, cited in BBC Online: 'Army fails "traumatised" soldiers'

225 UK Army web site: 'Army court martial statistics 1997-2004', (nd), <[http://www.army.mod.uk/linkedfiles/combined\\_services\\_sport/c\\_m\\_stats\\_97\\_\\_\\_04.doc](http://www.army.mod.uk/linkedfiles/combined_services_sport/c_m_stats_97___04.doc)>, accessed 12 April 2007.

226 Armed Forces Act 2006 (c 52), Part 1 — Offences (Desertion), section 8 (4).

A BBC Panorama programme in March 2007 interviewed the father of a soldier who went AWOL after witnessing civilian casualties in Iraq. James Piotrowski was a model soldier, loved the army and was committed to serving his full engagement. That changed when he was sent as part of a team to clear up after a US air strike. His father Mark relates James' experience:

The first thing he sees is a little girl's foot in the road, well he presumes it was a child's foot in the road because it was that small, and then on the other side of the road there, he said there was this little girl probably four, maybe five years old, and she was crying and shouting, and James took it as 'Help me' or 'Help my daddy', and she was over her daddy's body and he was lying there with all his intestines spewed out across his clothes and the road. He says, 'It suddenly hit me what war was all about, dad.'<sup>227</sup>

James Piotrowski could no longer face war. He and his family told Panorama that on his return their requests for help from the army were refused and he went AWOL. Eventually caught, he was dishonourably discharged from the army and sentenced to seven years in prison; his court martial had refused to hear medical testimony that James may have been suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Speaking to the programme from prison, he said:

It just all went wrong after Iraq because the army refused to help me. ... Just all the incidences; seeing the killings, being shot at; when I come back on civvy street, I just can't adapt; it's madness.<sup>228</sup>

Panorama interviewed another soldier who was currently AWOL and asked to remain anonymous:

I didn't come back from Iraq in the same state of mind I left. ... My friends were like, you're in a mess man. I became withdrawn and sometimes when I woke up I couldn't handle the day. ...

[The army authorities] laughed about it — as they would do. I mean a sick man is no good to them. Therefore they sort of ridiculed the fact that people do get down in the army and do have problems. ...

I don't believe I'm a coward, but if I could go back to that day when I was in the recruiting office just about to sign on the line I'd say 'no mate'. You don't realise what you're getting into.<sup>229</sup>

The extent of absence without leave prompted by psychological problems is not possible to quantify. Panorama cited unpublished research by Stephen Walker of Essex University showing that the perceived absence of support for sufferers of psychological conditions prompts many soldiers to go on the run as an act of desperation.<sup>230</sup>

227 BBC Panorama, 'Soldiers on the run' [television documentary], 26 March 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6479769.stm>>, accessed 9 April 2007.

228 Ibid.

229 BBC Online, 'My life as a runaway soldier' [article], 26 March 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6481911.stm>>, accessed 9 April 2007.

230 BBC Online, 'Army fails "traumatised" soldiers'; BBC Panorama, 'Soldiers on the run'.

The nature of the conflict in Iraq is extremely stressful. ... The young soldiers I've interviewed had traumatic experiences in Iraq and as a result developed emotional and mental health problems, which they felt weren't really acknowledged or dealt with properly, and that prompted them to go AWOL. They weren't put off by any deterrent; going AWOL for them was the obvious solution to dealing with their problems. Overall the army is letting young soldiers down. It's partly a problem of resources because they are overstretched but more importantly is there needs to be a cultural change within the army where there is less of a stigma around mental health problems.<sup>231</sup>

Bullying can also prompt soldiers to go AWOL.<sup>232</sup> In an interview for BBC News, Lee McDonald, a regular soldier garrisoned at Catterick, said that persistent bullying provoked him to go on the run:

If you imagine going to work every morning, getting up thinking: what's going to happen today, when am I going to get hit today — in the face, in the chest?<sup>233</sup>

Young men are the group most at risk of suicide in society at large; in the army, the risk of suicide in this group is as much as 50% higher still.<sup>234</sup> Custodial sentences are known to increase the risk of self-harm (and thus of suicide) among those experiencing psychological vulnerability.<sup>235</sup> It is possible that periods of detention for those who have been victims of bullying and sufferers of post-combat stress could compound the problems that prompted them to go AWOL and so increase their exposure to risk.

### 3.1.6 Service no longer required

**The armed forces may discharge personnel at any time. The air force and navy discharge very few personnel in this way; the army discharges approximately 3% [c. 2750] of its soldiers every year, mostly those who have failed to progress up the ranks or have chosen not to do so.**

An armed forces career is reputed to be one of the most secure. As one soldier states on the army recruitment video, 'It's the army; you're not going to have a more secure job.'<sup>236</sup> Every year a large number of personnel are discharged for 'service no longer required'.<sup>237</sup> This category excludes discharge for disciplinary reasons; rather, it applies largely to personnel discharged for having failed to progress up the ranks, or who have not wished to do so.

<sup>231</sup> BBC Panorama, 'Soldiers on the run'.

<sup>232</sup> Memorandum from Mrs Lynn Farr to HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 423-428.

<sup>233</sup> Film clip at BBC Online, 'Film leads to Army bullying probe', 2 August 2005, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/ft/-/1/hi/uk/4739955.stm>>, accessed 5 February 2007.

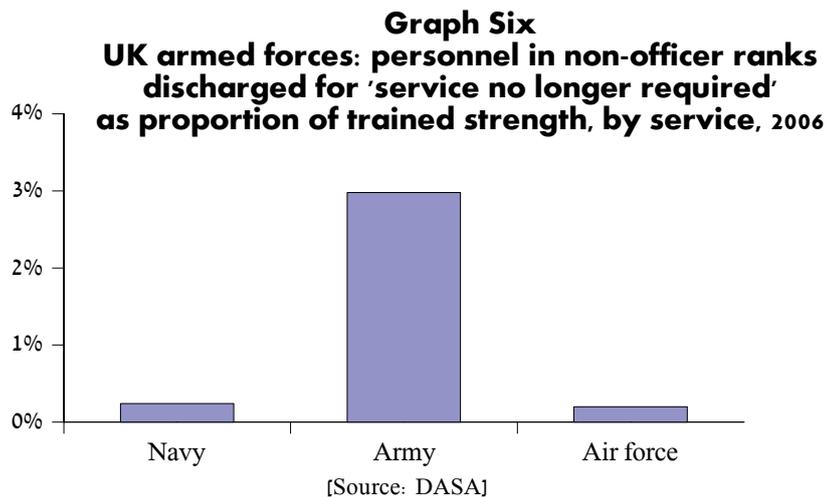
<sup>234</sup> See section on suicide and open verdict deaths in this report..

<sup>235</sup> Memorandum from the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales to HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 433.

<sup>236</sup> Serving soldier's testimonial, Ministry of Defence, Regular Army and Territorial Army Information Pack [DVD video].

<sup>237</sup> At Ease reports that many of their callers seek advice about how to avoid the threat of compulsory discharge, whether for 'service no longer required' or for disciplinary reasons. Personal communication, January 2007.

Only the army applies this policy on a large scale, in spite of recruitment difficulties and the high costs of recruiting new personnel. In 2006, 2,925 non-officer forces personnel were discharged for service no longer required, almost all from the army.<sup>238</sup> Graph Six shows the proportion of the trained strength (non-officers) of each force discharged for service no longer required in 2006.<sup>239</sup> Based on this data, the army's rate of discharges in this category is 2.98% of soldiers.



## 3.2 Protection for recruits joining as minors

Safeguards to protect minors considering a forces career are limited. Minors cannot be assumed to be sufficiently mature, or adequately supported by others, to give informed consent to the far-reaching legal obligations that enlistment imposes upon them. The selective information provided to minors and their parents is often misleading, further undermining the right to informed consent.

<sup>238</sup> Non-officer personnel discharged for service no longer required in 2006: Navy, 75; Army, 2775; Air force, 75. Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 5 October 2007.

<sup>239</sup> Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 5 October 2007. Proportions based on total non-officer trained strength at 1 April 2006, cited in Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'TSP 01 – Strength, Intake and Outflow of UK Regular Forces (Table 1: Total Strength of UK Regular Forces – by gender)', <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp1/tsp1tab1.html>>, accessed 10 February 2007.

### 3.2.1 Age of responsibility

A 16 or 17 year-old army recruit who does not leave within the first six months of duty then has no legal right to leave until the age of 22. He or she may apply for discretionary permission to leave before reaching 18; this is said to be normally granted but is not a right and it is unclear how many recruits are aware that this option exists. In effect, at enlistment the under-18 army recruit waives the right to choose their lifestyle and employment for up to six years. The obligations of minors joining the navy and air force are similarly restrictive. At the same time, minors in the armed forces are still deemed by the state not to be sufficiently responsible to vote, drink in pubs, watch adult films, or sign a contract in England and Wales.

Human rights organisations have called on the government to increase the minimum age of recruitment to 18 to reflect the national age of majority. Amnesty International is ‘unconditionally opposed to the recruitment of people under the age of 18 in the armed forces, be it “voluntary” or through conscription’. The organisation believes that the recruitment of minors ‘is, *per se*, an activity which ultimately jeopardizes [their] mental and physical integrity’.<sup>240</sup> Similar statements have been made by the children’s charity UNICEF, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, and the Religious Society of Friends.<sup>241</sup>

### 3.2.2 International law

International law defines a child as ‘every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier’.<sup>242</sup> The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child extends special protection to children but allows states to recruit from age 15 into the armed forces. An optional protocol (OP) introducing safeguards to the involvement of children in armed forces was added to the Convention and opened for signature in 2000. After a strong public campaign to persuade the UK to ratify the OP, the government agreed to sign and it entered into force in the UK in July 2003.

The OP raises the minimum age of recruitment from 15 to at least 16, although as of August 2004, 58 of the 77 states that had ratified it had implemented a ‘straight 18’ position.<sup>243</sup> The OP requires states parties to ‘take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities’. It also stipulates that potential recruits under 18 should be ‘fully informed of the duties involved in such military service’ and that they obtain the informed consent of their parents/guardians when enlisting.<sup>244</sup>

<sup>240</sup> Amnesty International: ‘United Kingdom: Army Barracks Deaths: Families Demand Justice’ [report] (18 June 2003), <<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur450042003>>, accessed 5 February 2007.

<sup>241</sup> For example, see UNICEF, ‘UNICEF questions UK’s right to deploy child soldiers’ [press release], 23 July 2003, <[http://www.unicef.org.uk/press/news\\_detail.asp?news\\_id=173](http://www.unicef.org.uk/press/news_detail.asp?news_id=173)>, accessed 19 May 2007.

<sup>242</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Convention on the Rights of the Child’, <<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>>, accessed 19 May 2007, Article 1.

<sup>243</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers: *Child Soldiers: Global Report 2004*, 17 November 2004, 24. The United Kingdom was among the few states that successfully resisted including 18 as the minimum age in the OP itself.

<sup>244</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict’, <<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/protocolchild.htm>>, accessed 19

In order to justify the recruitment of minors into the armed forces, the British government points to the safeguards concerning parental consent and exclusion from hostilities as laid down in the OP. The UK's first report to the United Nations on its implementation of the OP lists its safeguards for protecting the interests of minors; the text includes the following measures:

- the involvement of the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the potential recruits;
- clear and precise explanation of the nature of duties involved in military service to both the individual and their parent(s)/guardian(s); and
- explaining the demands of military life to the individual volunteer and establishing that he/she remains a genuine volunteer, the requirement that the parent(s) or guardian(s), having been similarly informed, freely consent to the individual's entry into the Armed Forces and duly countersign the appropriate application or other appropriate recruitment process forms.

These safeguards are still in place and continue to be applied rigorously.<sup>245</sup>

In practice, recruitment procedures fall short of these policies, as the following shows.

### 3.2.3 Explanation of military life and duties

This report has shown that army recruitment literature does not offer a 'clear and precise explanation of the nature of duties involved in military service', nor does it adequately explain 'the demands of military life', either to potential recruits or their parents (see p. 27 onwards). The terms of service are extremely confusing and the formal Notice Paper is difficult to understand (see p. 61).

In the absence of clear and accessible written information about a forces career, it falls to recruiting staff to brief potential recruits appropriately. However, as this report has argued, this is not a reliable or realistic policy. Recruiters are subject to pressure to meet targets and cannot be guaranteed to be impartial.

Many recruits have felt that they were not made sufficiently aware of their obligations and the nature of their career before enlisting. The independent advice service At Ease reports that many of its callers are not aware of their terms of service or their right of conscientious objection, for example.<sup>246</sup>

Some simple improvements to recruitment literature and the application process could ensure that potential recruits and their parents are informed more effectively about the realities of a forces career at an early stage (see p. 136).

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May 2007.

245 Ministry of Defence. *First Report by the United Kingdom on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, <[http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC\\_C\\_OPAC\\_GBR\\_1.doc](http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC_C_OPAC_GBR_1.doc)>, accessed 5 October 2007, paragraph 28 [part].

246 Personal communication, January 2007.

### 3.2.4 Parental/guardian involvement and consent

The UK's report to the UN states that parents/guardians<sup>247</sup> of under-18s are 'involved' in the recruitment process; that clear and precise information about military duties is provided to them; and that, once they are so informed, their consent is required to allow their child to enlist.<sup>248</sup>

In 2005, the Adult Learning Inspectorate carried out a survey of 453 parents of under-18 recruits. This revealed that most parents were satisfied that they had been sufficiently briefed by recruiting staff before their son or daughter left to train. 13% of parents felt that they had not been given enough information about general forces life before their son or daughter left home to train; and 8% felt that their children had not been given enough information themselves.<sup>249</sup>

Against this, many recruits' parents report having had very little contact with recruiters during the recruitment process.<sup>250</sup> There is no expectation of parents to take part in the recruitment process except to countersign the application form at the beginning of the process and the Notice Paper at the end, this is usually done at home. In principle, a potential recruit as young as 15 years old can undergo the entire recruitment process for the army — including interviews, screening, selection and the job offer — attesting on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, without their parents having had any contact with recruiting staff or knowing anything about their child's chosen career except through the Notice Paper, which is itself highly confusing. Recruiters concede that they never meet many applicants' parents, although they consider it desirable to do so.<sup>251</sup>

Many parents believe initially that they are sufficiently well informed of their children's legal obligations, only to find out too late that they had misunderstood the terms of service or that their children are suffering unexpectedly from the adversities of forces life. For example, the independent advice and information service At Ease reports that many families mistakenly assume that their children will be invited to sign a fresh contract at 18 and so will be free to leave then.<sup>252</sup> It seems probable that army recruits with low reading ages are relatively more likely to have parents who are also with low educational attainment; it is not therefore surprising that many parents have told At Ease that they did not fully understand the obligations set out in the Notice Paper, despite having declared the opposite by signing the consent form.<sup>253</sup>

247 Hereafter, 'parent' denotes parent or guardian as appropriate.

248 Ministry of Defence. *First Report by the United Kingdom on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, paragraph 28 [part].

249 Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 101.

250 HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 41; Vol 2, 159-181; personal communication between the author and some service families has also confirmed this.

251 Personal communication with senior recruitment staff, November 2007.

252 At Ease, personal communication, January 2007.

253 At Ease, personal communication, October 2007.

Some parents' lack of understanding of the contractual obligations that their children accept highlights the importance of parental involvement in the recruitment process from the outset. In the case of the army, nowhere in the recruitment literature is a potential recruit encouraged to bring their parents to the Careers Office. The *One Army* brochure mentions parents only once, only to encourage recruits not to feel bound by their advice:

What if my parents don't approve?

With everything that's going on in the world you can understand why parents get anxious, but if joining the Army is what you want to do then go for it. ...<sup>254</sup>

The above evidence casts serious doubt on the government's claim that parents are 'involved' and fully informed, and so may freely consent to their children's entry into the armed forces.<sup>255</sup>

### 3.2.5 Exclusion from hostilities

Since the OP came into force, the Ministry of Defence has made efforts to reduce the involvement of under-18s in armed conflict. Minors in the armed forces are no longer routinely sent on operations outside the UK except on wholly humanitarian missions where no hostile forces are expected.<sup>256</sup> According to the Ministry, between 1999 and 2003 (when the OP entered into force), there were about 300 under-18s deployed on operations; since 2003, there have been 18 minors on operations; and since 2005, none.<sup>257</sup>

The government filed a declaration on the OP, in which it retained the right to deploy under-18s in hostilities in certain circumstances:

- If it is unfeasible to remove or replace the individual because the unit in which he or she serves is in a remote location; or
- If the person is 'an integral member, playing a key role, in the collectively trained team which enables his/her unit to deliver its operational capability'.<sup>258</sup>

The second circumstance permits the MoD a large degree of latitude in the application of the OP, for all forces personnel can be described as playing key roles in teams. Although in practice the number of under-18s on operations has reduced to zero since 2005, in theory the declaration still provides for the state to deploy minors to combat roles. This could become more likely at a time of national emergency.

254 Ministry of Defence: *One Army. Regular and Territorial: The Guide*, (London: Army Recruiting Group, April 2007).

255 Ministry of Defence: *First Report by the United Kingdom on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, paragraph 28 [part].

256 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'Explanatory Memorandum on the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (Cm5759, February 2003), <<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029396041&a=KArticle&aid=1046180177986>>, accessed 19 May 2007.

257 Ministry of Defence: *First Report by the United Kingdom on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, paragraph 12.

258 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'Explanatory Memorandum on the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (Cm5759, February 2003), <<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029396041&a=KArticle&aid=1046180177986>>, accessed 19 May 2007.

Although the OP has helped to limit the exposure of minors to the risks of combat, it remains the case that all personnel regardless of age assume the legal status of combatants under international humanitarian law, and are considered to be legitimate targets in warfare.

The relatively successful exclusion of minors from hostilities since the OP came into force has effectively reduced their vulnerability to some of the risks of a forces career. However, human rights groups have criticised the government for sustaining its reservations on the OP. Among other human rights organisations, UNICEF responded:

The UK Government should remove this declaration without delay. Otherwise, the door is still open to the recruitment and deployment of under-18s in the UK, in contravention of the Optional Protocol, which is to ensure the protection of all children from involvement in armed conflict.<sup>259</sup>

## 3.3 Conscientious objection

All personnel have the right of conscientious objection to military service. Recruits are not routinely informed about this and few can be expected to be aware of it. When personnel experience a conscientious objection, it will not be articulated as such if the term is unfamiliar. There is some evidence that conscientious objection in the armed forces is heavily under-reported, partly because many cases are dealt with informally and not recorded. It is possible that conscientious objection may become confused with post-combat mental health problems in some cases. Recognition of conscientious objection by the chain of command is uneven.

### 3.3.1 Right of conscientious objection to military service

Conscientious objection to military service is a subtle concept. Broadly speaking, it arises when a serving or prospective member of the armed forces finds that their work cannot / could not be done in good conscience. When the claim of conscience is sufficiently powerful for the person to seek to remove themselves from their work, then a conscientious objection can be said to exist. This could arise in relation either to specific orders or military operations, or to military service in all its aspects.

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259 UNICEF, 'UNICEF questions UK's right to deploy child soldiers' [press release], 23 July 2003, <[http://www.unicef.org.uk/press/news\\_detail.asp?news\\_id=173](http://www.unicef.org.uk/press/news_detail.asp?news_id=173)>, accessed 19 May 2007.

The right of conscientious objection to military service is one expression of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the UK Human Rights Act 1998.<sup>260</sup> The UK is one of the few countries in the world to provide formal and informal processes for responding to conscientious objection among forces personnel, although in practice there are shortcomings.

### 3.3.2 Procedure

If a member of the armed forces feels that they might have a conscientious objection to military service, he or she is expected to approach the commanding officer informally in the first instance. According to the Ministry of Defence, the commanding officer will ‘identify the reasons behind the conscientious objection and see if the matter can be resolved’.<sup>261</sup>

It appears that most cases of conscientious objection are processed informally at this stage, whether to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the objector. This can include rejection of the objector’s claim (if the objector does not specify explicitly that he or she has a conscientious objection). It can include moving the objector to a non-combatant role, although this is insufficient for some objectors. It can also include discharging the objector for some other reason, such as on ‘administrative grounds’, which is a catch-all category of discharges for miscellaneous reasons. In all these cases, no instance of conscientious objection will be recorded. According to the forces helpline At Ease, at least some personnel who have expressed a conscientious objection have been discharged for being an ‘unsuitable officer’, for ‘service no longer required’ or being ‘unfit for further service’.<sup>262</sup>

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, then the objector must apply formally in writing to the commanding officer. The application must be substantiated with documentary evidence of the genuineness of the appellant’s claim. This is usually provided by or supplemented by someone who knows the soldier and can ‘elaborate on matters of conscience, eg minister of religion, solicitor or other professional person’.<sup>263</sup> The commanding officer may also offer evidence in support or criticism of the claim.<sup>264</sup>

260 Quaker Council for European Affairs, *The Right to Conscientious Objection in Europe: A Review of the Current Situation* (Brussels, 2005), <<http://www.quaker.org/qcea/coreport>>, accessed 20 May 2007, p. 1.

261 Letter from the Ministry of Defence to *At Ease*, 19 December 2006.

262 At Ease, personal communication, January 2007.

263 Ministry of Defence, ‘Instruction 6: Retirement or discharge on the grounds of conscience’ [D/DM(A)/7/5/3 (M1(A))], Issue 12, (nd), published at <[http://www.wri-irg.org/pdf/co\\_uk\\_army.pdf](http://www.wri-irg.org/pdf/co_uk_army.pdf)>, accessed 20 May 2007.

264 Letter from the Ministry of Defence to *At Ease*, 19 December 2006.

Between claiming a conscientious objection and the matter being settled, the objector remains subject to military discipline and must continue to obey all lawful orders. If the objector refuses to obey a lawful order on grounds of conscience, he or she will be subject to disciplinary action, which must be implemented fully before, and regardless of whether, a discharge is granted.<sup>265</sup> If applicable the commanding officer, at their discretion, can remove the objector from the front line while the case is pending in order to minimise conflict between the objector's conscience and their military role.<sup>266</sup>

The authenticity of the claim is judged by the chain of command. It is left to the personal judgement of the chain of command whether the application is granted. If it is deemed to be genuine, then the appellant is entitled to an honourable discharge on compassionate grounds and his or her reserve service liability is annulled; otherwise, the application is refused.<sup>267</sup>

In the event of refusal, the appellant may then appeal to the Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objectors (ACCO), comprising two legally qualified and four lay members.<sup>268</sup> ACCO will convene a hearing to consider the appeal and its decision is final on that application. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the appellant is legally obliged to remain in the forces and obey all lawful orders given, including on operations. The appellant may reapply to be a conscientious objector if he or she has fresh evidence to support their claim.

### 3.3.3 Limitations

Currently, there are no materials given to new army recruits or their parents in which the right of conscientious objection is mentioned.<sup>269</sup> A brief mention (four lines in 44 pages) is made in the wide-ranging *Guide on Religion and Belief in the MoD and Armed Forces*, which is not routinely given to new recruits.<sup>270</sup> The lack of information about conscientious objection is probably partly due to the government's fear of cases having a public profile.<sup>271</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Ministry of Defence, 'Instruction 6: Retirement or discharge on the grounds of conscience'.

<sup>266</sup> It is possible that this requirement to continue to serve after the appellant has manifested his or her statement of conscientious objection could contravene Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. See *Khan v RAF Summary Appeal Court* [2004] EWHC 2230, paragraph 64.

<sup>267</sup> Ministry of Defence, 'Instruction 6: Retirement or discharge on the grounds of conscience'.

<sup>268</sup> Ministry of Defence, 'Supplementary Document: Reference Information – Non-Departmental Public Bodies'.

<sup>269</sup> Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

<sup>270</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Guide on Religion and Belief in the MoD and Armed Forces*, 11.

<sup>271</sup> The document setting out the RAF's procedure for accepting a claim of conscientious objection states: 'Because objections to military service on grounds of conscience can often attract disproportionate Parliamentary and public interest, it is necessary for the MOD to be kept fully informed of all cases from the outset, and at times to assume control of them.' Royal Air Force: 'Procedure for Dealing with Conscientious Objectors within the Royal Air Force' [AP3392 Vol 5 Leaflet 113], obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by War Resisters International, September 2007.

In the five years between April 2001 and March 2006, no-one was recorded as having left the army or navy under a conscientious objection; four people left the air force.<sup>272</sup> The Ministry of Defence does not record applications that are made and refused;<sup>273</sup> however, there were no appeals made to ACCO during the same five-year period,<sup>274</sup> which suggests that claims of conscientious objection are usually dealt with informally. ACCO has not sat since 1996.

These statistics would appear to suggest that the rate of conscientious objection in the UK armed forces is very low. However, this assumption is likely to be wrong for three reasons.

First, most cases are probably dealt with informally without the individual's concerns being recorded as a conscientious objection. An informal process can be positive if it meets the needs of an objector in a straightforward manner and provided that: any change of role is not punitive for the objector; any discharge is made on honourable grounds; and, in the event of such discharge, reserve service liability is annulled.

Second, the helpline At Ease, which counsels forces personnel, reports that they are aware of dozens of cases of conscientious objection during the Iraq war.<sup>275</sup> This is not surprising: over half of all armed forces personnel had deployed to Iraq at least once by the end of 2005,<sup>276</sup> many witnessing the effects of war on themselves, their peers, their enemy and civilians for the first time. Further, many forces families have opposed the war.<sup>277</sup>

Third, it is probable that very few recruits are aware of conscientious objection as a term, even less a legal right. In the case of the army, only about 17% of recruits have an English GCSE at grades A-C; up to 50% have reading ages below GCSE Grade G.<sup>278</sup> It is unreasonable to expect a recruit with low educational attainment to express misgivings about warfare to a commanding officer, still less to articulate them explicitly as a 'conscientious objection'. Conceivably, forces personnel might be forced against their will to fight simply because they are unable to articulate their concerns in the appropriate terms. A study of the awareness of the right of conscientious objection among recruits in training would be useful.

272 Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

273 Ibid.

274 Ibid.

275 Information from At Ease cited in Quaker Council for European Affairs, *The Right to Conscientious Objection in Europe: A Review of the Current Situation* (Brussels, 2005), <<http://www.quaker.org/qcea/coreport>>, accessed 20 May 2007

276 Around 100,000 personnel had deployed to Iraq by the end of 2005. Hotopf, Matthew et al: 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', *The Lancet*, 16 May 2006, Vol 367: 1731–41, at <<http://download.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/0140-6736/PIIS0140673606686625.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2007, 1731.

277 See for example: Military Families Against the War web site, [www.mfaw.org.uk](http://www.mfaw.org.uk); and Nick Harvey MP, cited in Sengupta, Kim: 'Prisoner of conscience: RAF doctor who refused Iraq service is jailed', 14 April 2006, *The Independent*, <<http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/legal/article357656.ece>>, accessed 16 April 2007.

278 I.e. at Entry Level 3 (which is equivalent to the reading age of an 11 year-old) or less. In FY2003-04. MoD, 'Analysis of socio-economic and educational background of non-officer recruits', in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 256.

In theory, recruits are not legally required to recognise their own conscientious objection as such; they might express their objection in terms of, for example, having ‘second thoughts about what a soldier does’. It is the responsibility of the military authorities, beginning with the recruit’s commanding officer, to interpret such concerns context. There is no way of knowing whether this happens in practice but evidence that military culture often discourages complaint gives cause for concern.<sup>279</sup> If more recruits were aware of their right of conscientious objection, it seems likely that more instances of it would be recorded.

### 3.3.4 Conscientious objection and absence without leave

When personnel do not or cannot articulate a conscientious objection (especially if they are unfamiliar with the term or unaware of their rights in respect of it) or when military authorities do not or cannot recognise it, there is a high risk that personnel will seek other ways to avoid military service, including absence without leave.

In 1991, Lance Corporal Victor Williams went absent without leave from the Royal Artillery when he felt unable, on grounds of conscience, to deploy to Saudi Arabia before the war with Iraq. He later said at his court martial, ‘Had I known or been informed of a procedure for stating my reservations about this, I would have not felt the need to go absent without leave.’ He lost his case, however, and was sentenced to 14 months’ imprisonment.<sup>280</sup>

This problem was demonstrated more recently in the appeal court hearing of Leading Aircraftman Mohisin Khan, a reservist in the medical branch of the air force who was called up for service in 2003, just before the Iraq war.<sup>281</sup> His objection was based on his conviction that as a Muslim he could not be involved in killing other Muslims. The court accepted the genuineness of his claim but dismissed his appeal because he had not applied for his objection be recognised in the proper way when he was called out for service. Instead, he went absent without leave before being arrested and successfully prosecuted. The High Court found that Mohisin Khan was not informed before absenting himself that he had a right of conscientious objection, although he was so informed before his arrest and given the opportunity to apply. In this matter, the court’s judgement noted:

It remains mysterious why, genuine as he was, he never applied to invoke the opportunities to claim conscientious objection about which he was advised.<sup>282</sup>

The court also noted:

It is, however, true that the call-out materials in this case ... do not mention conscientious objection expressly. In that respect, it would seem that the information provided to the recalled reservist could be improved.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>279</sup> House of Commons Defence Committee: *Duty of Care* (Vol 1), (London: The Stationery Office, 2005), 15-16.

<sup>280</sup> Peace Pledge Union, Memorandum to the HC Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 2006, in Armed Forces Bill Select Committee, *Special Report of Session 2005-06, Minutes of Evidence*, Ev176.

<sup>281</sup> *Khan v RAF Summary Appeal Court* [2004] EWHC 2230.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

If personnel were properly informed about the right of conscientious objection at the outset of their careers, the risk that cases such as these could arise would be reduced.

### 3.3.5 Conscientious objection and post-combat mental health problems

Combat-related experiences leading to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are often the same as those that prompt conscientious objection to military service; these include killing people, being shot at, seeing colleagues killed and handling dead bodies.

Participating in warfare became unconscionable for the Irish Guards soldier, James Piotrowski, after he witnessed the aftermath of a US air strike in Iraq and saw body parts of a child lying on the road (see p. 65). In his case, a discrete experience led to both PTSD and moral revulsion at the effects of warfare.

The charity Combat Stress, which provides welfare support to veterans presenting psychological problems, has found that guilt feelings are among the most common symptoms that veterans report to its welfare officers. The object of a subject's guilt varies but can include the memory of causing death and injury. Similarly, extreme self-loathing and guilt feelings often accompany a diagnosis of PTSD.<sup>284</sup>

Stories of veterans with PTSD refer to horrific experiences, such as the acute fear of being killed in combat. Among these are experiences of extreme moral revulsion, such as seeing babies and children killed or maimed, or people being tortured and mutilated.<sup>285</sup> A powerful moral response to such events is humane, not a form of psychological weakness, but it may mean that continuous, forced exposure to such experiences will lead to psychological harm.

Thomas Burke, Director of Mental Health Policy at the US Department of Defense, explains that the trauma of killing arises from the conflict that it creates with moral instinct:

Killing is a stressor. It's a traumatic event. People have a natural aversion to killing other human beings. We would consider anybody who didn't have that aversion to be mentally ill.<sup>286</sup>

Jim Dooley, a mental health counsellor in the US Department of Veterans Affairs, explains the risk of traumatic effect on a person committing the act of killing:

284 Keron Fletcher, 'Combat Stress (The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society), Veterans and Psychological Trauma', in Lee and Jones (eds), *War and Health: Lessons from the Gulf War*, 93, 98.

285 For example, see *ibid.*, 106-9.

286 PBS: Frontline [television documentary company], 'The Impact of Killing and How to Prepare the Soldier', in PBS: *Frontline: The Soldier's Heart* [television documentary transcript], 1 March 2005, at <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/heart/themes/prep.html>>, accessed 15 September 2007.

We have been always taught not to hurt others. I know when we go to war, we're taught to kill directly. The current war [in Iraq], in particular, will have a profound effect on people. Because of the very nature of the directness of the killing. ... We're talking about disintegrating someone in front of you. That needs to be addressed by acknowledging that it does have an affect on people. That is what it means to go to war. But, that person will [need] some support in understanding themselves better and not to have a silence about it.<sup>287</sup>

There is a *prima facie* case for examining whether there is a link between the high levels of stress that some personnel experience during combat, and moral responses to warfare including conscientious objection to military service. A study to investigate this would be useful. It seems conceivable that conscientious objection is often manifesting as mental illness and thus being categorised as a sickness rather than a sane and honourable response to experience of war. If so, then a combatant's mental illness might be recognised but not the conscientious objection that precipitated it. Even those personnel who explicitly report a conscientious objection while also suffering from a psychological disorder like PTSD would be at risk of having their objection dismissed as a function of their illness.

### 3.3.6 Flight Lieutenant Dr Malcolm Kendall-Smith, RAF

The case of Flight Lieutenant Malcolm Kendall-Smith, a medical doctor, is an illustration of the consequences of acting on a limited objection on grounds of conscience.

Kendall-Smith refused to redeploy to Iraq in 2005 after he developed an objection to the operation, which he thought was an 'act of aggression' contrary to international law.<sup>288</sup> Kendall-Smith is a former moral philosophy tutor at Otago University and said he was taking a moral stand against 'systematically applied war crimes', but he remained personally committed to the RAF and did not feel there were grounds to resign his commission.<sup>289</sup> He did not describe himself as a conscientious objector but believed that his duty as an officer was to disobey what he believed to be an unlawful order to deploy to Iraq. The RAF and medicine were the 'two great loves' of his life, he said, and the decision to refuse orders caused 'great sadness'.<sup>290</sup>

287 PBS: Frontline [television documentary company], 'The Impact of Killing and How to Prepare the Soldier', in PBS: *Frontline: The Soldier's Heart* [television documentary transcript], 1 March 2005, at <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/heart/themes/prep.html>>, accessed 15 September 2007.

288 Staff and agencies: 'RAF doctor jailed over Iraq refusal', *Guardian Unlimited*, 13 April 2006, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,1753241,00.html>>, accessed 10 April 2007.

289 Ibid.

290 BBC Online: 'Jail for Iraq refusal RAF doctor', 13 April 2006, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4905672.stm>>, accessed 25 April 2007.

At his court martial, the prosecution argued that at the time of Kendall-Smith's refusal to deploy, the occupation of Iraq was mandated by the United Nations, therefore he was legally obliged to obey orders to deploy there. The judge accused him of showing 'a degree of arrogance which is amazing'.<sup>291</sup> 'Refusal to obey orders means that the force is not a disciplined force but a disorganised rabble,' he said.<sup>292</sup> Kendall-Smith was jailed for eight months and ordered to pay £20,000 costs, much of which was paid by members of the public.

The case of Kendall-Smith shows that developing moral scruples to military service is not necessarily considered sufficient grounds for refusal of orders. However strongly personnel may feel, they may still be dishonourably discharged and punished for action under conscience.

### 3.3.7 Trooper Ben Griffin, SAS

When SAS trooper Ben Griffin refused to redeploy to Iraq in 2005, his treatment was markedly different from that of his RAF colleague. Like Kendall-Smith, Griffin developed an objection to serving in Iraq, which he made known after his first three-month tour of duty to Baghdad. During the tour, he found that he profoundly objected to the treatment of Iraqi civilians. He was particularly critical of US forces, who regarded the Iraqis as 'sub-human, untermenschen', he alleged.<sup>293</sup> Like Kendall-Smith, Griffin had already harboured some doubts about the legality of the war, yet did not describe himself as a conscientious objector. In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph* in 2006, Griffin gave several examples of orders that he believed were inappropriate and which informed his request to be discharged.

I can remember coming off one operation which took place outside Baghdad, where we had detained some civilians who were clearly not insurgents, they were innocent people. I couldn't understand why we had done this, so I said to my troop commander 'would we have behaved in the same way in the Balkans or Northern Ireland?' He shrugged his shoulders and said, 'this is Iraq', and I thought 'and that makes it all right?'

As far as I was concerned that meant that because these people were a different colour or a different religion, they didn't count as much. You cannot invade a country pretending to promote democracy and behave like that.<sup>294</sup>

When Griffin refused to go back to Iraq, his commanding officer allowed him an honourable discharge from the armed forces and described the trooper as 'a balanced and honest soldier who possesses the strength and character to genuinely have the courage of his convictions'.<sup>295</sup>

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Staff and agencies: 'RAF doctor jailed over Iraq refusal', *Guardian Unlimited*.

<sup>293</sup> Sean Rayment, "'I didn't join the British Army to conduct American foreign policy'", *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 March 2006, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/03/12/nsas112.xml>>, accessed 10 April 2007.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

The judge in the trial of Malcolm Kendall-Smith refused to allow him to call Ben Griffin as a witness.

The two men both took action that they believed to be led by conscience. Whilst there may be differences between the two positions, a new recruit to the armed forces wanting to understand their right of conscientious objection would find the two cases confusing in comparison. It would be difficult to understand the circumstances in which conscientious objection would be considered an honourable position and when it would be punished.

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## 4 Risks: an assessment

Most personnel in the armed forces report being broadly satisfied with their career. However, there are significant risks related to career and lifestyle dissatisfaction, mental health and relationship problems, death and serious injury, bullying and harassment, ethical challenges, and post-discharge resettlement. The legal obligations of enlistment and the social context of forces life may compound the effects of these risks. Using academic studies and official surveys of forces personnel, this section of the report explores some of the principal risks that new recruits could face.

### 4.1 Army career satisfaction

#### 4.1.1 Job

An official, representative survey of soldiers in 2006 showed that the job satisfaction rate was fairly high (64%), although lower than that shown in surveys of civilians (76-78%).<sup>296</sup> Relatively few personnel resemble the highly satisfied soldier depicted in recruitment literature: 13% of soldiers reported being 'very satisfied' compared with 35-36% of civilians.<sup>297</sup> 5% of soldiers reported being 'very dissatisfied' [4,189 individuals at the time of the survey];<sup>298</sup> the legal restrictions on leaving the forces compound the effect of lifestyle dissatisfaction and may prompt soldiers to go absent without leave and/or precipitate mental health difficulties.

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<sup>296</sup> Work Foundation, The: *The good worker: A survey of attitudes towards work in the UK* (The Work Foundation, 2006), p. 7; British Social Attitudes Survey Report, p. 53, cited in *ibid.*, p. 9; Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), 'Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006', (nd), Q67b.

<sup>297</sup> Ministry of Defence: 'Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006', Q67b.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, Q67b.

The armed forces carry out personnel ‘attitude surveys’ periodically. The army survey undertaken between March and July 2006 was representative of the army as a whole and showed that most soldiers liked their job, with 64% feeling satisfied, 16% dissatisfied and 20% neutral.<sup>299</sup> At first glance, this is encouraging for those considering an army career but closer inspection reveals a mixed picture of army morale.

Best practice in polling requires that questionnaires use a balance of positive and negative phrases to reduce bias but the armed forces attitude surveys are based mostly on positively phrased statements and questions. For example, soldiers are asked to agree or disagree with statements such as ‘In the Army I am treated fairly’. Of the 225 questions or statements in the 2006 army survey, few were expressed neutrally and only 11 as negatives.<sup>300</sup> In general, questions using negative statements elicited higher responses of dissatisfaction from personnel than did the positive statements, which suggests that the surveys are not sufficiently neutral to give an accurate portrayal of personnel attitudes.

Another limitation of the surveys is that many areas of experience are not included: questions are not asked about stress, depression, alcohol consumption, attitudes to combat, the ethical issues of warfare, or the terms of enlistment. There is also little harmony between the army, navy and air force questionnaires, making comparisons problematic.

These reservations aside, the 2006 surveys showed that soldiers tended to be more satisfied than airmen/women and navy ratings.<sup>301</sup> However, soldiers’ job satisfaction did not compare as well with civilian rates. A survey of adult workers across all employment sectors and grades was undertaken in July 2006 by The Work Foundation.<sup>302</sup> The British Social Attitudes survey of 2006 was broadly consistent with the Work Foundation report.<sup>303</sup> The two surveys showed that civilian job satisfaction was 12 or 14 points higher than that for soldiers in 2006. Table 5 shows a comparison between the army attitudes survey and the two contemporaneous civilian surveys.

299 Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006*, (nd), Q1a. The survey results are believed with a confidence level of 95% to be accurate within 3% for the whole army at the time of the survey.

300 Ibid. Qs 24, 37, 38, 39, 41, 61a, 61b, 61c, 61d, 67a, 67b.

301 Soldiers: 64% satisfied, 16% dissatisfied; airmen/women and navy ratings: 55-56% satisfied, 21-22% dissatisfied (based on Ministry of Defence Continuous Attitude Surveys in 2006 — see bibliography for full references). Note that proportions given for the navy are not necessarily representative due to small sample size; proportions given for the army and air force are representative, however.

302 The Work Foundation, *The Good Worker*.

303 British Social Attitudes Survey Report, p. 53, cited in The Work Foundation, *The Good Worker*, 9.

<b>Army soldiers</b>		<b>Civilians</b> <b>[Work Foundation]</b>		<b>Civilians</b> <b>[British Social Attitudes survey]</b>	
Very satisfied	13	Very satisfied	35	Completely or very satisfied	36
Fairly satisfied	51	Quite satisfied	43	Fairly satisfied	40
Neutral	20	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8
Fairly dissatisfied	11	Quite dissatisfied	6	Fairly dissatisfied	8
Very dissatisfied	5	Very dissatisfied	5	Completely or very dissatisfied	4

The table shows a striking contrast between civilians and soldiers who reported being ‘very satisfied’ with their work. 13% of soldiers fitted this description, compared with 35% or 36% of civilians. The image that army recruitment literature portrays of the strongly satisfied and stimulated soldier therefore appears to be true only for relatively few recruits when compared with opportunities in civilian life.

The socio-economic background of army recruits is not typical of the general population. Even so, the Work Foundation survey found that civilians in low-paid jobs, service jobs and those aged 16-24 are only marginally less likely to be satisfied with their work than civilians in other categories.

The 2006 armed forces attitude survey results indicated that the large majority of soldiers felt proud of being in the army and enjoyed serving. At the same time, they also tended to feel unvalued. 46% found that army life had fallen short of pre-enlistment expectations (23% said the opposite). 22% reported having low morale (49% had high morale), 56% ‘often [thought] about quitting’ and 20% wanted to leave at the earliest opportunity.<sup>305</sup>

<sup>304</sup> Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006*, (nd), Q1a; Work Foundation, The: *The good worker: A survey of attitudes towards work in the UK* (The Work Foundation, 2006), p. 7; British Social Attitudes Survey Report, p. 53, cited in *ibid.*, p. 9

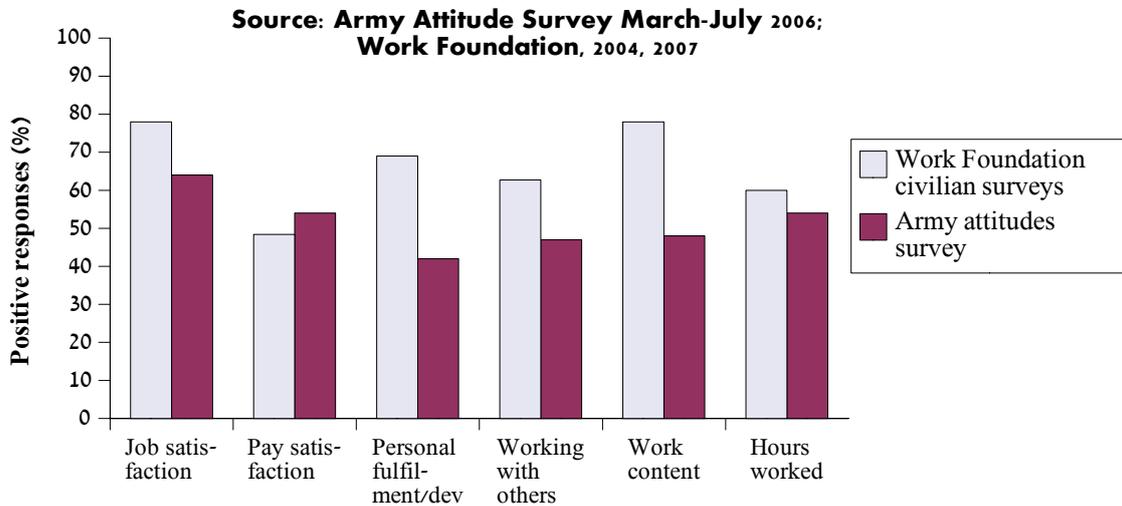
<sup>305</sup> Ministry of Defence: ‘Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Mar-Jul 2006’, Qs 3a, 3b, 3c, 4b, 67a, 67b, 70.

Armed forces marketing recruitment marketing often characterises civilian life as meaningless and monotonous in contrast with the excitement and responsibility of a forces career. The Work Foundation survey of 2006 contradicts this, finding that only 9% of civilian workers thought their work meaningless (86% said it was not), and only 17% said that was it was not stimulating and challenging (78% said it was).<sup>306</sup>

Applying the army’s 16% dissatisfaction rate to all 83,789 non-officer soldiers at the time of the survey shows that there were around 13,406 unhappy soldiers, of which about 4,189 would describe themselves as ‘very dissatisfied’. In civilian employment, these individuals could choose to leave their jobs at short notice. In the army, the terms of service require 12 months’ notice to leave, which can only come into effect after at least four years and three months’ regular service (or up to six years’ service for those enlisting as minors). Because dissatisfied soldiers are effectively trapped in the army for a long period, the effects of career dissatisfaction are compounded. This problem has no parallel in civilian life.

Tentatively, Graph Seven compares levels of employment satisfaction of soldiers and civilians using the army attitude survey and Work Foundation surveys. A loosely indicative comparison is possible, showing that apart from their slightly higher satisfaction with pay, soldiers tend to be less satisfied with their work than the general civilian population.<sup>307</sup>

**Graph Seven**  
**Comparison of positive responses by army soldiers and civilians to aspects of employment experience**



306 The Work Foundation, *The Good Worker*, 5

307 The Work Foundation, *The joy of work?* (2004) and *The Good Worker* (2007 – survey conducted in 2006); MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*. Qs 1a, 1c, 1g/1h, 3d, 8a, 27g/27i. Work Foundation survey questions: overall job satisfaction (2007); pay satisfaction (2004); personal fulfilment (2007); working with others (2004); stimulation and challenge (2007); hours worked (2004). Army attitude survey criteria used for comparison: How satisfied are you with: your job in general; your rate of basic pay (including x-factor and excluding allowances); the development of your personal potential/opportunities to gain educational qualifications for promotion/advancement [median of both results]; the amount of variety in your work/the challenge of your job [median of two results]; your current workload. (Response options: very satisfied; fairly satisfied [both counted as a positive response]; neutral; fairly dissatisfied; very dissatisfied.) Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statements — I feel a sense of belonging within the Army? (Response options: strongly agree; agree [both counted as a positive response]; neutral; disagree; strongly disagree. The Work Foundation survey for 2006 is used where possible; where comparisons are not possible, the survey from 2004 is used.

#### 4.1.2 Pay

**Among soldiers there is considerable dissatisfaction with pay, although most believe that their financial package as a whole, including pension, compares favourably with a civilian career at the same level. Information in recruitment literature about some of the financial benefits of an army career is misleading, however.**

The Armed Forces Pay Review Body periodically reviews the levels of forces pay and advises the government on appropriate changes. It is instructed to ‘have regard for the need for the pay of the Armed Forces to be broadly comparable with pay levels in civilian life’.<sup>308</sup>

Additionally, forces pay is increased by a percentage known as the x-factor, which is intended to compensate for aspects of the lifestyle that cannot be compared with civilian careers. In setting the x-factor, some of the risks, restrictions and strains peculiar to life in the forces are considered, such as ‘...being subject to military discipline, liability for duty at all times, the inability to resign at will, change jobs or negotiate pay, and the danger, turbulence and separation which are part of Service life’.<sup>309</sup> Some of the positive aspects are also taken into account, such as ‘...travel, adventure, the chance to learn a trade, variety, leave and job security’.<sup>310</sup> The x-factor now stands at +13% and is reviewed every five years.

The Review Body found that levels of pay for trainees, privates and lance corporals were significantly lower than civilian median gross earnings, and that corporals and above generally do better than civilians in comparable work.<sup>311</sup>

Personnel have complained to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body that the x-factor ‘no longer reflected the growing disadvantages of Service life’.<sup>312</sup>

Personnel felt that X-Factor did not adequately reflect the disadvantages, specifically the “step change” in [family] separation levels arising from increased operational commitments and the continuing effects of turbulence, notably the implications for spouse employment, home ownership and access to public services. In addition, personnel considered that those aspects of Service life which have been positive elements of the X-Factor have been eroded since increased operational pressures now allow fewer opportunities for adventure training and sport.<sup>313</sup>

308 Armed Forces Pay Review Body: *Thirty-Fifth Report — 2006*, (Cm6740), February 2006, iii.

309 ‘An introduction to military pay’, *Serving Soldier* [official army web site], <<http://www.army.mod.uk/servingsoldier/condofserv/mm/index.html>>, 11 April 2006, accessed 16 February 2007.

310 Ibid.

311 Armed Forces Pay Review Body, *Thirty-Fifth Report — 2006*, 11.

312 Ibid.

313 Ibid.

Table 6 is based on the 2006 army and Work Foundation surveys, which showed that soldiers tended to have more polarised views on their pay than did civilians, with greater proportions expressing both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and fewer neutral. The attitude survey also suggested that soldiers place a high value on other elements of their benefits package, such as their pension. Whilst 41% of soldiers thought that their pay was generally worse than civilian pay (31% felt the opposite),<sup>314</sup> when the whole package, including pension, was taken into account, most soldiers thought they were better off than civilians.<sup>315</sup>

<b>Army soldiers (%) [2006]</b>		<b>Civilians (%) [2004]</b>	
Very or fairly satisfied	54	Very satisfied	48.4
Neutral	17	Neutral	30.8
Very or fairly dissatisfied	29	Not at all satisfied	20.8

The recruitment brochure *One Army, Regular and Territorial: The Guide* carries a two-page spread arguing that the financial situation of soldiers is better than that of civilians because daily costs are lower. Among the advantages the *Guide* lists are a free pension, subsidised accommodation, no utility bills, subsidised food and drink, free prescriptions and dental charges, free travel and subsidised council tax.

This is all misleading. The army does not provide a free pension; a reduction, known as the abatement, is made to levels of pay each year. Accommodation is subsidised in order to ‘reflect the inherent disadvantages associated with living in Service accommodation... [including] lack of choice, lack of security of tenure on postings or on leaving the Armed Forces, lack of an option to buy and restrictions on decorating or making other changes’.<sup>317</sup> Utility bills are not free; rent is increased to include a utility charge comparable with the rate for civilians.<sup>318</sup> Food charges are not cheaper than cooking at home; they are set to be comparable to the costs of a subsidised canteen in a civilian firm.<sup>319</sup> Free travel during time off is limited to three return journeys home per year.<sup>320</sup> Subsidised council tax is at least partly due to recruits’ accommodation in shared rooms in large blocks, of which 47% worldwide are of the lowest grade.<sup>321</sup> Free dental and prescription charges are genuine benefits but are often available in private health care packages in civilian firms.

<sup>314</sup> MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*: Q11a.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.* Q11b.

<sup>316</sup> Army: MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*: Q8a [Army soldiers: How satisfied are you with your rate of basic pay (including x-factor and excluding allowances)? (%)]; The Work Foundation, *The joy of work?* (2004), 16. Pay satisfaction was not tested-for in the 2006 Work Foundation survey.

<sup>317</sup> Armed Forces Pay Review Body, *Thirty-Fifth Report — 2006*, 37.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>320</sup> Ministry of Defence, *One Army. Regular and Territorial: The Guide*, (London: Army Recruiting Group, April 2007), 9.

<sup>321</sup> Armed Forces Pay Review Body, *Thirty-Fifth Report — 2006*, 40.

Senior army recruitment staff expressed frustration that poor retention levels in the army are largely due to the low level of pay, which compares badly with the rate for police, for example.<sup>322</sup> Better pay for soldiers would help to stem the outflow of existing soldiers and, in turn, relieve pressure on recruiters by reducing their targets for new enlistments.

#### 4.1.3 Other lifestyle factors

**Some features of army life are particularly unpopular. These relate to limitations of personal development opportunities, heavy workload, lack of involvement in decision-making, losing leave, limitations to freedom and opportunity and poor accommodation.**

The 2006 army attitude survey showed that some aspects of the army lifestyle were particularly unpopular among large numbers of personnel:

- a) *Limitations of personal development opportunities.* Recruitment literature emphasises the personal development potential of army life more strongly than other benefits. 47% of soldiers said they were satisfied with the personal development benefits of training; 25% were dissatisfied. 30% were dissatisfied with opportunities for education and promotion (37% and 43% were satisfied, respectively).<sup>323</sup>
- b) *Strain on family life.* Frequent separation from family is a common complaint; 30% of soldiers reported having been away from home for six months or more in the previous 12 months. 40% were dissatisfied with the amount of family separation (29% were satisfied). Army life also tends to limit the freedom of spouses and partners to have careers of their own: 50% of soldiers were dissatisfied with the impact of army life on their spouse's/partner's careers (16% were satisfied). 52% said that they were dissatisfied with the impact of army life on their relationship with their spouse/partner (18% were satisfied) and a similar proportion reported dissatisfaction with the impact on family life in general.<sup>324</sup>
- c) *Heavy workload.* Several high-ranking officers broke with protocol in 2006 and 2007 to warn publicly that the armed forces were overstretched or at risk of it.<sup>325</sup> According to the National Audit Office, 9% of soldiers have a workload of 70 hours or more per week.<sup>326</sup> 58% of soldiers responding to the 2006 army survey felt that their workload was high or very high, 34% felt that they were expected to do too many operational tours and 42% felt that the gaps between tours were too short. The typical notice period for operations is one to six months; 22% of soldiers reported having had less than one month's notice to prepare for their most recent tour.<sup>327</sup>

<sup>322</sup> Personal communication with senior recruiting staff, November 2007.

<sup>323</sup> MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*: Qs 27g, 27j, 27k.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid. Qs 22a, 61a, 61b, 61c, 61d.

<sup>325</sup> For example, Ned Temko and Mark Townsend, 'Army fears over troop levels', *The Guardian*, 15 October 2005.

<sup>326</sup> National Audit Office: *Ministry of Defence: Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces* (November 2006), 2.

<sup>327</sup> MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*: Qs 5, 14a, 14c, 14d.

- d) *Lack of involvement in decision-making.* 39% of soldiers said they were dissatisfied with the amount of involvement they had in decisions that affected them (24% were satisfied).
- e) *Losing leave.* Operational commitments mean that soldiers are often unable to choose when they take leave and sometimes lose it altogether. 46% of soldiers were dissatisfied that they were unable to take leave when they wanted to. 43% of soldiers who had lost leave were ‘extremely unhappy’ about this; only 10% said that it did not bother them.<sup>328</sup>
- f) *Limitations to freedom and opportunity.* Many soldiers (45%) said they were satisfied with the amount of free time in general; 25% said that they were not. 31% said they were dissatisfied with the opportunities for sport and travel (44% were satisfied) and 43% were dissatisfied with opportunities for adventurous training (30% satisfied).<sup>329</sup>
- g) *Accommodation.* 45% of soldiers said they were dissatisfied with the maintenance of their accommodation (35% satisfied). 42% were dissatisfied with the prospects of buying or renting their own place to live (24% were satisfied).<sup>330</sup> In December 2006, army head General Sir Mike Jackson described some forces accommodation as ‘frankly shaming’.<sup>331</sup>

## 4.2 Mental health and relationships

The work of armed forces personnel carries a relatively high risk of clinically significant psychological harm. Symptoms of psychological ill-health in the armed forces exceed those in the civilian population ‘by a large margin’, according to a British study undertaken in 2002.<sup>332</sup>

Psychiatric casualties of war far exceed those who are killed or seriously injured.<sup>333</sup> There is now a wealth of evidence to show that all veterans experience some form of stress as a result of combat, even if not in a front-line role.<sup>334</sup>

328 Ibid. Qs 23b, 24.

329 Ibid. Qs 12d, 21b, 21c, 21d.

330 Ibid. Qs 21g, 54d.

331 BBC Online: ‘General Condemns Forces Housing’, 3 January 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6229393.stm>>, accessed 6 July 2007.

332 Jones, Margaret et al: ‘The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces’, *Occupational Medicine* 2006, 56(5): 322-328, <<http://occmed.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/56/5/322>>, accessed 5 July 2007, 326.

333 Combat Stress Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society, ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ [online article], (nd), <<http://www.combatstress.org.uk/default.asp>>, accessed 22 January 2006.

334 Lee, Harry: ‘Causation’, in Lee, Harry and Jones, Edgar (eds): *War and Health: Lessons from the Gulf War*, (Chichester: Wiley, 2007), 56; and Jones, Edgar: ‘Post-combat disorders: the Boer War to the Gulf’, *ibid.*, 28.

In general, the risk of psychological harm is highest among personnel who are not sent on any deployments and those sent on several.<sup>335</sup> The transition between initial training (Phase 1) and training in the recruit's chosen trade (Phase 2) also carries a higher risk.<sup>336</sup>

According to the authors of a British study of over 2,500 personnel conducted in 2002 before the Iraq war,

there is a high prevalence of self-reported psychological ill-health in the UK Armed Forces. The prevalence of psychological distress ... exceeded by a large margin that reported in the Scottish Health Survey [1998] and the Health Survey for England [2003] ...<sup>337</sup>

The authors qualified this by observing that forces personnel seemed to fare slightly better than those working in the civil emergency services, who may also be subject to stressors such as seeing dead bodies and working with violence.

Combat Stress (the Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society) employs clinicians to support veterans suffering from the adverse psychological effects of warfare. Based on treating around 700 veterans (80% ex-army) each year, CS lists the most common disorders that they deal with as: clinical depression, raised anxiety states, phobic disorders, obsessional compulsive disorder, bi-polar illness (manic depression), substance abuse (drug and alcohol), psychotic conditions in a non-acute phase and post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>338</sup>

No new recruit to the armed forces can know how the experience of deployment will affect them psychologically. As the CS clinician Keron Fletcher writes:

...what seems indisputable is that war changes people. Some individuals benefit from their wartime experience; others simply cope with it and move on. For some veterans life will never be the same — there is a new understanding of what humans can do to each other, and of what they themselves could be capable of in certain circumstances. The world seems like a more unpredictable, dangerous and ugly place. It takes no great leap of the imagination to consider that these veterans may never feel 'well' again.<sup>339</sup>

Psychiatric provision for armed forces personnel is limited. As of 1 April 2007, the armed forces between them employed 13 psychiatrists and 98 mental health nurses<sup>340</sup>, yet one study suggests that some 4% (around 7,110 personnel) of regular personnel may be suffering symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>341</sup>

335 Wessely, Simon, Director, King's Centre for Military Health Research and Professor of Psychiatry, King's College London, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 78.

336 Ibid.

337 Jones et al, 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', 326.

338 Combat Stress Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 'Welfare and Treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' [online article], <[http://www.combatstress.org.uk/welfare-and-treatment/about-post-traumatic\\_stress\\_disorder.asp](http://www.combatstress.org.uk/welfare-and-treatment/about-post-traumatic_stress_disorder.asp)>, accessed 22 January 2006; and Ibid. 'Iraq Psychiatric Casualties' [press release], (16 February 2006), <<http://www.combatstress.org.uk/default.asp>>, accessed 22 January 2006.

339 Fletcher, Keron: 'Combat Stress (The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society), Veterans and Psychological Trauma', in Lee and Jones, *War and Health: Lessons from the Gulf War*, 110.

340 Hansard, HC: 11 July 2007: Col 1475W, Defence (Armed Forces: Mental Health Services).

341 Hotopf, Matthew et al: 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', *The Lancet*, 16 May 2006, Vol 367: 1731–41, at <<http://download.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/0140-6736/PIIS0140673606686625.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2007, 1738.

#### 4.2.1 Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

A study of forces personnel before the Iraq war found a 2.5% incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms; a second study between 2004 and 2006 found a 4% incidence [equivalent to around 7,110 individuals]<sup>342</sup>, with higher rates for those in combat roles (6%) than in support roles (3%).<sup>343</sup> A US study in 2004 showed that the risk of PTSD increases in proportion to exposure to the stresses of warfare: the incidence of symptoms of PTSD rose to 19.3% among US troops who had been exposed to more than five firefights in Iraq or Afghanistan.<sup>344</sup>

Post-traumatic stress disorder is colloquially familiar as ‘shell shock’. It is a debilitating, often persistent condition that can occur after any traumatic event. Symptoms include upsetting thoughts and nightmares, avoidance behaviour, numbing of responsiveness, increased irritability and hypervigilance, culminating collectively in clinically important distress or reduced functioning of the person.<sup>345</sup> PTSD and other combat-related psychiatric illnesses ‘can leave Service veterans badly damaged and have profound effects on their future lives and those of their families’, according to Combat Stress (CS).<sup>346</sup>

A partner of a Northern Ireland veteran describes a typical effect of PTSD as follows:

I know he’s got PTSD, when we used to go out he would sit with his back to the wall, you know, if we were with friends or something like that and even if we were together, with his back to the wall, and then if one of our friends went to the toilet, and took a little longer than you know, he’d be straight in, obviously thinking that they’d be hiding or something.<sup>347</sup>

Writing in *War and Health: Lessons from the Gulf War*, Keron Fletcher provides five typical case studies of PTSD in veterans. Sufferers experienced chronic feelings of terror, rage and/or exhaustion, which were overwhelming and dominated daily living. Murderous thoughts, repeating nightmares, violent outbursts and self-harming behaviour characterised the moderate and severe cases.<sup>348</sup>

The condition can remain with the sufferer for their whole life: one study showed that six years after being diagnosed with PTSD, about a third had not recovered.<sup>349</sup> In CS’s experience, some sufferers have lived with the condition for over 50 years.<sup>350</sup>

342 Based on Defence Analytical Services Agency, ‘TSP 02 - UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Requirements at 1 April 2007’ [table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp2/tsp2tab.html>>, accessed 1 June 2007.

343 Jones et al: ‘The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces’, 326; Hotopf, Matthew et al: ‘The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study’, *The Lancet*, 16 May 2006, Vol 367: 1731–41, at <<http://download.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/0140-6736/PIIS0140673606686625.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2007, 1738. The higher rate for combat troops is partly due to their being of lower rank and younger age in general than troops in combat-support and service-support roles.

344 Hoge, Charles W et al: ‘Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mental Health Problems, and Barriers to Care’, in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 1 July 2004, 16.

345 Bisson, Jonathan: ‘Post-traumatic stress disorder’, *BMJ Clinical Evidence* [online medical reference database], (1 July 2006) <[http://www.clinicalevidence.com/ceweb/conditions/meh/1005/1005\\_background.jsp](http://www.clinicalevidence.com/ceweb/conditions/meh/1005/1005_background.jsp)>, accessed 7 January 2007.

346 Combat Stress, ‘Iraq Psychiatric Casualties’.

347 The Tim Parry and Johnathan Ball Trust: *The Legacy: A study of the needs of GB Victims and Survivors of the Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’* [report] (2003), 56.

348 Fletcher, Keron: ‘Combat Stress (The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society), Veterans and Psychological Trauma’, in Lee and Jones, *War and Health: Lessons from the Gulf War*, 106–9.

349 Bisson, ‘Post-traumatic stress disorder’.

350 Fletcher, ‘Combat Stress (The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society), Veterans and Psychological Trauma’, 94.

There are no studies estimating the current prevalence of PTSD in the UK general population.<sup>351</sup> Studies of other populations show large variations: from 0.1% in German males to 3.9% in US males/females and intermediate proportions in Australia, Canada and some European countries.<sup>352</sup> A US study indicated that about 5% of all US men and 10% of all US women suffer from PTSD at some stage in their lives.<sup>353</sup>

A study undertaken in 2002 showed that symptoms of post-traumatic stress among forces personnel are also associated with excessive alcohol intake, smoking, and general health problems.<sup>354</sup> Another study in the same year, this time of UK veterans of the 1991 Iraq war, found that over a third of those diagnosed with PTSD were also suffering from conditions such as depression, alcohol abuse and substance abuse.<sup>355</sup> The likelihood of these associated problems increases as symptoms of PTSD increase. According to CS, three quarters of PTSD sufferers on their books have secondary diagnoses, the most common being alcohol dependence.<sup>356</sup> A growing number of younger ex-forces forces personnel with PTSD are now also presenting with drug dependence problems.<sup>357</sup>

A study of over 2,500 British forces personnel during 2002, a time of low deployment activity before the Iraq war, found a 2.5% incidence of PTSD symptoms in the UK forces population.<sup>358</sup> It indicated that women were about 1.5 times more likely to suffer from PTSD than men; the risk for army personnel was twice that for those in the navy or air force; and those in non-officer ranks were 3.5 times more likely to suffer from the condition than were officers. A study of the incidence of PTSD among young soldiers in combat roles would be useful; this group is probably most vulnerable to PTSD and least likely to be aware of it.

PTSD is a common effect of exposure to warfare. A US study found that stressors causing PTSD include: being shot at, being wounded, handling dead bodies, knowing someone who was killed, and killing people.<sup>359</sup> Between a quarter and a third of Vietnam veterans suffered from PTSD and between a quarter and a half of sufferers were still affected by the 1980s.<sup>360</sup> In a retrospective study (1995-97) of US Gulf War veterans, there was a 10% prevalence of PTSD among those who had been on combat duty (4% among those who had not).<sup>361</sup>

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351 Jones et al: 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', 326.

352 Ibid.

353 Bisson: 'Post-traumatic stress disorder'.

354 Jones et al: 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', 324.

355 Lee, Harry A et al: 'Health status and clinical diagnoses of 3000 UK Gulf War veterans', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, October 2002, Vol 95: 491-497.

356 Fletcher: 'Combat Stress (The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society), Veterans and Psychological Trauma', 97.

357 Ibid.

358 Jones et al: 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', 326 All the studies mentioned in this section are based on survey questionnaires, which tend to indicate higher prevalence of PTSD than do diagnostic interviews.

359 Hoge, Charles W et al: 'Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mental Health Problems, and Barriers to Care', in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 1 July 2004, 16.

360 Friedman, Matthew J: 'Acknowledging the Psychiatric Cost of War', in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 1 July 2004, 75

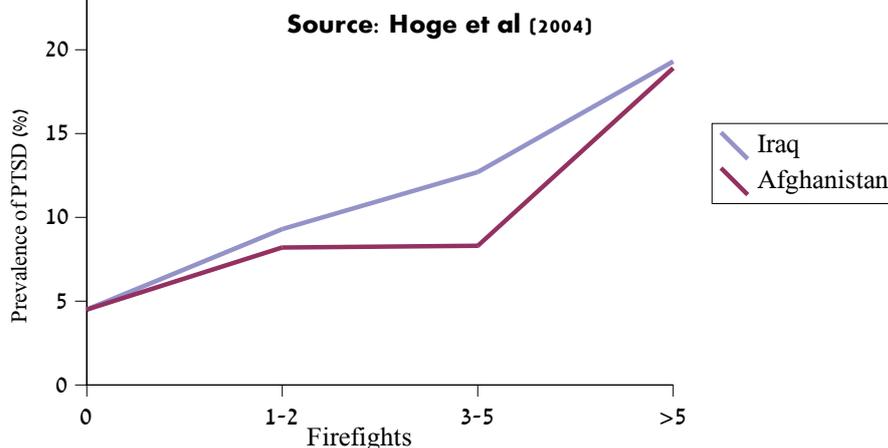
361 Friedman: 'Acknowledging the Psychiatric Cost of War', 75.

A large study of over 10,000 British personnel conducted between 2004 and 2006 found a 4% prevalence of PTSD,<sup>362</sup> which means that around 7,710 of current regular forces personnel would be expected to be suffering symptoms of PTSD based on the current regular trained strength. The study also found that those in combat roles were at higher risk: 6% of these personnel had PTSD symptoms, compared with 3% among others.<sup>363</sup> Prevalence of PTSD in the UK armed forces therefore appears to have increased since the Iraq war.

A similar US study found a PTSD incidence of 13% among US infantry and marines.<sup>364</sup> The authors of the US study believe that the difference in PTSD prevalence between UK and US personnel is probably due to the much lower intensity of combat experienced by British troops: for example, 17% of personnel in the UK study reported discharging their weapon in combat, versus 77%-87% of US personnel. There were also much higher rates among US forces of handling dead bodies, being shot at and seeing colleagues wounded or killed.<sup>365</sup>

This is significant because the US study found a linear relationship between the degree of exposure to PTSD-inducing stressors and the prevalence of PTSD symptoms. It reported a 9.3% incidence of PTSD among soldiers who had been in one or two firefights, rising to 19.3% among those with experience of more than five firefights.<sup>366</sup> According to this study, therefore, one in five soldiers who had experienced more than five firefights would be expected to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (see Graph Eight).

**Graph Eight**  
**Prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among US soldiers and marines deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan as a function of number of firefights experienced**



362 Hotopf, Matthew et al. 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', *The Lancet*, 16 May 2006, Vol 367: 1731-41, at <<http://download.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/0140-6736/PIIS0140673606686625.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2007, 1738.

363 The higher rate for combat troops is partly due to their being of lower rank and younger age in general than troops in combat-support and service-support roles.

364 Hoge et al: 'Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan', 16.

365 Hoge, Charles W and Castro, Carl A: 'Post-traumatic stress disorder in UK and US forces deployed to Iraq' [correspondence in *The Lancet*, 2 September 2006, Vol 368: 837], at <<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673606693161/fulltext>>, accessed 16 February 2007.

366 Hoge et al: 'Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan', 16. The prevalence of PTSD for having seen no firefights is 4.5%; for one or two firefights, 9.3%; for three to five, 12.7%; for five or more, 19.3%.

When PTSD is present among some members of a group who have experienced trauma, it is likely that other psychiatric effects are present in the rest of the group. An analysis of ex-military and civilian victims of the Northern Ireland conflict found that those survivors who did not meet the criteria for PTSD nonetheless commonly reported many of the associated symptoms, especially recurring nightmares and flashbacks.<sup>367</sup> This so-called sub-syndromal PTSD resembles the disorder but does not match all the clinical criteria. Therefore, besides those troops returning from combat with PTSD, many more suffer related forms of psychological distress.

The prevalence of PTSD among veterans may be significantly higher than reported because symptoms often only appear and intensify during the two years following a traumatic event<sup>368</sup> and it can even take decades for trauma-related problems to surface.<sup>369</sup> Combat Stress report that, on average, a person leaving the UK armed forces will not seek CS's help with a psychological problem for 14 years. One third of the veterans on the books of Combat Stress have Northern Ireland experience, which CS describes as 'an operation that has perhaps been the most difficult and dangerous of all'.<sup>370</sup>

Loss of social support can cause relapse into PTSD.<sup>371</sup> This is a particular concern for personnel leaving the forces, who face the many social and economic challenges of resettling into civilian life.

#### 4.2.2 Suicide and open verdict deaths

**Male soldiers under 20 years of age face a 50% greater risk of suicide than those of similar profile in the civilian population; otherwise suicide rates in the armed forces are lower than among civilians. The disproportionately large number of suicides among discharged Falklands veterans suggests that the official statistics understate the true long-term suicide risk among combat troops.**

The regular armed forces saw 687 suicides and open verdict deaths (hereafter referred to collectively as 'suicides'<sup>372</sup>) between 1984 and 2006, mostly among young men.<sup>373</sup>

367 The Tim Parry and Johnathan Ball Trust, *The Legacy: A study of the needs of GB Victims and Survivors of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'* [report] (2003), 56.

368 Friedman: 'Acknowledging the Psychiatric Cost of War', 76, 77.

369 Combat Stress Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 'The Need for Combat Stress in today's world' [online article], (nd), <<http://www.combatstress.org.uk/default.asp>>, accessed 22 January 2006.

370 Ibid.

371 Friedman: 'Acknowledging the Psychiatric Cost of War', 76.

372 Hereafter, 'suicides' refers to 'suicides and open verdict deaths', following the convention of the Office of National Statistics.

373 Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'Statistical Notice: Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 1984-2006' [report], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/publications/pdfs/suicide/suicideMar07.pdf>>, accessed 19 October 2007.

The Ministry of Defence recognises that young people are most at risk of suicide and that personnel are usually most vulnerable during their early career. Army commanders in training establishments are expected to be vigilant in identifying those at risk. Army recruits are issued with a card including contact details of their Unit Welfare Officer, Padre, the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, the Army Welfare Service and the Samaritans.<sup>374</sup> A confidential helpline is available, which provides a supportive listening service for forces personnel and their families.<sup>375</sup>

Female suicides are relatively rare; numbers are too low to calculate a rate and therefore the level of risk.<sup>376</sup> With the exception of the army, the rate of male suicides in the armed forces has remained relatively constant since the 1980s. In the case of the army, suicide rates grew during the late 1980s to a peak of 20 per 100,000 per year in 1996 before falling back in recent years to the levels seen in the mid-1980s.<sup>377</sup>

Based on data from 1984 to 2006, the annual rate of male suicides in the army is 14 per 100,000 per year; rates for the navy and air force are both 10 per 100,000 per year.<sup>378</sup> In all cases, this is a lower rate than for civilians of the same age profile.<sup>379</sup> The Defence Analytical Services Agency attributes this to the physical fitness of forces personnel, as well as other factors associated with forces life such as group loyalty and mutual dependence.<sup>380</sup> There is also rudimentary screening of forces recruits for mental/general health problems at the point of selection, which could filter out some of those most at risk of suicide.

The situation for young soldiers is an exception to this positive statistic. Based on data for 1984 to 2006, the highest rate of forces suicides is among army males between the ages of 16 and 24 (16-18 deaths per 100,000 per year). The high suicide rate for under-25s in the army is striking when compared with much lower rates for the navy and air force (see Graph Nine).<sup>381</sup>

374 MoD, 'Tri-Service Policy: prevention and management of suicide and deliberate self-harm', in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 280.

375 The line received 3,391 genuine (non-hoax) calls in 2003. MoD, 'Figures on the use of Confidential Support Line', in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 283.

376 Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'Statistical Notice: Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 1984-2006', 'Introduction'.

377 Ibid., 'Figure 2: Three year moving average age-standardised rates for suicides by Service, males, 1984-2006'.

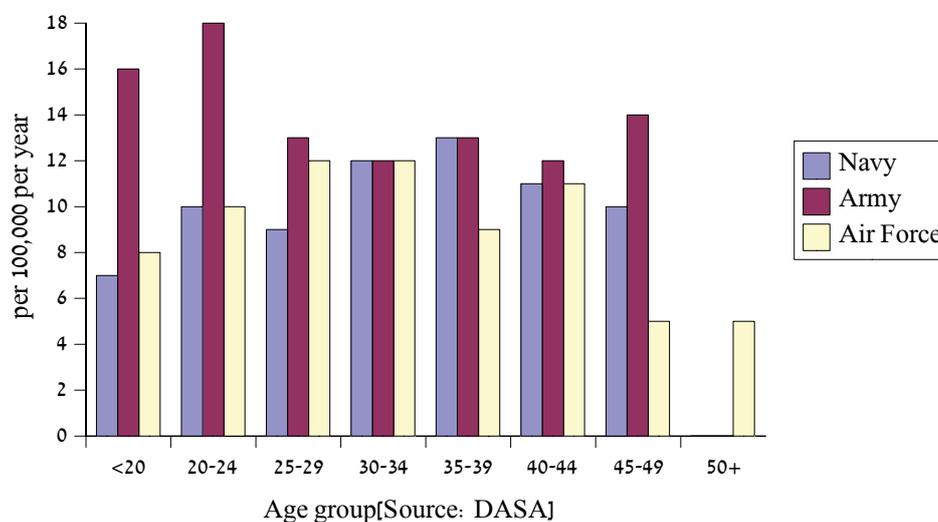
378 Ibid., 'Figure 1: Age-standardised rates (per 100,000) and 95% confidence intervals by Service'.

379 Ibid., 'Introduction'.

380 Ibid., 'Discussion'.

381 Ibid., 'Figure 2: Age specific rates (per 100,000) and 95% confidence intervals by Service, 1984-2006'.

**Graph Nine**  
**UK armed forces: Age specific rates for suicides**  
**among males 1984-2006**



Even accounting for the drop in army suicides since 2000, male soldiers under 20 years of age carry a 50% greater risk of suicide than that faced by the general UK population.<sup>382</sup> At 1 April 2007, there were 14,770 soldiers in this high-risk group. The age-specific rate of suicide among soldiers aged 20-24 is now lower than the general UK population, although it remains much higher than the rates for the navy and air force.

This suggests that the nature of the army training regime and first postings might carry an increased risk of suicide and associated mental health problems. The limited available data give cause for concern about the culture shock of the training regime for young men. The Infantry Training Centre (ITC) at Catterick saw seven suicides among non-officer recruits between 1995 and 2002.<sup>383</sup> A thorough statistical analysis of suicides at ITC Catterick would be needed to calculate the rate per year accurately. An approximation is possible using data from the training year 2003-04, showing that the Centre had an average number of non-officer recruits under training of 1,961 at any one time.<sup>384</sup> If the rate was typical for the eight years of 1995-2002, the suicide rate at Catterick ITC can be estimated at 38 per 100,000 per year for the period: more than twice the average rate for army males under 25.<sup>385</sup>

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 'Key points'.

<sup>383</sup> Cited in Ministry of Defence: 'Numbers of suicide and open verdict deaths of non-officer recruits at initial training establishments since 1990' [Memorandum to the House of Commons Defence Committee, 2004], cited in House of Commons Defence Committee, Duty of Care, (Third Report of Session 2004-05), Vol 2, Ev 322-324. The memorandum states that there were six suicides at ITC Catterick up to 2002 and one death that was awaiting a verdict; discussions with Lynn Farr, who has documented deaths at ITC since it opened in 1995, have confirmed that the 'awaiting verdict' death reported was later confirmed as a suicide. An attempt to obtain up-to-date statistics using the Freedom of Information Act process has been unsuccessful. Although data is available for suicides at Catterick garrison (12 persons between 1995 and 2006 excluding deaths while off the base), specific data for suicides among personnel stationed at the Infantry Training Centre are not available [letter from the Ministry of Defence to the author, 5 October 2007].

<sup>384</sup> Ministry of Defence: 'Non-officer recruits: Input and output figures' [Memorandum to the House of Commons Defence Committee, 2004], cited in House of Commons Defence Committee, Duty of Care, (Third Report of Session 2004-05), Vol 2, Ev 243. The average number of recruits at the Infantry Training Centre in 2003-04 was 1,886; in 2005, when the Adult Learning Inspectorate visited the centre, there were 1,343 recruits [Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 27].

<sup>385</sup> Data set: 1984-2006. Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'Statistical Notice: Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 1984-2006' [report], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/publications/pdfs/suicide/suicideMar07.pdf>>, accessed 19 October 2007.

Four suspicious deaths of young recruits have occurred at Deepcut barracks since 1995: Sean Benton (20) and Cheryl James (18) died in 1995; Geoff Gray (17) died in 2001; and James Collinson (17) died in 2002. All the victims died of gunshot wounds while on guard duty; and all cases were assumed from the outset to be suicides. Investigations into the deaths were hampered by bungled crime scene searches, the loss or destruction of key evidence, contradictory and unreliable witness statements and other suspicious incongruities. Even despite mounting evidence and publicity, including a BBC Panorama programme, the chain of command had denied that there was a systemic problem at Deepcut.<sup>386</sup> Detailed reports by police and subsequently by Nicholas Blake QC concluded that all four victims had taken their own lives. The mysterious circumstances of the deaths remain largely unexplained and the police reports have attracted criticism from some of the bereaved families, as well as from MPs and the media.<sup>387</sup>

Although there are no reliable predictors of suicide, the strongest known risk factor is a history of self-harm.<sup>388</sup> There are no general statistical data available on the prevalence of self-harm in any social group.<sup>389</sup> However, the increased risk of suicide among young males in the army could indicate correspondingly increased rates of attempted suicide, self-harm and psychological disorders that are associated with suicide but do not usually culminate in it. A study of the mental health of young soldiers undergoing training would be useful.

Army suicides have often been linked with allegations of bullying; the higher risk among young soldiers could reflect the impact of bullying on the mental health of new recruits.<sup>390</sup>

Traumatic events can precipitate suicide in those most at risk<sup>391</sup> and experience of war is known to increase the of self-harm among military personnel: incidents of self-harm and risk-taking behaviour both rise after deployment.<sup>392</sup>

Ready access to the means of committing suicide is linked with its prevalence:<sup>393</sup> access to firearms and explosives has facilitated 30% of suicides in the army between 1984 and 2005, against just 6% for the navy and 11% in the air force.<sup>394</sup>

386 BBC Panorama Online: 'Fear and violence at Deepcut' [article], 1 December 2002, at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/2531237.stm>>, accessed 16 February 2007.

387 For example, see House of Commons Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1; Heather Mills and Brian Cathcart, 'Deepcut: Shots in the dark' [special report], *Private Eye*, 17-23.

388 Hawton, Keith, Director, Centre for Suicide Research and Professor of Psychiatry, Oxford University, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 74.

389 Wessely, Simon, Director, King's Centre for Military Health Research and Professor of Psychiatry, King's College London, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 77.

390 See, for example, Memorandum from Mrs Lynn Farr to HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 423-428 and HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1; also Amnesty International, 'UK: Army Barracks Deaths'.

391 Hawton, Keith, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 74.

392 Wessely, Simon, cited *ibid.*, Ev 75.

393 Hawton, Keith, cited *ibid.*, Ev 73.

394 Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 1984-2005'.

The true suicide rates for combat veterans could be significantly higher than official statistics indicate. According to the veterans group, the South Atlantic Medal Association, by 2002 more British Falklands veterans had committed suicide since the war than the 255 who died during it.<sup>395</sup> If the claim is correct, then the suicide rate among the 28,000 British personnel deployed during the operation is 46 per 100,000 per year for each year between the war's end and 2002.<sup>396</sup> This is over twice the rate for armed forces personnel overall during the same period.<sup>397</sup> Few Falklands veterans suicides would have been included in official statistics at the time because many personnel left the forces shortly after the war. The suicide rate among Argentine forces involved in the war is reportedly broadly comparable with the British rate.<sup>398</sup>

Speaking for the South Atlantic Medal Association, veteran Denzil Connick criticised the government for not tackling post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans after the war.<sup>399</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Alcohol, smoking and drug use

**Levels of alcohol consumption in the armed forces are higher than in the civilian population; levels of smoking are about the same. Alcohol consumption rises as symptoms of combat stress increase, and personnel with combat roles are significantly more likely than others to drink excessively.**

A study of over 2,000 personnel in 2002, before the Iraq war, found that 13% of men consumed 40 or more units of alcohol per week (about two and a half pints of standard lager per day on average) and 6% of women consumed 30 or more units (just under two pints of standard lager per day on average).<sup>400</sup> This is considerably higher than consumption rates in the civilian population: in Scotland, for example, only 8% of men drink over 35 units per week and only 4% of women drink more than 21 units.<sup>401</sup> If the 2002 study's findings apply to personnel in 2007, they indicate that at least 23,123 men and 1,071 women in the forces are drinking heavily and at risk.<sup>402</sup>

395 BBC Online: 'Falklands veterans claim suicide toll', 13 January 2002, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1758301.stm>>, accessed 6 January 2007.

396 255 suicides among this number since the war amounts to 45.5 per 100,000 per year for every year between the conflict and the South Atlantic Medal Association's claim in 2002 (i.e. 255 suicides / 28,000 troops x 100,000 rate / 20 years). This includes support personnel, who usually outnumber those with combat roles. Given that direct exposure to combat is a known precipitant of mental health problems such as stress and alcoholism, it is reasonable to assume that the rate of suicide among combat troops could be higher still, although there is insufficient evidence to support this.

397 Ministry of Defence data for suicides among forces personnel date back only as far as 1984; during that period the rate has not risen above 20 per 100,000 per year for any branch of the forces.

398 Sardon, Veronica (The German Press Agency): 'Suicide plagues Argentine veterans of Falklands conflict', *The Raw Story* [web log], 27 March 2007, <[http://rawstory.com/news/dpa/Suicide\\_plagues\\_Argentine\\_veterans\\_\\_03272007.html](http://rawstory.com/news/dpa/Suicide_plagues_Argentine_veterans__03272007.html)>, accessed 14 November 2007; and [no author cited], 'Their island story', *The Economist*, 4 April 2007.

399 BBC Online: 'Falklands veterans claim suicide toll'.

400 Jones et al, 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', 323, 324.

401 National Health Service, 'Table 9.1 Adults' estimated usual weekly alcohol consumption level, by age and sex' in *Scottish Health Survey 1998*, <<http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/scottishhealthsurvey/sh809-04.html>>, accessed 9 July 2007, Vol 1, Ch 9, Table 1. No comparable data were available in the Health Survey for England 2003.

402 Based on Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'TSP 02 - UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Requirements at 1 April 2007' [table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp2/tsp2tab.html>>, accessed 1 June 2007 [177,870 men and 17,850 women on trained and untrained strength, officers and other ranks combined].

It might be argued that the higher rate of drinking is due to the pre-existing socio-economic disadvantages of recruits to the armed forces. However, this is unlikely to be the only factor. Homeless veterans have similar socio-economic backgrounds to other homeless people but are significantly more likely to have alcohol problems.<sup>403</sup> Alcohol consumption among forces personnel also increases significantly after deployment/combat<sup>404</sup> and when symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are present.<sup>405</sup> Those in combat roles are also significantly more likely to suffer from alcohol problems than those in other roles.<sup>406</sup>

Levels of smoking in the forces population (28%) are similar to those in the civilian population (24-27%, with higher rates for younger people).<sup>407</sup>

The level of illicit drug use is difficult to ascertain. The Ministry of Defence carries out a large compulsory drug testing programme every year; this consists of around 120,000 separate tests of personnel, of which around 90,000 are in the army. In 2003, 0.62% of the army tests were positive.<sup>408</sup> If the tests were 100% effective and representative of the army as a whole, this would amount to 735 soldiers involved in detectable illicit drug use in that year.<sup>409</sup> There is no directly comparable statistic for the civilian population.

#### 4.2.4 Depression

A British study of over 10,000 personnel returning from Iraq found that 24% showed symptoms of psychological stress such as depression. However, this is not significantly different from the civilian population, where the same test commonly gives rates of 20-30%.<sup>410</sup> The study did discover that British reservists were almost twice as likely to suffer from psychological/general health problems as were regulars.<sup>411</sup> The cause of the difference is not yet known; it could be due to the increased dislocation and step change experienced by reserve personnel when called up, and the limited combat training for reservists.

#### 4.2.5 Domestic violence

**Military operations and exposure to combat increase the risk that personnel will commit domestic violence, according to some US studies.**

403 Two in five ex-forces homeless have alcohol problems, compared with one in four among other homeless, according to Ballintyne, Scott and Hanks, Sinead: *Lest We Forget: Ex-servicemen and homelessness* (Crisis, 2000).

404 Hotopf et al: 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', 1737 (Table 8).

405 Jones et al: 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', 325.

406 Hotopf et al: 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', 1738 (Table 10).

407 Jones et al: 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', 326; National Health Service, *Health Survey for England 2003*, 'Summary of Key Findings', <[http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/idcplg?IdcService=GET\\_FILE&dID=28442&Rendition=Web](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dID=28442&Rendition=Web)>, accessed 9 July 2007.

408 HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 320.

409 Based on 118,530 personnel in the army at 1 October 2003. Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'TSP 02 – UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Trained Requirements at 1 October 2003' [data table].

410 Hotopf et al, 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', clarified in personal communication with the study's author: in the civilian population, 'rates of 20-30% are common'.

411 Hotopf et al, 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', clarified in personal communication: health problems among regulars, 16.3%; in reservists, 26.3%.

The UK government defines domestic violence as:

Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.<sup>412</sup>

There is a strong link between domestic violence and child abuse. In the UK population, one in four women and one in six men will suffer domestic violence at least once in their lifetime; most domestic violence is perpetrated by men against women.<sup>413</sup>

Some have claimed from personal experience that levels of domestic violence in the army are higher than in civilian life.<sup>414</sup> There is some evidence for this in the US context: a study in 2002 found that US male veterans exposed to military combat were 4.4 times more likely to abuse their spouses or partners than those not exposed to combat.<sup>415</sup> It also discovered that combat experience was significantly associated with other disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, substance abuse, unemployment, job loss, and separation or divorce: all these are stressors and potential precipitants of domestic violence in their own right.

Most survey respondents were Vietnam veterans, which could explain the much higher relative risk ratios for these disorders than have been found in studies of troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan where combat has been less intense. It must also be recognised that the problem of domestic violence in the US military may not be comparable with that in the UK.<sup>416</sup> A study of UK personnel would be useful. Even so, the US study does offer strong evidence of a link between combat exposure and domestic violence.

A large study focused on the 1991 war over Iraq discovered that the probability of severe spousal aggression by US army soldiers returning from the war zone was significantly greater than among those not deployed:

Our analyses indicate that in this sample [of 26,835 respondents], deployment had a small but statistically significant effect on self-reported severe spousal aggression by active duty Army men and women and that the probability of severe aggression increased with the length of deployment. These rates were 3.7% to 4.1% for no deployment and increased to 5% for a deployment from 6 to 12 months. Thus, it is not solely the fact of deployment that is associated with severe spousal aggression, but the longer the deployment, the more likely severe spousal aggression becomes.<sup>417</sup>

412 Crime Reduction Centre: 'Domestic violence', [crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk) [government web site for crime reduction practitioners], 12 April 2007, <<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/dv/dv01.htm>>, accessed 12 April 2007.

413 Ibid.

414 For example, see Warren Dodd, Lynda: *The Effects of Domestic Violence on Mothers and their Young Children and the Development and Evaluation of Groupwork with these Families* [PhD thesis, 2004], <[http://s1.stockport.gov.uk/DAF/documents/Effects\\_DV\\_Mothers\\_Young\\_Children\\_LWDodd.pdf](http://s1.stockport.gov.uk/DAF/documents/Effects_DV_Mothers_Young_Children_LWDodd.pdf)>, accessed 12 April 2007, p. 142; Gethin Chamberlain, 'Murderer's ex-wife says his violence drove them apart', 13 January 2005, *The Scotsman*, <<http://news.scotsman.com/uk.cfm?id=42552005>>, accessed 12 April 2007.

415 Prigerson, Holly G; Maciejewski Paul K; and Rosenheck, Robert A: 'Population Attributable Fractions of Psychiatric Disorders and Behavioral Outcomes Associated With Combat Exposure Among US Men', *American Journal of Public Health*, 2002; 92: 59-63.

416 See, for example, Donohoe, Martin: 'Violence Against Women in the Military' [report], *Medscape* [US web journal for health professionals], 14 September 2005, <<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/512380>>, accessed 10 April 2007.

417 McCarroll J E et al: 'Deployment and the probability of spousal aggression by U.S. Army soldiers', *Military Medicine*, 2000; 165: 41-44.

There is also a link between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and partner abuse. In 1992, a US study estimated that one third of US male Vietnam veterans with PTSD engaged in partner violence.<sup>418</sup> The rate is 2 to 3 times higher than that for non-PTSD veterans and non-PTSD civilians (as of 1990).<sup>419</sup> In the experience of Combat Stress working with British veterans, memories of combat may trigger aggressive behaviour, and minor incidents in everyday life can lead veterans with PTSD to fly into a rage.<sup>420</sup>

#### 4.2.6 Stigma associated with mental health problems

**There is a stigma in the armed forces associated with psychological problems, partly due to a military culture that often views mental illness as a sign of personal and professional weakness. This increases the risk that personnel will take desperate measures to protect themselves, including going absent without leave.**

Professor Simon Wessely, the director of King's Centre for Military Health Research, told the House of Commons Defence Committee in 2004 that military training encourages recruits to put their fears and feelings to one side, which leads to the repression of certain emotions.<sup>421</sup> If this is true, then the training regime risks creating a culture that stigmatises those who experience mental health problems as a result of their forces career.

Those most in need of help for mental health problems are usually those most resistant to seeking it due to a fear of being seen as weak and of jeopardising their career. For example, a study of US soldiers and marines returning from Iraq has found that the stigma attached to PTSD is much stronger in the forces than among civilians.<sup>422</sup> Those with and without symptoms of PTSD were asked whether 'being seen as weak' would be a barrier to seeking help for a psychological problem. 65% of those with symptoms said that it would, against 31% of those without.<sup>423</sup> Of those who met the criteria for PTSD, only 4% had sought help, leaving the vast majority suffering in silence.<sup>424</sup>

The Ministry of Defence is aware that soldiers can often feel a stigma associated with seeking help for psychological problems:

We understand that it may be particularly hard for a young recruit to seek help for mental or emotional problems. Tackling stigma and discrimination is therefore a central part of Armed Force's mental well-being policy. The need to change culture, so that seeking appropriate help for mental health problems becomes a natural reaction, is a much wider issue for society as a whole at large.<sup>425</sup>

418 Jordan K B et al. 'Problems in families of male Vietnam veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder', *J Consult Clin Psychol.* 1992; 60: 916-926, cited in Donohoe, Martin: 'Violence Against Women in the Military'.

419 Strauss M, Gelles RJ (eds): *Physical Violence in American Families* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), cited in Donohoe, Martin: 'Violence Against Women in the Military'.

420 Fletcher, 'Combat Stress (The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society), Veterans and Psychological Trauma', 94, 107, 109.

421 *Ibid.*, Ev 79.

422 Friedman: 'Acknowledging the Psychiatric Cost of War', 76, 77.

423 Hoge et al: 'Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan', 21.

424 Friedman: 'Acknowledging the Psychiatric Cost of War', 76, 77.

425 Ministry of Defence, *The Government's Response to HC Defence Committee's Duty of Care Report*, 9.

This acknowledges the stigma but does not recognise that sufferers can face a culture of ridicule among peers and the chain of command. A BBC Panorama programme in January 2007 offered substantial anecdotal evidence that PTSD is widely regarded by the chain of command as a sign of psychological weakness among soldiers (see p.64).<sup>426</sup> Similar views are also common in the US army.<sup>427</sup> In fact, PTSD can affect anyone, however psychologically robust they are reputed to be.

When traumatised personnel feel unable to seek help or are not taken seriously, and yet are not able to leave the forces because of their contractual obligations, they risk going absent without leave (AWOL) (see p. 64).

### 4.3 Death and serious injury

The mortality rate for the armed forces as a whole is currently lower than that of the civilian population with a matched profile. However, this statistic could mask the relatively greater risks faced by those in combat roles. During a high intensity conflict such as the Falklands War, mortality rates are much higher than those of the civilian population. Fatality rates could also rise if the government continues an interventionist approach to national security as demonstrated in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the armed forces, the risk of serious injury is usually thought to be approximately three times greater than the risk of violent death.

Military commanders usually expect their forces to incur about three times as many serious injuries as fatalities during full combat operations, although this depends on the type of combat. Table 7 compares the numbers of British personnel killed in action in Afghanistan and Iraq with those wounded in action up to the end of July 2007. The statistics exclude illness and death from disease and other non-combat-related causes.

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426 BBC Online: 'Army fails "traumatised" soldiers' [news article], 27 March 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6479769.stm>>, accessed 9 April 2007; BBC Panorama: 'Soldiers on the run', 26 March 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6479769.stm>>, accessed 9 April 2007.

427 Friedman: 'Acknowledging the Psychiatric Cost of War', 76.

**Table 7: Numbers of British personnel killed and wounded in combat-related incidents in Afghanistan and Iraq from the beginning of each engagement up to 31 July 2007.<sup>428</sup>**

	<b>Afghanistan</b>	<b>Iraq</b>
Killed or died of wounds	45	128
Total non-fatally wounded in action	223	267
Non-fatally wounded or injured in action (seriously or very seriously)	71	196

Ministry of Defence data show that the annual mortality rate in the armed forces collectively was within the range of 69-82 persons per year per 100,000 between 2000 and 2005.<sup>429</sup> About one third of deaths in the forces are currently caused by road traffic accidents.<sup>430</sup>

In a straight comparison, the mortality rate in the UK armed forces is lower than for a matched profile of the general population, which stands at 110-120 per 100,000 between 2000 and 2005.<sup>431</sup> This is misleading, however, for the majority of personnel in the armed forces perform non-combat roles, whereas those in combat roles face the highest risk. Even so, the risk remains low in absolute terms.

In the forces, the rate of deaths by violence has been relatively low even during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq: in the 1-19 per 100,000 range between 2001 and 2005.<sup>432</sup> This rate would rise if the UK were involved in a high intensity conflict, such as the Falklands War, or sustained low-intensity conflict, such as that in Northern Ireland. It would therefore be wrong to conclude from current fatality rates that a new recruit on a 22-year engagement would have less chance of suffering a premature death than would a civilian of the same age.

Risk of combat death increases greatly for those troops selected for intensive combat operations, especially the elite regiments such as the marines and paras. *The Times* estimated in August 2007 that a front-line soldier's risk of combat death while serving in Afghanistan could be as high as 1 in 36.<sup>433</sup>

428 Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'Op Telic casualty and fatality tables: 1 January 2003 to 31 July 2007'; Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'Op Herrick casualty and fatality tables: 7 October 2001 to 31 July 2007'. The casualty rate has been much higher among US personnel. As of 3 February 2007, 15,746 US personnel had been non-mortally wounded in Iraq; 3,380 had been killed. Iraq Coalition Casualty Count [web site], <<http://www.icasualties.org/oif>>, last updated 3 February 2007, accessed 9 May 2007.

429 This includes death by accidents, disease-related conditions and violence; it excludes death by suicide and 'open verdict' deaths, which are discussed above; deaths in accidents account for 50%. Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'Statistical Notice: Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 2005' [report], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/deaths/pdfs/deaths01mar06.pdf>>, accessed 10 February 2007.

430 Ibid.

431 Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'Table 2.24 : Deaths of UK Regular Forces personnel by Service, 1996 to 2005, numbers and rates', <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/ukds/2006/c2/table224.html>> [table], accessed 9 April 2007.

432 DASA, 'Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 2005'.

433 Yeoman, Fran: 'Britain's frontline soldiers have 1 in 36 chance of dying on Afghan battlefield', *The Times Online*, 13 August 2007, <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article2246580.ece>>, accessed 1 September 2007.

The Falklands War of 1982 exemplified how an unforeseen conflict could cause an acute increase in fatality rates. After the Argentinian invasion, British soldiers, airmen and sailors (many of them under 18) were deployed rapidly to retake the islands. Their training had prepared them well for the extremely difficult military tasks that many faced. However, their many stories show that the realities of war were horrific in ways that they and their Argentinian counterparts had not imagined, and for which they were unprepared.<sup>434</sup> 255 British military personnel and 17 civilians died and 777 military personnel were wounded.<sup>435</sup> Many more suffered psychological disorders and struggled to reintegrate into life back in the UK.<sup>436</sup> The toll was higher still on the Argentinian side: an estimated 655 Argentinian personnel died and 1,105 were wounded.<sup>437</sup>

Typical serious injuries sustained in the conflict on both sides included serious burns (e.g. from shell fire), loss of limbs (e.g. from landmines), and head injuries (e.g. from rifle fire). In 1982, a soldier in the Paratroop Regiment or Royal Marines, which were both engaged in hard, close combat against entrenched Argentinian defences, ran a high risk of violent death or serious injury.

Britain has a history of high intensity conflicts such as the Falklands War and conflicts in Korea and Malaya. There is every reason to assume that conflicts like these will continue to erupt, often unexpectedly. A new recruit today could be called upon at short notice to deploy in very dangerous circumstances that they could not now anticipate, and thus they could run a higher risk of violent death or serious injury than recruitment literature or current military fatality rates suggest.

Current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq could continue for some time. If so, in terms of combat casualty rates, they are likely to resemble the long-term, low intensity conflict in Northern Ireland, in which 655 UK forces personnel died and 6,292 were injured during the 36 years between 1969 and 2005 (18 deaths and 175 injuries per year).<sup>438</sup> According to one senior officer, the current conflict in Afghanistan has seen ‘an intensity of combat not faced for a generation’ by British forces.<sup>439</sup> The Afghanistan operation could pose a greater long-term risk to UK forces personnel than that in Iraq.

434 For some case studies, see Hugh Tinker (ed.), *A Message from the Falklands: The Life and Gallant Death of David Tinker, Lieut. R.N. from his Letters and Poems*, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1983); Martin Middlebrook, *Task Force: The Falklands War 1982* (Revised Edition), (London: Penguin, 1987); Ken Lukowiak, *A Soldier's Song*, (London: Phoenix, 1999 – first pub. 1993); Dan Hallock, *Bloody Hell: The Price Soldiers Pay*, (Robertsbridge, Sussex: Plough, 1999).

435 Middlebrook: *Task Force*, 383. Civilian fatalities comprise three Falkland Islanders, eight Chinese merchant seamen and six British merchant seamen, according to Royal Air Force: ‘The Falklands Campaign 1982: The Falkland Islands Roll of Honour — Royal Air Force and others’ [web page], 1 October 2004, <<http://www.raf.mod.uk/falklands/rafetcroll.html>>, accessed 26 October 2007.

436 e.g. Lukowiak: *A Soldier's Song*.

437 Norton-Taylor, Richard: ‘Falklands war to be remembered over four days’, *The Guardian*, 14 November 2006, at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/military/story/0,,1947099,00.html>>, accessed 21 January 2007; and Middlebrook: *Task Force*, 384-5.

438 Defence Analytical Services Agency, ‘Table 7.4 : Number of Army personnel deployed to Northern Ireland and numbers of Service personnel deaths and injuries since 1969’, <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/ukds/2005/c7/table74.html>> [table], accessed 16 February 2007.

439 Gillan, Audrey: ‘They faced fighting that hasn’t been seen for a generation’, *The Guardian*, 12 October 2006.

In recent years, the UK has deployed forces overseas with the intention of removing perceived threats to UK interests or preventing mass human rights abuses. To achieve these aims, the UK has chosen to initiate military conflict abroad on several occasions, including in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. As the government takes a more activist, interventionist approach to security, it is probable that UK military engagements abroad will continue to eclipse the more passive concept of military security based on homeland defence.<sup>440</sup> New recruits today will find that they are helping to implement this foreign policy; conceivably, they could become increasingly involved in military conflict as their career progresses.

## 4.4 Bullying and harassment

Many personnel enjoy close camaraderie with their peers, which some describe as unique to the armed forces. Against this, bullying and harassment are common and under-reported. In official surveys in 2006, 8% of soldiers, 8% of airmen/women and 12% of navy ratings reported having been bullied in the previous 12 months [equivalent to 13,093 individuals at time of survey].<sup>441</sup> There has been some success in reducing bullying and other inappropriate behaviours in armed forces training establishments since 2005. However, results of an official survey in 2006 show that army recruits during initial training were still approximately 40% more likely to report being 'badly/unfairly treated' than those in other armed forces training establishments.<sup>442</sup> The unusual social context of a forces lifestyle can compound the effects of bullying and harassment. A culture of bullying and harassment also risks affecting the treatment of detainees apprehended on operations.

Most personnel value the friendships and camaraderie that can develop in a forces career. As one soldier on the Information Pack DVD says, 'Army mates are the best mates in the world.'<sup>443</sup> Where personnel experience a tightly-knit, supportive social environment, this is often attributed to the mutual dependence and teamwork required for effective operations and exercises.

440 Blair, Tony: 'Our Nation's Future — Defence' [speech], 12 January 2007, <<http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page10696.asp>>, accessed 9 April 2007.

441 Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Sep 2006-Jan 2007*, (nd), Q43; Royal Air Force, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Air Force 2006*, QG12; Royal Navy, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q34; personnel numbers based on Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'TSP 02 – UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Trained Requirements at 1 October 2006' [data table] [85,360 soldiers, 28,550 navy ratings, 35,470 airmen/women on trained strength]. Notes: the navy survey is not stratified and therefore not held to be representative of the full trained strength, although it is likely to be generally indicative; the navy and air force surveys are only distributed to trained personnel; the army survey does not specify whether it includes untrained personnel, hence personnel numbers given here are based on the trained strength only, and not personnel under training.

442 Extrapolated from Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI): *Better Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services: two years of progress* (Coventry, 2007), 33; and ALI: *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 27. The rounded rates for Phase 1 army training establishments visited by ALI were: ATR Bassingbourn, 11% [equivalent to 33 individuals out of 302]; ATR Lichfield, 6% [20 out of 326]; ATR Winchester, 11% [31 out of 280]; ATR Pirbright, 8% [71 out of 891]; AFC Harrogate, 12% [144 out of 1,202]; ITC Catterick, 10% [134 out of 1,343]. The average rate for these establishments was therefore 10%. The rate for all armed forces training establishments was 7%, according to the ALI.

443 Serving soldier's testimonial, cited in Ministry of Defence: *Regular Army and Territorial Army Information Pack* [DVD video].

However, bullying and harassment are widespread in the armed forces despite a strong zero-tolerance policy and ongoing practical efforts to reduce their extent. The legal obligations of enlistment and a lack of faith in the complaints system can combine to compound the problems. When bullying and harassment are perpetrated by superiors, life can be made a misery for their victims. Official surveys of personnel show the extent to which they believe they are harassed, discriminated against or bullied; see Table 8.

**Table 8: Incidence of self-reported victimisation by bullying, harassment or discrimination among non-officer ranks in the previous 12 months, by service, 2006 (%)<sup>444</sup>**

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Army</b>	<b>Navy</b>	<b>Air force</b>
Bullying	8%	12%	8%
Harassment	10%	13%	7%
Negative discrimination	15%	20%	14%
‘Particularly upsetting’ sexual harassment of women	15% (all armed forces)		

The Ministry of Defence has strong ‘zero tolerance’ policies against bullying and harassment and a pro-active approach to encouraging diversity in the armed forces. This has yet to have an appreciable impact on the culture of behaviour. The House of Commons Defence Committee’s 2005 *Duty of Care* report concluded that

...bullying exists in the Armed Forces and ... is under-reported. ... [The] assertion that the Armed Forces does not tolerate bullying does not sit well with the levels of bullying the MoD acknowledge.<sup>445</sup>

The social context of forces life can make it more difficult for victims of bullying and harassment to cope with the experience. Living away from regular forms of social support, such as family and long-standing friends, can leave victims of bullying and harassment isolated and thus more vulnerable than they might otherwise be.<sup>446</sup>

<sup>444</sup> Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Sep 2006-Jan 2007*, Q41, Q42, Q43; Royal Air Force, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Air Force 2006*, QG6, QG9, QG12; Royal Navy, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q32, Q33, Q34; Rutherford, Sarah; Schneider, Robin; Walmsley, Alexis: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces* [report], (Equal Opportunities Commission and the Ministry of Defence, 22 March 2006), 22

<sup>445</sup> HC Defence Committee: *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 15-16.

<sup>446</sup> Professor Keith Hawton and Professor Simon Wessely, Director of the King’s Centre for Military Health Research at King’s College London, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 75.

#### 4.4.1 Bullying

In 2005, the House of Commons Defence Committee *Duty of Care* report criticised the armed forces for failing to understand bullying, recognise the extent of the problem, or respond to it.

We have concluded that in the past insufficient weight has been given to the issue of bullying, which led to a tolerance of, or at least insufficient action being taken against, bullying. In recent years, attempts have been made to implement what is termed ‘zero tolerance’, but much bullying by both superiors and peers will continue to go unreported unless the culture changes.

The Ministry of Defence responded by acknowledging that the major challenge is to change the culture on the ground.<sup>447</sup>

In January 2005 the Ministry of Defence commissioned MORI to conduct a survey of recruits’ experiences of bullying in armed forces training establishments. In the army’s case, the study found that the highest rates of bullying were among initial (Phase 1) training establishments and that its most common victims were women and people with minority ethnic backgrounds.<sup>448</sup> On average, the rate of those reporting having been bullied in army Phase 1 training was 11%.<sup>449</sup> This suggests that the problem of bullying in initial army training establishments is significantly worse than in the rest of the army, where the rate was 8% in the same year according to the official, representative survey of soldiers.<sup>450</sup> The MORI study found the highest rates of bullying at Bassingbourn and Harrogate, at 19% and 18% respectively; Lichfield had the lowest rate at 7%; the large infantry training centre at Catterick was found to have a rate of 10%.<sup>451</sup>

Whilst recruitment literature makes clear that training for the army is hard work, it also emphasises that the army will support recruits in their development. One soldier vouches for this on the recruitment DVD: ‘You expect a big Sergeant-Major screaming at you but it doesn’t happen. It’s just talking to you, it’s step-by-step explained to you.’<sup>452</sup> Senior army personnel consider shouting appropriate only as a form of encouragement<sup>453</sup> but shouting at recruits with the intention of humiliating them (known as ‘beasting’) still forms part of the training experience for many.<sup>454</sup>

447 Ministry of Defence, *The Government’s Response to HC Defence Committee’s Duty of Care Report*, 20.

448 Adult Learning Inspectorate: *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 43.

449 *Ibid.*, 43 (Extrapolated for Phase 1 establishments only from table of all training establishments).

450 Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy): *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army 2005*, nd

451 Adult Learning Inspectorate: *Safer Training*, 43.

452 Serving soldier’s testimonial, Ministry of Defence, *Regular Army and Territorial Army Information Pack* [DVD video].

453 Lieutenant-General Anthony Palmer, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel), cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev17.

454 For example, see HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2; BBC Online, ‘Film leads to Army bullying probe’, 2 August 2005, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/4739955.stm>>, accessed 5 February 2007; Blake, Nicholas (QC), ‘The Deepcut Review’ [press briefing], 29 March 2006, 5.

Bullying by those in authority positions can be particularly difficult to deal with. Although many cases of bullying by trainers and other superiors are thought to go unreported, there is evidence that the problem is widespread. This includes the reports of investigations at Deepcut Barracks in Surrey and several cases uncovered by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) in 2005. There is additionally a large amount of anecdotal evidence from recruits, their families, friends and colleagues, of bullying by superiors.

The training of new recruits aims to inculcate discipline and obedience, which some trainers have used to mete out harsh punishments that would generally be described as bullying. The ALI lists classic examples of common punishments as ‘locker-trashing’, which involves wrecking the contents of a recruit’s locker or throwing the contents about the room; ‘tanking’, which involves throwing recruits into a tank of murky water in all weathers; and physical attacks, including with the use of an object as a weapon.<sup>455</sup> These punishments are often meted out for trivial offences, such as ‘not listening’, the ALI report noted, and self-evidently all aim to humiliate the victims.

The Blake Review of four deaths at Deepcut (Princess Royal) Barracks in Surrey concluded that ‘there is no evidence of bullying related to the deaths’.<sup>456</sup> However, it noted in relation to Sean Benton:

There is evidence from trainees and permanent staff that Sean, amongst others, was subject to verbal and physical sanctions from NCOs that went beyond the legitimate demands of even a necessarily robust training regime.<sup>457</sup>

One recruit alleged that he witnessed such an incident:

I have seen Sgt Gavaghan for an unknown reason punch Sean in the chest and would pick Benton up out of the parade and humiliate him in front of us. I can recall one incident when Sgt Gavaghan got Benton out and made him lay down and he was punched in the leg, given a dead leg.<sup>458</sup>

Trevor Hunter, a friend of Sean Benton, told the BBC’s Panorama programme:

He [Sean Benton] was thrown out of a second floor window to land on the grass below. He never ever told me who it was but he did say that an NCO had done it.<sup>459</sup>

Trainee James McAleese described the general atmosphere at Deepcut as being one ‘of depression with a high boredom factor, bullying and humiliation’.<sup>460</sup> Another Deepcut recruit, Paul Kerr, claims to have witnessed a recruit being punched in the head by a sergeant, and another incident in which a young trainee ‘was thrown against a wall so violently by a member of staff I thought he had broken his back’.<sup>461</sup>

455 Adult Learning Inspectorate: *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 43.

456 Blake, Nicholas (QC), ‘The Deepcut Review’ [press briefing], 29 March 2006.

457 Ibid.

458 Cited in Heather Mills and Brian Cathcart, ‘Deepcut: Shots in the dark’ [special report], *Private Eye*, 19.

459 BBC Panorama Online, ‘Fear and violence at Deepcut’.

460 Ibid.

461 Ibid.

The House of Commons Defence Committee's Duty of Care inquiry in 2005 was unable to gather enough evidence to gauge the prevalence of bullying and harassment at Deepcut;<sup>462</sup> it did observe that the majority of the evidence that it received indicated a serious problem. The committee cited one former recruit quoted in the *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper:

Staff crossed the boundaries of discipline into humiliation and control through the use of fear... A handful of staff members made our training unattainable and not only soul-destroying but, for some, life-destroying. Senior officers stood back and watched the morale plummet, self-harming soar and people die and did nothing.<sup>463</sup>

Police investigations into the prevalence of bullying at Deepcut after the deaths in 1995 and 2001-2 revealed 118 reported (not necessarily proven) incidents.<sup>464</sup> A 2002 survey of recruits at Deepcut revealed that 8.4% of respondents had experienced bullying and 42.6% claimed to have witnessed it.<sup>465</sup> The Blake Review concluded in 2006 that there was no longer a culture of bullying at Deepcut,<sup>466</sup> although this seems at odds with the 2005 MORI survey, which found that 7% of personnel at Deepcut reported having been bullied.<sup>467</sup>

The Infantry Training Centre (ITC) at Catterick, Yorkshire, has also been accused of a culture of bullying. The centre has around 1,343 non-officer recruits under training at any one time.<sup>468</sup> It has a rapid turnover, taking in around 140 soldiers for training every fortnight with an output of approximately 2,835 in the training year 2005-06.<sup>469</sup> These are mostly new recruits taking the tough, 24-week Combat Infantryman's Course.

Lynn Farr, mother of 18-year-old recruit Daniel Farr who died of pneumonia at Catterick and a provider of informal welfare support to army recruits, has documented 19 non-combat deaths at ITC Catterick between 1995 and 2001. Some of these were associated with alleged bullying by peers and superiors, although investigations were often inconclusive. Based on her contact with recruits and their parents, Mrs. Farr believes that the most vulnerable to bullying are those who struggled at school, or who were set apart from others by conditions such as dyslexia.<sup>470</sup> She and the BBC have evidence that some recruits have felt forced to go absent without leave because of bullying at Catterick.<sup>471</sup>

462 HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 33.

463 'Deepcut troops reveal scale of cruelty at base', *Scotland on Sunday*, 23 May 2004, cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 33.

464 Memorandum from Surrey Police to HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 452-472.

465 QinetiQ Post Training Survey, November 2002, cited in Memorandum from Surrey Police to HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 457.

466 Blake, Nicholas (QC): 'The Deepcut Review' [press briefing], 29 March 2006.

467 Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 43.

468 Data from 2005, cited in Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 27.

469 Infantry Training Centre Catterick web site.

470 Memorandum from Mrs Lynn Farr to HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 423-428; personal communication, November 2007.

471 Memorandum from Mrs Lynn Farr to HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 423-428; BBC Online, 'Film leads to Army bullying probe'; Daniel's Trust, Fight Against Bullying [web site], 'Catterick In Memoriam' [web page], (nd), <<http://freespace.virgin.net/lynn.farr/in%20memoriam.htm>>, accessed 19 May 2007.

Mrs. Farr reports that the situation at ITC Catterick has improved since the Duty of Care inquiry: there have been fewer non-combat deaths and senior staff now take complaints more seriously.<sup>472</sup> Changing the culture on the ground remains a slow process, she says; a persistent problem is that ‘[in] most cases senior officers do not know what is fully happening on camp’.<sup>473</sup>

A culture of bullying carries the further risk that detainees apprehended during operations will be treated inappropriately; soldiers who are victims of bullying might also bully detainees in order to compensate for their own disempowerment by their peers (see p. 126).

In 2005 and 2007 the ALI reviewed armed forces training establishments.<sup>474</sup> The 2007 report noted energetic efforts by the armed forces to promote a zero-tolerance policy. It concluded that some significant progress had been made to reduce bullying since the 2005 report, including fewer inappropriate punishments, while noting that ‘Phase 1 Army establishments still give some cause for concern’.<sup>475</sup>

An official survey in 2006 found that 7% of trainees in all armed forces training establishments reported being ‘badly/unfairly treated’. The rate among new army recruits was significantly higher, at 10% on average for all initial (Phase 1) army training establishments (including ITC Catterick, at 10%).<sup>476</sup> The same survey found that 12% of recruits across all armed forces training establishments reported not being ‘correctly treated by the staff always/most of the time’; at ITC Catterick the proportion was 26%, which was the highest rate among the 27 armed forces training establishments visited by the ALI.<sup>477</sup> This suggests that despite genuine and productive efforts to reduce bullying in the armed forces, it remains a serious problem, especially at initial training establishments for soldiers.

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472 Personal communication, November 2007

473 Memorandum from Lynn Farr to the HC Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 2001, in Armed Forces Bill Select Committee, *First Special Report of Session 2000-01, Minutes of Evidence*, and personal communication, November 2007

474 Adult Learning Inspectorate: *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005) and *Better Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services: two years of progress* (Coventry, 2007).

475 *Ibid.*, 32.

476 See footnote 442.

477 *Ibid.*, 32 [extrapolated, rounded] Rounded rates for other Phase 1 army training establishments were: ATR Bassingbourn, 15%; ATR Lichfield, 11%; ATR Winchester, 14%; ATR Pirbright, 15%; AFC Harrogate, 12%.

#### 4.4.2 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is common in all branches of the armed forces. 15% of respondents to an official survey of female personnel in 2006 said that they had had a 'particularly upsetting' experience of unwanted sexual behaviour directed at them in the previous 12 months [equivalent to 2,700 individuals at time of survey].<sup>478</sup> The rate was higher for those aged 16-23 or those of low rank, each at 20%. The Ministry of Defence appears to be responding urgently to the problems revealed. However, a 'macho' culture impedes progress towards universal acceptance of women as equals with men in the armed forces.<sup>479</sup>

Women make up 9% of the UK regular forces [17,850 at 1 April 2007].<sup>480</sup> In June 2004 the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) expressed concern to the Ministry of Defence about '...the frequency and persistence of sexual harassment against women serving in the Armed Forces'.<sup>481</sup> The EOC began a formal investigation, which it suspended conditionally '...upon the Armed Forces' fulfilment of an Agreement and three-year Action Plan to prevent and deal effectively with sexual harassment'.<sup>482</sup>

As part of the action plan, the EOC and MoD jointly commissioned a wide-ranging survey of sexual harassment in the armed forces.<sup>483</sup> The survey invited participation from all female forces personnel, of whom 52% [9,384] responded,<sup>484</sup> and the findings were published in 2005.

The survey found that female personnel routinely experience unwanted sexual behaviour directed at them. Younger women and those of lower rank are at particular risk. The Ministry of Defence responded that '...it is clear from this research that we have a serious problem with which we must deal urgently'.<sup>485</sup>

The surveyors' work with all-male focus groups found that, although some men felt that the presence of women in the forces makes for a better working and social atmosphere, many were sceptical or even hostile. Men in the armed forces commonly sexualise women, deem them to be emotionally unsuitable and criticise them as physically incapable; women are expected to adapt to the male culture.<sup>486</sup>

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478 Rutherford, Sarah; Schneider, Robin; Walmsley, Alexis: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces* [report], (Equal Opportunities Commission and the Ministry of Defence, 22 March 2006), 22. Personnel numbers based on Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'TSP 02 – UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Trained Requirements at 1 October 2006' [data table] [18,000 women on full-time strength including officers and other ranks].

479 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 9.

480 MoD: *Annual Report 2005-06*, 142; Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'TSP 02 - UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Requirements at 1 April 2007' [table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp2/tsp2tab.html>>, accessed 1 June 2007.

481 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 5.

482 Ibid., 5.

483 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*.

484 MoD: *Annual Report 2005-06*, 142.

485 Ibid.

486 The survey included ten male focus groups of about ten participants each. Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 7, 9-10.

‘If you can’t change a drop tyre you shouldn’t be in the Army.’  
 ‘Ok there are a few exceptions but on the whole they shouldn’t be here.’  
 ‘Females are good at being clerks, chefs of admin.’  
 ‘They can’t even run properly, always getting injured and taking ages.’  
 ‘They are emotionally unstable.’  
 ‘Yes they can be very moody, very moody.’  
 ‘They’re all lesbians or sluts.’  
 ‘They like banging in public.’  
 ‘The Army is no place for women.’  
 ‘They are an absolute fucking liability...’<sup>487</sup>

One female army officer reported that a group of men grabbed her colleague while out on exercise and,

...ducked her head in a bucket of water and each time she came up for breath she had to repeat ‘I am useless and I am a female’. She told the story and said it was a joke but I could see she was upset.<sup>488</sup>

Women are excluded from careers involving close combat roles such as infantry soldier. A principal reason given is the importance that men attach to male bonding for operational effectiveness. Men are concerned about ‘...the potential impact of gender mixing in small teams i.e. the bonding process may be inhibited by the presence of females’.<sup>489</sup>

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (amended 2005) defines sexual harassment as ‘unwanted verbal, non-verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature’ that violates or intends to violate the complainant’s dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.<sup>490</sup>

The specific character of such conduct is not defined in the legislation but the European Commission has provided guidelines, as follows. Non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature includes ‘the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects or written materials; leering, whistling, or making sexually suggestive gestures’. Verbal conduct of a sexual nature includes ‘unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity; continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome; offensive flirtations; suggestive remarks, innuendoes or lewd comments’. Physical conduct of a sexual nature includes ‘unwanted physical contact ranging from unnecessary touching, patting or pinching or brushing against another employee’s body, to assault and coercing sexual intercourse’.<sup>491</sup>

The EOC/MoD survey divided behaviour that could constitute harassment into two types: environmental behaviour and behaviour targeted at individuals.

487 Ibid. 9-12.

488 Ibid. 13.

489 Ibid. 12.

490 Ibid. 5.

491 Cited *ibid.*, 5.

Environmental behaviour is that which forms part of the working and living environment of personnel. This includes sexual gestures, body language, explicit language, display of explicit materials, and jokes and stories. Women in the armed forces are relatively tolerant of this behaviour, yet of those who had experienced it in their environment in the last 12 months 51.5% had found at least one situation offensive.<sup>492</sup>

Unwelcome sexual behaviour targeted at individuals includes: comments on appearance, body or sexual activities; attempts to talk about sexual matters; sending explicit material; body language and gestures; attempts at touching; attempts to establish a sexual relationship despite discouragement; offers of better treatment at work in return for a sexual relationship; threats of worse treatment if a sexual relationship is refused; and sexual assault.<sup>493</sup> The survey found that two thirds of women in the forces had experienced at least one of these behaviours directed at them in the previous 12 months. The rate rose to 77% for those aged 16-23 and 75% for those of low rank (below Corporal or Leading Hand).<sup>494</sup>

15% of respondents said that they had had a 'particularly upsetting' experience in the previous 12 months [equivalent to 2,700 individuals at time of survey].<sup>495</sup> The rate was again higher for those aged 16-23 or those of low rank, at 20% in both cases.<sup>496</sup> The implication is that a female recruit has a 1-in-5 chance of having a particularly upsetting experience of unwanted sexual behaviour directed at her at least once in a 12-month period.

The survey found that 49% of particularly upsetting experiences lasted for more than two months,<sup>497</sup> and exactly a quarter of those who had had a particularly upsetting experience considered leaving the forces as a result.<sup>498</sup>

3.2% of women who responded to the survey [302 cases out of 9,384 respondents; 576 cases if applied to all women in the forces] reported that they had been sexually assaulted at least once in the previous 12 months.<sup>499</sup>

Rates of unwelcome sexual behaviour were generally higher than average in the army than in the air force and navy.<sup>500</sup>

The survey found that in some cases perpetrators appeared to use a position of seniority to protect themselves from complaint. 36% of perpetrators of particularly upsetting experiences were more senior than the woman affected and were often her line manager.<sup>501</sup> This adds a barrier to complaint, for the command chain is integral to the complaints system.

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492 Ibid. 13.

493 Ibid. 17.

494 Ibid. 19-20.

495 Ibid. 22; personnel numbers based on Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'TSP 02 – UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Trained Requirements at 1 October 2006' [data table] [18,000 women on full-time strength including officers and other ranks].

496 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 22.

497 Ibid. 27.

498 Ibid. 28.

499 Ibid. 17; personnel numbers for the armed forces as a whole based on Defence Analytical Services Agency: 'TSP 02 – UK Armed Forces Full Time Strengths and Trained Requirements at 1 October 2006' [data table] [18,000 women on full-time strength including officers and other ranks].

500 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 18, 22.

501 Ibid. 25.

It is reasonable to conclude that a culture of sexual harassment exists in the armed forces. The Ministry of Defence's collaborative three-year programme with the Equal Opportunities Commission is an important step towards changing this. The programme:

...aims to create a working environment in which sexual harassment is not tolerated; to ensure that Service personnel who experience sexual harassment feel able to complain and have confidence in the complaints process, including a robust investigation process, high quality support, the use of effective sanctions, a focus on resolving the problem, and protection from future harassment or victimisation; and to monitor the nature and extent of harassment in the Armed Forces in order to correct deficiencies and build upon the strengths of our policies and processes.<sup>502</sup>

There is some hope that at least some progress is possible: some men are unaware that their behaviour may be inappropriate and will stop if told.<sup>503</sup> Even so, sexual harassment is part of the pervasive macho culture of the armed forces, typified by a caption for an image on the Infantry Training Centre web site: 'People sleep peacefully in their beds at night because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.'<sup>504</sup> The survey report observed that the armed forces' emphasis on a macho perception of masculinity marginalises female personnel:

Characteristics associated with the Armed Forces are bravery, physical strength, ability to lead and to obey — all traditionally masculine traits, which are emphasised by the men [who took part in the survey] themselves. Men saw the Service environment as being in essence 'macho' and physically demanding (and they were proud of their physical prowess.) In that regard, women were often seen as a 'liability' and not strong enough physically or emotionally to do the job to the required standards. Men need to identify themselves with this 'macho' masculinity and to do [so] may mean distancing themselves from everything female. This automatically places the 'feminine' as being contrary to the ideal.<sup>505</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Racial, cultural and religious discrimination

**Those with ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely than others to be victims of harassment or bullying, according a study of armed forces training establishments by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2005.**

Since the Strategic Defence Review in 1998, the armed forces have attempted to attract more recruits with ethnic minority backgrounds, partly due to the increasing proportion of youth with these backgrounds. In 1997, the proportion of forces personnel with an ethnic minority background was 1%; by 2006 it was over 5%, although only 2.4% of officers had a minority background compared with 6.2% in other ranks.<sup>506</sup>

502 MoD: *Annual Report 2005-06*, 142.

503 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 31.

504 Infantry Training Centre Catterick web site, 7 March 2007, <[http://www.army.mod.uk/hqschinf/itc\\_catterick/](http://www.army.mod.uk/hqschinf/itc_catterick/)>, accessed 13 April 2007.

505 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 9.

506 Ministry of Defence, *Strategic Defence Review 1998* (July 1998), 'Supporting Essay Nine: A Policy for People', 214; Defence

Special exceptions to uniform rules now meet some of the religious and cultural needs of Jews, Muslims and Sikhs; halal and kosher meals and ration packs are available; time off is usually granted for religious observance; and there are now ‘chaplains’ from the Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths.<sup>507</sup>

Table 9 shows discrimination experienced by respondents in non-officer ranks to official surveys in 2006; rates of harassment are slightly lower. The table appears to show that a large proportion of those with minority backgrounds are discriminated against, although sample numbers are too low to be reliable or to show a consistent pattern. However, an official survey in 2005 of recruits in army training establishments found that those of an ethnic minority background were most likely to be victims of bullying.<sup>508</sup>

A further study aimed at determining the level and types of discrimination against recruits with a minority background in comparison to those in civilian careers would be useful.

<b>Table 9</b>			
<b>Incidence of negative discrimination experienced by non-officer ranks on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin or religion in the previous 12 months, by service, 2006 (% , rounded)<sup>509</sup></b>			
	<b>Army</b>	<b>Navy</b>	<b>Air force</b>
With an ethnic minority background	9%	3%	2%
Discriminated against because of race, colour or ethnic origin (all non-officer personnel)	3%	4%	2%
Discriminated against because of religion (all non-officer personnel)	1%	1%	1%

Analytical Services Agency: ‘Table 2.10 : Strength of UK Regular Forces by ethnic origin, Service and rank at 1 April 2006’ [table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/ukds/2006/c2/table210.html>>, accessed 1 September 2007.

507 MoD: *Annual Report 2005-06*, 148.

508 Women were the other high-risk category. Cited in Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 43.

509 Defence Analytical Services Agency: ‘Table 2.10 : Strength of UK Regular Forces by ethnic origin, Service and rank at 1 April 2006’ [table], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/ukds/2006/c2/table210.html>>, accessed 1 September 2007; Ministry of Defence (Directorate Army Personnel Strategy), *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Army Sep 2006-Jan 2007*, Q41; Royal Air Force, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Air Force 2006*, QG6; Royal Navy, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q32.

#### 4.4.4 Discrimination and harassment on grounds of sexual orientation

The ban on lesbian and gay people in the armed forces was lifted in 2000 following a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. It is now a disciplinary offence to discriminate against personnel on grounds of their sexual orientation. The navy (including marines) is the only force to ask personnel about attitudes to working with gay and lesbian colleagues. In official, unstratified surveys, 21% of navy ratings and 41% of marines disagreed with the statement, 'I don't mind serving alongside gay men or lesbians.'<sup>510</sup>

Until 2000, it was a disciplinary matter to be openly gay or lesbian in the armed forces; personnel could face humiliating investigations into their private lives and be dismissed. After a long campaign led by Rank Outsiders, a group of former forces personnel persecuted for their sexual orientation, successful legal action at the European Court of Human Rights prompted the government to change the policy. This reversed the policy and it became an offence to discriminate against personnel on grounds of their sexual orientation. Even so, relatively few lesbian and gay people in the forces are thought to have come out since the ban was lifted.<sup>511</sup>

On winning their battle with the Ministry of Defence, Rank Outsiders became the Armed Forces Lesbian and Gay Association (AFLaGA), which was launched in 2001 to promote equal treatment within the armed forces.

According to the Ministry of Defence:

In practice, the Services now treat sexual orientation as a private matter not relevant to an individual's suitability for a career in the Armed Forces. Personnel are free to choose whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation. The important thing is that if they wish to do so, they must be confident that they will not suffer abuse or intimidation. All members of the Armed Forces are expected to challenge homophobic behaviour, attitudes and all other forms of prejudice.

In line with the terms of the Civil Partnerships Act, the Services also give parity of treatment, for example in the allocation of accommodation, to gay and lesbian couples who have formally registered their partnerships.<sup>512</sup>

The navy is collaborating with the gay and lesbian rights organisation Stonewall to recruit among the gay community and advertise in the gay press.<sup>513</sup> Some in the lesbian and gay community are critical, believing that their community is by definition counter-cultural and opposed to the armed forces as an 'oppressive straight institution'.<sup>514</sup>

510 Royal Navy, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q30e [714 respondents]; Royal Marines, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q30e [152 respondents].

511 Barkham, Patrick: 'Navy's new message: your country needs you, especially if you are gay', *The Guardian*, 21 February 2005, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/gayrights/story/0,,1418932,00.html>>, accessed 30 April 2007.

512 MoD: *Annual Report 2005-06*, 147.

513 Barkham, Patrick: 'Navy's new message: your country needs you, especially if you are gay', *The Guardian*, 21 February 2005, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/gayrights/story/0,,1418932,00.html>>, accessed 30 April 2007.

514 Tatchell, Peter: 'Dying to be Equal', Red Pepper archive, (nd), <<http://www.redpepper.org.uk/cularch/xtatchel.html>>, accessed 30 April 2007.

At least two officers have vouched for the effectiveness of the policy against homophobia. The most senior openly gay officer, Lieutenant-Commander Craig Jones, told *The Guardian* in 2005 that he thought there had been ‘an enormous climate of change’ and that he had not had to reproach anyone for discrimination or harassment since the ban was lifted.<sup>515</sup> Andy Wasley, an officer in the RAF, told *Attitude* magazine that he had never experienced any homophobia.<sup>516</sup>

Much to its credit, the navy (including marines) is the only force to ask personnel about attitudes to working with gay and lesbian colleagues. The results reveal an apparent striking difference between the attitudes of navy ratings and marines. Asked in 2006 whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, ‘I don’t mind serving alongside gay men or lesbians’, 21.9% of navy ratings and 40.8% of marines questioned disagreed. With the proviso that sample numbers were small and are not held to be representative of the force as a whole, in both cases the level of homophobia seems high. Table 10 gives the full breakdown of responses.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Navy</b>	<b>Marines</b>
Strongly agree	11.1%	3.3%
Agree	38.8%	36.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	28.2%	19.7%
Disagree	13.4%	19.1%
Strongly disagree	8.5%	21.7%
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>152</b>

515 Barkham, Patrick: ‘Navy’s new message: your country needs you, especially if you are gay’, *The Guardian*, 21 February 2005, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/gayrights/story/0,,1418932,00.html>>, accessed 30 April 2007.

516 ‘Attitude talks to Andy Wasley, Identification Officer in the Fighter Control branch’, *Attitude* magazine, September 2005, cited at Proud 2 Serve [British armed forces personnel web site], 24 August 2005, <<http://www.proud2serve.net/interviews/200508-attitude-forces4change-wasley.htm>>, accessed 30 April 2007.

517 Royal Navy, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q30e [714 respondents]; Royal Marines, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys: Royal Navy 2006*, Q30e [152 respondents].

#### 4.4.5 Complaints

The House of Commons Defence Committee's *Duty of Care* report in 2005 concluded that the armed forces have a culture that 'discourages complaint'.<sup>518</sup> Among personnel there is a widespread lack of faith in the complaints system; many fear that complaining can jeopardise their career.

There is widespread reluctance among personnel to report inappropriate behaviour, as the House of Commons Defence Committee Duty of Care inquiry and the investigations into the deaths at Deepcut discovered. *The Observer* reported in June 2003 that '...a recent review of training spoke of a "code of silence" and a "widespread reluctance" to report bullying'.<sup>519</sup> Of 453 recruits' parents surveyed by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) in 2005, 63 respondents [14%] reported incidents involving their son or daughter that provided clear grounds for a formal complaint; only 20 were made.<sup>520</sup>

One reason that some personnel choose not to complain is that they believe punishments that might count for bullying in civilian life should not necessarily do so in the armed forces. Yvonne Collinson, mother of James Collinson who died at Deepcut Barracks in 2002, told the Duty of Care inquiry about an incident involving her son during training: when he answered back to a sergeant who had criticised him for taking too long to climb a steep muddy slope, the sergeant 'knocked him all the way back down to the bottom of the hill'.<sup>521</sup> When Mrs. Collinson wanted to complain, her son said to her, "Oh Mum, don't be silly. This is the British Army; that's what they do."<sup>522</sup>

The belief that inappropriate behaviour in civilian life may be acceptable in the armed forces means that those in the chain of command may not always take complaints seriously. According to his oral evidence to the Duty of Care inquiry, the father of another trainee who died at Deepcut, Cheryl James, had been in contact with a recruit who was absent without leave. Whenever the recruit returned to Deepcut, he was beaten up, said Mr. James, who had appealed to Lieutenant-Colonel Ron Laden, then the commanding officer:

Ron, remember what you told me — the WRVS, the WI, the Army, reputation — your fellows are just knocking hell out of this lad. What are you doing? Why are you doing it?' 'Yeah,' he said, 'but he's useless; he just keeps running away.' I said: 'But you keep beating him up.' 'No, no, no,' he said, 'he just runs away all the time.' I said: 'Ron, honestly, I have spoken to the boy and if he is no good send him away from the Army. Why are you doing this?' But the attitude, the mentality — [I] could not get through.<sup>523</sup>

518 House of Commons Defence Committee: *Duty of Care* (Vol 1), (London: The Stationery Office, 2005), 15-16.

519 No author cited, 'Sex fear of Army teens', *The Observer*, 8 June 2003, <[http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,6903,972901,00.html](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,972901,00.html)>, accessed 10 April 2007.

520 Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 46.

521 HC Defence Committee: *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev193.

522 Ibid.

523 Ibid., Ev193-4; see also *ibid.* Ev163.

Another reason for the common reluctance to complain is a widespread absence of faith in the effectiveness and justice of complaints system. The now well-documented cases of bullying at Deepcut Barracks are a case in point: the Surrey Police investigation into four deaths at the barracks revealed ‘a common theme [of] the lack of faith that young soldiers have in the way that they can report any problems’.<sup>524</sup> Trevor Hunter told the BBC’s Panorama programme that bullied soldiers at Deepcut ‘...were that scared that they would never tell you what happened’. Glynn Boswell confirmed this: ‘But you can’t report it. You could be reporting it to the person who was actually doing it.’

The web site for the Royal Logistics Corps Phase Two training programme advised Deepcut trainees in 2003:

If at any time you think you have a problem with an instructor, you have the right to speak with your troop commander about the subject, *but be aware that if you find yourself in this position, the problem is more likely to be a fault with your attitude than it is with the instructors.*<sup>525</sup>

By presuming that complaints will not be genuine, the advice effectively discourages all complaint. The advice on the web site has since been revised.

Lieutenant-General Anthony Palmer, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel) told the Duty of Care inquiry:

...we have put in as many separate points of contact for all young people as we possibly can. I do not think actually that we could do much more than that.<sup>526</sup>

Providing a variety of points of contact for personnel to air problems is important but insufficient to change a military culture that, as the *Duty of Care* report concluded, ‘discourages complaint’.<sup>527</sup> The report stated,

The Armed Forces, and in particular the Army, still do not seem to understand the extent to which their hierarchical structures make it likely that abuses will not be reported.<sup>528</sup>

The official army survey of 2006 found that over a quarter of soldiers (27%) had complained during their careers about unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment or bullying (but did not indicate whether this applies to ill treatment of the complainant or of others). Of those who had made a complaint, 58% felt that it had not been handled fairly and objectively; the same proportion were dissatisfied with the length of time taken to deal with it.<sup>529</sup>

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524 Memorandum from Surrey Police to HC Defence Committee, Duty of Care, Vol 2, Ev 457.

525 Charter for RLC Phase Two Trainees web site (accessed 23 January 2003, since deleted), cited in Memorandum from Surrey Police to HC Defence Committee, Duty of Care, Vol 2, Ev 458 [emphasis in original].

526 Lieutenant-General Anthony Palmer, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel), cited in HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev19.

527 HC Defence Committee: *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 15-16.

528 HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 1, 16.

529 MoD: *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*: Qs 41, 42a, 42b.

According to a joint Equal Opportunities Commission and Ministry of Defence survey of women in the forces in 2005, 38% of those who had had a particularly upsetting experience of sexual behaviour directed at them and who did not tell anyone about it chose not to do so because they believed that nothing would be done about it; 34% thought that complaining could adversely affect their job or career.<sup>530</sup>

The survey also found that only 5% who had had a particularly upsetting experience had made a formal complaint and of those who did, few (20%-43%) were satisfied with how it was handled and more than half reported negative consequences at work as a result.<sup>531</sup> One junior officer in the army described the reaction from her chain of command:

Complaints to my line manager and Adjutant were brushed aside and I was told I had to expect that sort of [sexualised] behaviour in the Army. Once I had spoken out I then faced going to lunch and a senior Major of the unit said 'I hear you've made a complaint and don't approve of our behaviour. That's why we don't want women in the Army'. I was mortified.<sup>532</sup>

There is further anecdotal evidence that complaints from personnel are felt to make a situation more difficult for complainants.<sup>533</sup> Some evidence to the Duty of Care inquiry revealed that some recruits had been threatened by their superiors not to complain.<sup>534</sup>

Personnel who feel unable to complain within the established formal and informal channels are not usually able to discuss their problems with those outside the military system. The Queen's Regulations for all three forces forbid personnel to make statements to any outside party; to do so is a disciplinary offence that can lead to imprisonment (and has done so).<sup>535</sup> In practice, personnel discuss or display their experiences publicly and anonymously using web sites such as Live Leak and Army Rumour Service but many are unsure about how much they can reveal to outside parties without breaking the rules. Amnesty International's investigations into adolescent soldiers were

...faced with a virtual wall of silence by former/serving young recruits, some of whom stated that they were 'not allowed' or were 'too scared' to speak to representatives of the organization.<sup>536</sup>

2007 has seen some improvement, according to an inspection of training establishments by the ALI. Its report noted:

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530 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 34.

531 Ibid. 39.

532 Ibid. 35.

533 See for example, Memorandum from Professor Margaret Cox to HC Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev 488-490.

534 See, for example, House of Commons Defence Committee, *Duty of Care*, Vol 2, Ev160. Janette Mattin reported that her son Mark was 'intimidated all the time'.

535 Queen's Regulations for the Army, c.12, J12.016c, 'Activities Involving the Use of Official Information or Experience' [applies also to navy and air force personnel].

536 Amnesty International, 'United Kingdom: Army Barracks Deaths: Families Demand Justice' [report] (18 June 2003), <<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur450042003>>, accessed 5 February 2007.

The recording of complaints has improved significantly across all three of the armed services. All the training establishments now have satisfactory complaints procedures, although some of the procedures are still being bedded in and it is too early to judge their long-term effectiveness.<sup>537</sup>

The ALI believes that more still needs to be done, however:

Continuing ambivalence [among armed forces authorities] about the useful role that an open approach to resolving complaints can play in organisational improvement.<sup>538</sup>

## 4.5 Ethical challenges

An armed forces career involves ethical questions associated with the justification of killing, the risk of civilian casualties and the political purposes of military action. In order to make a responsible choice about enlistment, all potential recruits need to have considered these issues before accepting the legal obligations of service, and to continue to do so during their career. In omitting to mention ethical dilemmas, the army recruitment literature and applications process fail to support potential recruits in making an informed decision about enlistment in this respect.

### 4.5.1 Killing

Armed forces personnel must be prepared to harm and kill people. At enlistment, the recruit becomes legally obliged to kill if ordered to do so and will be punished under military law if he or she refuses, unless recognised as a conscientious objector.

The potential recruit must be prepared for what killing other people could mean for them personally, both ethically and experientially. It could have a profound effect on the person's conscience and/or mental health, and it raises challenging moral questions that it would be inhumane and irresponsible to ignore.

David Grossman, a retired officer in the US military, trains police and military personnel to overcome their natural inhibition to killing other human beings. Interviewed for a US documentary about killing as a stressor, he described the neurophysiological effect of killing on a person at the point of firing a weapon:

One of the most devastating, catastrophic effects of all is forebrain processing shuts down. And the mammalian brain, the mid-brain part of your brain that's the same as your dog, begins to take over.

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<sup>537</sup> Adult Learning Inspectorate. *Better Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services: two years of progress* (Coventry, 2007), 34.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

... So inside the mammalian brain of most healthy human beings is this powerful resistance to killing your own kind. We can see it throughout history... We saw it in World War II when only 15 percent of the riflemen would fire their weapon at an exposed enemy soldier. In Vietnam, around 95 percent were firing, but there was a lot of spraying and praying [firing a weapon indiscriminately].

... And the only way to get the mammalian brain to do the right thing is to train it, train it, train it, train it. ... and we do that through various inoculation: paint bullets — the technology of actually firing real guns with real gunpowder. What comes out the barrel is not a chunk of lead, but a plastic bullet, the marking capsule, and when it hits, it hurts. And we're inoculating [the soldier/police officer].

A firefighter can't use flickering red lights in his training. A mountain climber can't use a picture of a 1,000-foot drop. He needs a real 1,000-foot drop. A firefighter needs real fire to inoculate them, to teach them that they can deal with this. And soldiers and cops need the same, and we brought them up [through training] to that level.

So you see, this physiological phenomenon can be dealt with in several ways. One is to not get into what we call condition black, [but] to remain calm, cool, calculating in the heat of battle. And we're doing that. The other thing is to have a condition reflex in place so that even at the moment of truth, the shot's there [*snaps fingers*] and you fire without conscious thought.<sup>539</sup>

Grossman says that soldiers need to recognise and accept that killing is what they do:

So when I teach, one of the things I believe we need to do is embrace this word 'kill'. You will read 100 military manuals, and you'll never see the word 'kill'. It's a dirty four-letter word. It's an obscene word. And yet it's what we do. ...<sup>540</sup>

David Grossman's observation about military manuals holds true for UK army recruitment literature, which omits all mention of killing despite its centrality to the soldier's role. As this report has shown, the literature obscures the soldier's duty to kill.

Often, it is only after combat has ceased that the psychological effects of killing are felt. Vince Bramley was a machine gunner with 3 Parachute Regiment in the night-time battle of Mount Longdon in the Falklands War. He describes it as 'combat at very close quarters, hand to hand, eye to eye, very bloody stuff' and recalls the scene at the top of the mountain after the battle in the early hours of the morning:

It wasn't until daylight, when I ran into the bowl on the summit and saw the number of dead people there, including my own friends and colleagues, that the shock hit me. Nobody touched me, but it was as if somebody had punched me in the stomach. And I just went into a state of shock. ...

539 PBS: Frontline [television documentary company], 'The Impact of Killing and How to Prepare the Soldier', in PBS: Frontline: The Soldier's Heart [television documentary transcript], 1 March 2005, at <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/heart/themes/prep.html>>, accessed 15 September 2007.

540 Ibid. [full interview version of page].

I remember looking around at some of my friends who had survived as well and were in this bowl, and I hadn't realised until then that I wasn't the only one crying. And there were Argentines who had been taken prisoner, and they were crying as well. I think all of us were shocked at the extent of what we'd done to each other. And then you begin to realise you're not the rough, tough British paratrooper that the programme of training had made you out to be. You realise you're human, and you have human feelings, and that the men beside you are no different.<sup>541</sup>

#### 4.5.2 Civilian casualties

Potential recruits also need to be aware that in battle they or their colleagues could kill people unintentionally, including women, children and the elderly. In the Falklands War, three islanders were killed by the British navy in error; these were the only violent deaths among the islanders during the conflict.

The coalition military operation in Iraq has killed an increasing number of Iraqi people every year since the invasion in 2003.<sup>542</sup> A study published in *The Lancet* in October 2006 estimated with 95% confidence that the invasion and occupation of Iraq had led to between 392,979 and 942,636 more deaths than would have occurred if the war had not taken place, with the most probable figure being 654,965. Although the findings have been disputed, it is now beyond doubt that the operation has exacted a massive toll on Iraq's civilian population.<sup>543</sup>

The study found that most deaths in Iraq (55%) had been caused by violence; 31% of Iraqi violent deaths had been caused by coalition forces.<sup>544</sup> Even on the basis of the study's lowest estimate of 392,979 Iraqi fatalities, this amounts to 121,823 deaths as a direct result of coalition action. An unknown proportion of the dead will have been insurgents but many were civilians: 20% of all Iraq's child fatalities (aged 0-14 years) since the invasion were killed in coalition air strikes, the survey found.

541 Hallock, Dan: *Bloody Hell: The Price Soldiers Pay* (Robertsbridge, Sussex: Plough, 1999), 65.

542 Burnham, Gilbert et al, 'Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross-sectional cluster sample survey', *The Lancet*, 21 October 2006, Vol 368: 1425.

543 654,965 (95% confidence interval 392,979-942,636). Ibid. The study was based on face-to-face interviews with 47 random, representative clusters of 40 households each across Iraq. The methodology was careful and conservative. The findings were reviewed by four expert peers, all of whom recommended publication with only minor revisions. Even so, many politicians, scientists and journalists instinctively felt that the fatalities estimate was too large to be credible. As the study was widely scrutinised, limitations and shortcomings in the methodology were alleged. The authors were already aware of some of these. The relatively low number of clusters was a limitation, for example, but not a flaw. It did not affect how reliable the study was as representative of the Iraqi population as a whole, as many had assumed; rather it meant only that the 95% confidence interval would have to be relatively large (392,979-942,636). The number of clusters was accounted for by the insecure operating environment in Iraq and the study's budgetary constraints. As a later analysis of the discussion that followed the study shows, criticism was often based on misunderstanding and, where it was valid, related to issues that could not seriously affect the accuracy of the fatalities estimate. See for example Steven E Moore, '655,000 War Dead: A bogus study on Iraq casualties', *Opinion Journal* [Wall Street Journal online journal], 18 October 2006, <<http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110009108>>, accessed 25 April 2007; and Neil Johnson, Sean Gourley and Michael Spagat, 'Bias in Epidemiological Studies of Conflict Mortality' [draft of unpublished article], cited in Dale Keiger, 'The Number', *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, February 2007, <<http://www.jhu.edu/jhumag/0207web/number.html>>, accessed 25 April 2007.

544 Burnham et al: 'Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross-sectional cluster sample survey', 368: 1425.

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The *Lancet* study shows beyond reasonable doubt that coalition military operations in Iraq, whilst aimed at preventing civil war and protecting Iraqi people from the insurgency, have been directly responsible for at least tens of thousands and possibly hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilian fatalities. Military personnel who deploy to Iraq therefore run a significant risk that their actions will result in the deaths of civilians. There is a similar risk for those deployed to Afghanistan, and a smaller risk for those involved in peacekeeping roles.

### 4.5.3 Enemy combatants

Enemy combatants may not conform to their depersonalised image portrayed in recruitment literature. Often, British forces face young enemy combatants conscripted against their will into the military, as in the wars over the Falklands (1982) and Iraq (1991, 2003). British forces may also face child combatants, such as those believed to number among Afghan forces in the UK/US war over Afghanistan of 2001-02.

Even when enemy personnel have volunteered to join their armed forces, the moral question is not simple. In the Former Yugoslavia and Iraq, for example, many young men had volunteered to join the armed forces only because it was one of few viable economic opportunities available to them to support their families. The same applies to many UK forces personnel.

### 4.5.4 The political purposes of military action

Recruitment literature for the army states simply that the British armed forces save lives and support security around the world. According to the *Infantry Soldier* career brochure: 'The British Army has a job to do all over the world from fighting terrorism, to protecting British citizens and helping other armies defend their own countries'.<sup>545</sup> There is no hint that a new recruit could find themselves fighting for a goal that they could not believe in, or in a manner that they could not accept.

In reality, forces personnel are often ambivalent about the moral value and practical wisdom of specific military operations. Many felt that the decisions by the Conservative government to fight the Falklands War in 1982 and by the Labour government to invade Iraq in 2003 fell outside the goal of safeguarding national security for which they had enlisted. Lieutenant David Tinker was killed in an Argentine Exocet attack on *HMS Glamorgan* during the Falklands War. Shortly before his death, he wrote home:

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545 Ministry of Defence: *Army Career Guide to Infantry Soldier*, (London: Army Recruiting Group, December 2005, 18-19.

I cannot think of a single war in Britain's history which has been so pointless. ... This one is to recapture a place which we were going to leave undefended from April, and to deprive its residents of British citizenship in October. And to recapture it, having built up *their* forces with the most modern Western arms (not even *we* have the air-launched Exocet which is so deadly). And fighting ourselves without the two pre-requisites of naval warfare: air cover, and airborne early warning, which have been essential since World War II ...<sup>546</sup>

In January 2007, Prime Minister Tony Blair called for a change in the way UK national security is understood, involving a shift from homeland defence to expeditionary roles overseas, including military intervention in other countries. If this trend continues, forces personnel may find themselves implementing foreign policy decisions that are widely controversial.

#### 4.5.5 Indiscriminate weaponry and tactics

Within the UK's arsenal are weapon types that, when used, entail a significantly high risk of injury or death to civilians. Notable among these are the so-called wide area impact munitions, including cluster bombs and the Multiple Launched Rocket System (MLRS). Both weapons are a relatively low-cost means of destroying widespread enemy positions or civil infrastructure.

Cluster bombs have been criticised widely by humanitarian, human rights and campaign groups worldwide, such as Landmine Action and Human Rights Watch. The scattered bombs often fail to detonate, especially if they land on soft ground; in these circumstances, the bombs behave like landmines and may detonate when handled. The presence of unexploded bombs renders large areas of land economically inactive long after combat has stopped; clearance is often too laborious and expensive to attempt. According to a large study of the impact of the munitions in 24 countries, almost all those killed or severely injured by cluster bombs are civilians, including a large number of children who treat the unexploded bombs as toys.<sup>547</sup>

In March 2007, following a sustained campaign by pressure groups lasting over ten years, the UK pledged to cease using standard cluster bombs. The armed forces will continue to use so-called 'smart' versions of the weapon that are designed to self-destruct if they fail to explode, although Landmine Action argues that these are little better than the 'dumb' variety and has called for a total ban.<sup>548</sup>

<sup>546</sup> Letter dated 28 May 1982, in Tinker, Hugh (ed.): *A Message from the Falklands: The Life and Gallant Death of David Tinker, Lieut. R.N. from his Letters and Poems*, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1983), 198. See also Lukowiak, Ken: *A Soldier's Song*, (London: Phoenix, 1999 – first pub. 1993).

<sup>547</sup> Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Civilians main cluster bomb victims', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2006.

<sup>548</sup> Landmine Action: press release, 19 March 2007, <<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/news.asp?id=56>>, accessed 10 April 2007.

The MLRS is the Royal Artillery's most powerful weapon. Based on a large armoured vehicle, it fires rockets loaded with small bombs that are scattered widely on the same principle as the cluster bomb. A single salvo of 12 rockets can deliver over 7,500 bombs over a wide area up to 24 miles away, earning the weapon the nickname The Black Rain. The system is massively destructive and used at a long stand-off distance; its crew cannot know with confidence whether civilians are present in the large target area. Wind and poor visibility can also lower the weapon's accuracy. The humanitarian risks of cluster bombs are reflected also in the MLRS: a proportion of bombs fail to explode and may detonate if handled; and the target area is then rendered economically inactive for long periods.

*Camouflage*, the magazine designed to encourage 13- to 17-year-olds to consider an army career, describes the MLRS as part of the army's 'cool stuff'.<sup>549</sup> It gives children and young people the impression that firing this weapon system is an enjoyable, ethically neutral experience of power, akin to a real-life computer game:

If you get excited by the clash of heavy metal, get ready to feel the shudder of the Royal Artillery's most powerful kit. Gunners don't just lug shells and rain lead on the bad guys. In this age of digital technology, the men and women of the Royal Artillery have become technical wizards, covert observers and comms specialists. They are at the heart of what the Army does best: make the earth move.<sup>550</sup>

Cluster bombs and the MLRS are among several military systems that are ethically controversial for their indiscriminate effects. Others include depleted uranium munitions, anti-vehicle landmines and nuclear weapons. A potential recruit might be expected to use any of these systems if he or she enlisted but the recruitment process does not help him or her to consider the ethical issues involved.

Nuclear weapons are the most indiscriminate of all. Personnel aboard British Trident submarines must be prepared to launch nuclear weapons to destroy entire cities if so ordered. This order could be made in retaliation against a nuclear attack on the UK or another NATO state, or as a pre-emptive strike, which the government reserves the right to make in line with the strategic doctrine of NATO.

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549 *Camouflage* magazine [army promotional magazine for 13-17 year-olds]: Issue 19, Autumn/winter 2006, 56.

550 *Ibid.*, 33.

#### 4.5.6 Treatment of detainees

Ben Griffin was a British special forces trooper who, after a three-month tour of duty in Iraq, objected to further participation and was discharged. He claimed that it was the norm for coalition forces to treat Iraqi civilians without dignity and was particularly critical of the attitude of US personnel, although he also criticised some behaviour by British forces.<sup>551</sup> In March 2007, *The Observer* quoted Ministry of Defence information that there had been 221 investigations into allegations of abuse by British troops but only six had gone to court martial.<sup>552</sup>

The largest of these cases was the trial of five soldiers accused of treating a group of Iraqi detainees inhumanely. The group of Iraqi men concerned had been apprehended by a detachment of British soldiers in September 2003 from the Basra hotel where they worked. The men were taken to a detention centre where a second group of soldiers maltreated them; this involved hooding, sleep deprivation and the sustained use of stress positions (such as standing with knees bent and arms parallel to the ground). The court heard that the soldiers punched, kicked and stamped on the detainees. The Iraqi men were punished when they could no longer sustain a stress position, as one detainee, Baha Malki, recalled in an interview for the BBC's Panorama programme:

If we failed to keep upright we would be strangled around our necks until we are out of breath, to make us stand quickly to get ready for more beatings. And the British soldier used to kick us in the kidneys and around the head to force us to stand.<sup>553</sup>

The beatings lasted for 36 hours, the court heard; toilet breaks were refused and the men were forced to lie in their own faeces and urine. One detainee, Baha Musa, died from 93 separate injuries, and two of the others sustained damage to their internal organs.

In the face of substantial evidence against him, Corporal Donald Payne pleaded guilty at the beginning of the trial, becoming Britain's first convicted war criminal. The other five accused were cleared and no-one has been found responsible for Baha Musa's death.

The judge described 'a more or less obvious closing of ranks' among British personnel called as witnesses and a 'wall of silence' that had prevented the trial from getting to the facts of the case.<sup>554</sup> Ten colleagues of the accused gave evidence in the trial and on 667 occasions said that they could not remember key events and actions including those they had been directly involved in, according to the Panorama programme.<sup>555</sup>

551 Rayment, Sean: "'I didn't join the British Army to conduct American foreign policy'", *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 March 2006, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/03/12/nsas112.xml>>, accessed 10 April 2007.

552 Townsend, Mark: 'How army's £20m trial failed to find the killers', *The Observer*, 18 March 2007, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,329749356-110595,00.html>>, accessed 10 April 2007.

553 BBC Panorama, 'A good kicking: Transcript' [transcript of television documentary], 13 March 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6455113.stm>>, accessed 25 April 2007.

554 Townsend, Mark: 'How army's £20m trial failed to find the killers'.

555 BBC Panorama, 'A good kicking: Transcript'.

This case brought to light that military personnel had been authorised to use tactics such as stress positions that are at odds with a generally accepted understanding of the Geneva Conventions.<sup>556</sup> It also illustrated how group-think and peer pressure may play a role in facilitating abuse/bullying by a group of colleagues amid the stresses of an operational environment. Furthermore, it showed a reluctance among colleagues to complain openly about one another's behaviour.

The case is an extreme example of abuse by a small number of personnel, but Amnesty International believes that less extreme breaches of human rights law by the UK have been widespread in Iraq. The organisation claims that in 2006:

The UK breached international and domestic human rights law through its role in the internment without charge of at least 10,000 people in Iraq. UK officials sat, along with US and Iraqi officials, on the Joint Detention Review Board, which reviewed the cases of all those interned by members of the Multinational Force in Iraq (in most cases, by US troops). At the end of October, the UK was itself holding 33 'security internees' in Iraq without charge or trial.<sup>557</sup>

## 4.6 After discharge

**The majority of those leaving the armed forces resettle into civilian life. A significant minority face difficulties. Socio-economic disadvantage, homelessness and unemployment are more common among ex-forces personnel than the general population. The risk of turning to crime appears to be lower among the ex-forces community, however.**

In 2005, the Royal British Legion surveyed over 6,000 adults in the UK (excluding homeless) to assess the size of the ex-forces community as a proportion of the total population. On the basis of the survey, they estimated that there are 4.8 million veterans, or 10% of the UK population (over 16 years of age).<sup>558</sup> In 2004, the government's estimate was similar, at 'around 5 million'.<sup>559</sup>

556 Graff, Peter: 'British judge says headquarters okayed Iraq abuse', Reuters, 12 March 2007, <<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L12522611.htm>>, accessed 12 April 2007.

557 Amnesty International, *2006 Report (UK)*, <<http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/gbr-summary-eng>>, accessed 2 February 2007.

558 Royal British Legion, *Profile of the Ex-Services Community in the UK*, (London: 2005 [revised edition]), 13, 16.

559 Ivor Caplin MP, Minister for Veterans: 'Project Compass' [speech, 16 June 2004], cited at Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, *Veterans UK* [web site], 'Veterans Issues' [web page], <[http://www.veterans-uk.info/vets\\_programme/vets\\_speeches160604.html](http://www.veterans-uk.info/vets_programme/vets_speeches160604.html)>, accessed 3 July 2007.

### 4.6.1 Homelessness

Of the approximately 20,000 people who leave the forces every year, the large majority resettle into civilian life. However, a disproportionate minority do not.

Two thirds of all those advised by Shelter's housing aid centres in 2001 were ex-forces personnel.<sup>560</sup> Surveys of homeless ex-forces personnel in 1994 and 1997 indicated that only 8% had been subject to compulsory national service; 86% had enlisted voluntarily.<sup>561</sup> The surveys also showed that most (78%) ex-forces homeless had served their full contract; only 6% had been discharged for disciplinary reasons and 82% had experienced no problems while in the forces.<sup>562</sup> The army has a poorer resettlement record than the navy or air force, accounting for two thirds of the ex-forces homeless surveyed.<sup>563</sup>

The evidence in these surveys suggests that all forces personnel, not only the most vulnerable, may be at significant risk of homelessness after leaving the forces.

The highest risk of ex-forces homelessness comes months or years after discharge. Most ex-forces homeless surveyed had settled after discharge into new accommodation that they did not want and then became homeless subsequently.<sup>564</sup>

Data on the proportion of homeless people with a forces background are scarce. Using data from the government's Rough Sleepers Unit (2000) and Social Exclusion Unit (1997), the homelessness organisation Crisis estimated in 2000 that about a third of the 6,000 people sleeping rough at least once per year had a forces background. Of the estimated total of 400,000 homeless in Britain, up to 100,000 (25%) were ex-forces, Crisis claimed, although few data were available at the time.<sup>565</sup>

If Crisis' estimate is broadly correct, then the number of ex-forces homeless could be as high as the population of Exeter [106,772 in 2001], equivalent to a 2% prevalence of homelessness among former forces personnel.<sup>566</sup> If 10% of the general population have a forces background<sup>567</sup> yet comprise 25% of the homeless population, then ex-forces personnel are up to 2.5 times more likely to be homeless than are those with no forces history.

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560 Communitycare.co.uk: 'Ex-armed forces staff seek most help', 14 November 2002, <<http://communitycare.co.uk>>, accessed 6 January 2007.

561 Crisis, *Falling Out*, and ESAG, *Homeless on Civvy Street*, cited in Ballintyne and Hanks, *Lest We Forget*.

562 Ibid.

563 Ibid.

564 Ibid.

565 Ballintyne and Hanks, *Lest We Forget*, Ch. 1.

566 100,000 = approx. 2% of 4.9 million ex-forces personnel (including 100,000 homeless).

567 Royal British Legion, *Profile of the Ex-Services Community in the UK*, (London: 2005 [revised edition]), 13, 17.

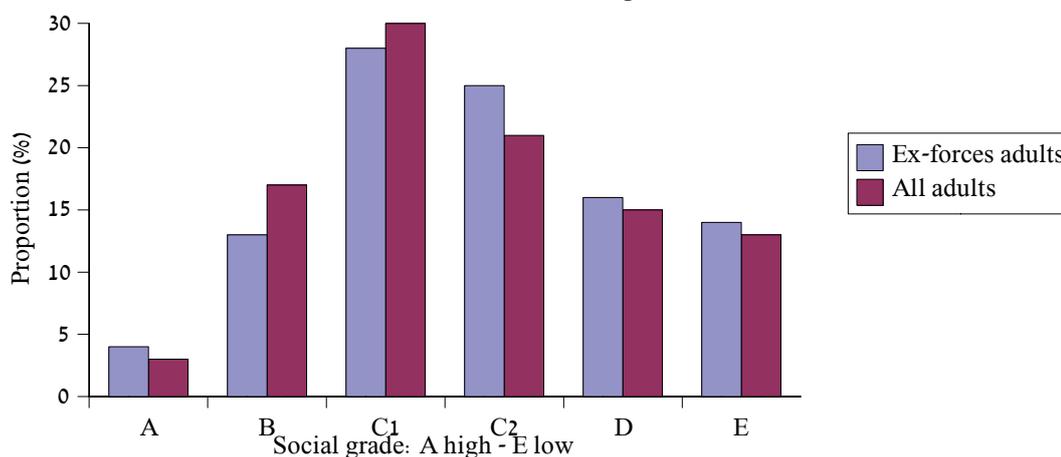
In recent years the government has increased provision for those leaving the forces and improved support for charities working with veterans and the homeless. A government survey of ex-forces homeless is also under way. Lord Drayson, Minister of Defence, told the House of Lords in May 2007 that the survey's interim findings indicate that the proportion of rough sleepers with a forces background has dropped by two thirds since 2000.<sup>568</sup> Even so, the high proportion of homeless people with a forces background remains a cause for concern.

#### 4.6.2 Socio-economic disadvantage

The British Legion survey found that, as of 2005, those with an ex-forces background who had not yet retired were marginally more likely than average to be in a lower socio-economic class and less likely than average to be in a higher one, with the exception of Grade A. 16% of the ex-forces community were found to be in Grade D, defined as: 'Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers and apprentices/trainees to skilled workers'. 14% were in Grade E, defined as: 'All those entirely dependent on the state long-term, through sickness, unemployment, old age etc.; those unemployed for a period exceeding six months; casual workers with no regular income.' This amounts to 672,000 individuals in Grade E as a proportion of the total ex-forces community, excluding homeless.<sup>569</sup> See Graph Ten.

**Graph Ten**  
**Socio-economic class of adult ex-forces community**  
**compared with UK adult population, before retirement**

Source: British Legion, 2005



<sup>568</sup> Hansard, HL: 9 May 2007: Cols WA256-WA257, Defence (Armed Forces: Homelessness).

<sup>569</sup> Royal British Legion, *Profile of the Ex-Services Community in the UK*, (London: 2005 [revised edition]), xii. Summary of grade definitions: A = professionals, very senior managers; B = middle management executives in large organisations with qualifications; C1 = Junior management, owners of small establishments, and all other non-manual positions; C2 = Skilled manual workers and manual workers with responsibility for other people; Grades D and E are defined in the main text. Number of ex-forces individuals in Grade E based on total ex-forces community of 4.8 million, cited in *ibid.*, 13, 17.

If Crisis' estimate of 100,000 homeless people with a forces background are included, then the proportion of the ex-forces community in Grade E rises to 16%.<sup>570</sup> The marginally poorer-than-average prospects for forces leavers might be attributable to the armed forces' disproportionate recruitment of non-officer personnel from disadvantaged communities, although respondents to the British Legion survey included officers, who are usually from more privileged backgrounds.

Taken together, data from the British Legion and Crisis suggest that a new recruit to the armed forces has, after leaving regular service, just under a one-in-three chance (32%) of working in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs or of being entirely dependent on the state (on average at any given point before retirement). The finding that ex-forces personnel tend to fare slightly worse than others casts doubt on claims made in recruitment literature that an armed forces career provides ample transferable skills for the job market, although there are good training opportunities available in some military trades.

### 4.6.3 Unemployment

The British Legion Survey found that ex-forces personnel of working age are slightly more likely to be unemployed (6%) than the general population (5%). Younger veterans (aged 18-49) are as much as twice as likely to be unemployed than the rest of the population.<sup>571</sup>

### 4.6.4 Crime

If the prison population were representative of the population as a whole, 10% of inmates would have a forces background.

The government does not collect data on the number of prison inmates with a forces background. A limited Home Office survey of prisoners in 2000 found that 5.6% were veterans.<sup>572</sup> This suggests that forces and ex-forces personnel are at lower risk of committing a crime carrying a custodial sentence than are civilians.

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570 Based on 672,000 ex-forces not homeless + 100,000 ex-forces homeless as a proportion of 4.9 million ex-forces personnel including homeless = 15.8%. The proportion of all UK adults in Grade E rises to 14% if the estimated 400,000 homeless in the UK are included; proportions in the other categories are not substantially changed. Crisis' estimate made in 2000, cited in Ballintyne, Scott and Hanks, Sinead: *Lest We Forget: Ex-servicemen and homelessness* (Crisis, 2000), Ch. 1.

571 Royal British Legion, *Profile and Needs: Comparisons between the Ex-Service Community and the UK population* (London: 2006), 11.

572 Dandekar, C et al, 'Improving the Delivery of Cross Departmental Support and Services for Veterans' (Dept of War Studies and the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London, July 2003), cited in Royal British Legion, *Profile of the Ex-Services Community in the UK*, (London: 2005 [revised edition]), 16.

Veterans in Prison (VIP), a group of ex-soldiers alarmed at the number of veterans in prison, believes that the proportion of prisoners with an ex-forces background is higher than the Home Office estimate. VIP's limited survey of one prison found that 10.6% of inmates had a forces background. Most of these were ex-soldiers serving long sentences for serious crimes. VIP also believes that many veterans in prison are suffering psychiatric effects from warfare and have not been appropriately diagnosed.<sup>573</sup>

Neither the Home Office survey nor the VIP survey is a reliable guide to the number of veterans in prison; a fuller study would be useful.

## 4.7 Risks assessment summary – army recruits

Most soldiers (64%) report being satisfied with their job in general. However, this is a lower job satisfaction rate than that of the civilian population (76-78%) and relatively few soldiers are 'very satisfied' (13%) when compared with civilians (35-36%).<sup>574</sup>

In addition, a large minority of soldiers amounting to thousands of people in the army are dissatisfied in general (16%, or 13,406 personnel at the time of the survey). The risk of dissatisfaction is compounded by restrictive contractual obligations that make it difficult for serving personnel to return to civilian life if they want to do so.

Using the evidence surveyed in this report, it is possible to calculate approximately some of the risks that a new army recruit faces, which include:

An even chance of: leaving or being dismissed from the army before the age of 23 (if joining aged 16-22);<sup>575</sup> often thinking about quitting;<sup>576</sup> feeling that the workload is high or very high,<sup>577</sup> and/or the army has a negative impact on relationship with a partner, family, or his or her spouse's/partner's career;<sup>578</sup> being dissatisfied with the way complaints about bullying and harassment are handled.<sup>579</sup>

573 Johnson, Jimmy: 'The Wars/Conflicts come home', *Veterans in Prison* [web site], 17 January 2007, <[http://www.vetsinprison.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=2](http://www.vetsinprison.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=2)>, accessed 5 October 2007.

574 The Work Foundation: *The Good Worker*; British Social Attitudes Survey Report, p. 53, cited in The Work Foundation: *The Good Worker*, 9; MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*, Q1a.

575 Based on intake and outflow of recruits aged between 16 and 22 in FY2005-06, when 10,520 recruits aged 16-22 years old joined the army and 5,720 in the same age range left. Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 1 – Intake to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2005-06 and Table 6 - Outflow from UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2005-06)' [data tables], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab1.html>> and <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab6.html>>, accessed 5 February 2007.

576 MoD: *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*, Q67a.

577 Ibid. Q5.

578 Ibid. Qs 61b, 61c, 61d.

579 Ibid. Q42a.

A one-in-three chance of: feeling that army life is worse than expected pre-enlistment;<sup>580</sup> feeling frustrated with the amount of separation from loved ones;<sup>581</sup> feeling that there are too many operational tours<sup>582</sup> or that the gaps between tours are too short;<sup>583</sup> feeling excluded from decisions that directly affect him/her;<sup>584</sup> feeling dissatisfied with the amount of opportunity for adventurous training,<sup>585</sup> or with where he/she lives and how it is maintained;<sup>586</sup> being dependent on the state or working in unskilled/semi-skilled jobs after leaving regular service.<sup>587</sup>

A one-in-four chance of: being dissatisfied with the personal development potential of training;<sup>588</sup> complaining about unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at some point;<sup>589</sup> feeling that he/she is not being correctly treated always/most of the time (if a new infantry recruit in training);<sup>590</sup> being dissatisfied with prospects for advancement or promotion,<sup>591</sup> opportunities for sport and travel,<sup>592</sup> the amount of free time,<sup>593</sup> the level of pay;<sup>594</sup> being away from home for six months or more in a 12-month period.<sup>595</sup>

A one-in-five chance of: having low or very low morale;<sup>596</sup> wanting to leave at the earliest opportunity;<sup>597</sup> having to go on tour at less than a month's notice;<sup>598</sup> if a young woman or a woman of low rank, having a particularly upsetting experience of unwanted sexual behaviour directed at her.<sup>599</sup>

A one-in-six chance of: choosing to leave the army (by Discharge as of Right) during initial training;<sup>600</sup> contracting post-traumatic stress disorder if involved in more than five firefights (based on US data).<sup>601</sup>

A one-in-seven chance of feeling that he or she has been discriminated against in any 12 month period.<sup>602</sup>

A one-in-ten chance of being bullied during initial (Phase 1) training.<sup>603</sup>

580 Ibid. Q70.

581 Ibid. Q61a.

582 Ibid. Q14a.

583 Ibid. Q14c.

584 Ibid. Q12d.

585 Ibid. Q21e.

586 Ibid. Qs 54d, 54f.

587 Royal British Legion, *Profile of the Ex-Services Community in the UK*, (London: 2005 [revised edition]), xii; Ballintyne, Scott and Hanks, Sinead: *Lest We Forget: Ex-servicemen and homelessness* (Crisis, 2000), Ch. 1. Extrapolated.

588 MoD: *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*, Q27g.

589 Ibid. Q41.

590 From an official survey of new recruits conducted by MORI in 2006, cited in Adult Learning Inspectorate: *Better Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services: two years of progress* (Coventry, 2007), 33.

591 MoD: *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*, Q27i.

592 Ibid. Qs 21c, 21f.

593 Ibid. Q21b.

594 Ibid. Q8a.

595 Ibid. Q22a.

596 Ibid. Qb.

597 Ibid. Q67b.

598 Ibid. Q15a.

599 Rutherford et al, *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 22.

600 Based on data for FY2004-05. Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 14 March 2007.

601 Hoge, Charles W et al: 'Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mental Health Problems, and Barriers to Care', in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 1 July 2004, 16. The prevalence of PTSD among US marines and soldiers returning from Iraq was found to be 4.5%; for one or two firefights, 9.3%; for three to five, 12.7%; for five or more, 19.3%.

602 MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*, Q37.

603 Extrapolated from Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Safer Training: Managing risks to the welfare of recruits in the British armed services* (Coventry, 2005), 43 (Extrapolated for Phase 1 establishments only from table of all training establishments).

A one-in-eleven chance of working a 70-hour week.<sup>604</sup>

A one-in-thirteen chance of being bullied or harassed in any 12-month period of his or her service, on average.<sup>605</sup>

A one-in-seventeen chance of suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder on return from Iraq if serving on combat duties.<sup>606</sup>

A one-in-thirty chance (if a woman) of being sexually assaulted one or more times in any 12-month period.<sup>607</sup>

A one-in-thirty-five chance of being discharged for 'service no longer required' (i.e. being made redundant) on average in each year of service after training.<sup>608</sup>

A one-in-fifty chance of becoming homeless after discharge (based partly on data from 1997 and 2000).<sup>609</sup>

There are additional risks that cannot be quantified even approximately in absolute terms but can be compared in relative terms to civilian life. This report has shown that a military career/lifestyle carries higher risks of the following than does a civilian career/lifestyle:

- Alcohol problems, especially if exposed to combat<sup>610</sup>
- Symptoms of psychological ill-health<sup>611</sup>
- Domestic violence (according to some US studies)<sup>612</sup>
- Suicide (if a male under 20 years of age)<sup>613</sup>
- Unemployment after discharge, especially if aged 18-49.<sup>614</sup>

A military career carries a lower risk than does a civilian career of the following:

- Suicide (if not a male under 20 years of age)<sup>615</sup>

604 National Audit Office, *Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces*, 2.

605 MoD, *Army Attitudes Survey Mar-Jul 2006*, Q39.

606 Hotopf, Matthew et al: 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', *The Lancet*, 16 May 2006, Vol 367: 1731-41, at <<http://download.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/0140-6736/PIIS0140673606686625.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2007, 1738.

607 Rutherford et al: *Quantitative & Qualitative Research into Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces*, 17

608 In 2006, around 2.98% of soldiers were discharged for service no longer required. Information obtained from the Ministry of Defence by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, disclosed on 5 October 2007.

609 Estimated ex-forces homeless population in 1997, 2000: 100,000. Estimated ex-forces population excluding homeless and in prison: 4.8 million. Proportion of ex-forces population homeless: 2.1% Crisis, *Falling Out*, and ESAG, *Homeless on Civvy Street*, cited in Ballintyne and Hanks: *Lest We Forget; Royal British Legion, Profile of the Ex-Services Community in the UK, (London: 2005 [revised edition])*, 13, 16.

610 Hotopf et al: 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', 1737 (Table 8) and 1738 (Table 10); National Health Service, 'Table 9.1 Adults' estimated usual weekly alcohol consumption level, by age and sex' in *Scottish Health Survey 1998*, <<http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/scottishhealthsurvey/sh809-04.html>>, accessed 9 July 2007, Vol 1, Ch 9, Table 1; Margaret Jones et al, 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', *Occupational Medicine* 2006, 56(5): 322-328, at <<http://ocmed.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/56/5/322>>, accessed 5 July 2007, 323, 324.

611 Margaret Jones et al: 'The burden of psychological symptoms in UK Armed Forces', *Occupational Medicine* 2006, 56(5): 322-328, at <<http://ocmed.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/56/5/322>>, accessed 5 July 2007, 326.

612 Holly G Prigerson, Paul K Maciejewski and Robert A. Rosenheck: 'Population Attributable Fractions of Psychiatric Disorders and Behavioral Outcomes Associated With Combat Exposure Among US Men', *American Journal of Public Health*, 2002; 92: 59-63; McCarroll J E et al, 'Deployment and the probability of spousal aggression by U.S. Army soldiers', *Military Medicine*, 2000; 165: 41-44.

613 Based on data set for 1984 to 2005. Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 1984-2005'.

614 Royal British Legion, *Profile and Needs: Comparisons between the Ex-Service Community and the UK population* (London: 2006), 11.

615 Based on data set for 1984 to 2005. Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 1984-2005'.

- Being sentenced to prison<sup>616</sup>

Risks that are present but difficult to quantify even approximately for new recruits include:

- Taking part in an operation where causing civilian casualties is common (e.g. current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan)<sup>617</sup>
- Death or serious injury<sup>618</sup>
- Encountering unexpected ethical dilemmas that the recruit cannot resolve in favour of his or her military role

The data show in general that the risks for army personnel are slightly higher than for those in the navy and air force, although there are some exceptions.

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<sup>616</sup> Dandekar, C et al, 'Improving the Delivery of Cross Departmental Support and Services for Veterans' (Dept of War Studies and the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London, July 2003), cited in Royal British Legion, *Profile of the Ex-Services Community in the UK*, (London: 2005 [revised edition]), 16.

<sup>617</sup> Burnham, Gilbert et al: 'Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross-sectional cluster sample survey', *The Lancet*, 21 October 2006, Vol 368: 1425; Hotopf et al, 'The health of UK military personnel who deployed to the 2003 Iraq war: a cohort study', 1731.

<sup>618</sup> DASA, 'Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 2005'; deaths in accidents account for 50%.

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# 5 Conclusions and proposals

## 5.1 General remarks

The evidence collected in this report points to a number of ethical shortcomings in armed forces recruitment practice in the UK. These include: failing to inform potential recruits sufficiently about the risks associated with a forces career; failing to inform potential recruits about vital rights and privileges; severely curtailing recruits' right to withdraw consent from their employment; depending upon those who are socially and economically vulnerable to enlist for negative reasons; and recruiting minors without adequate safeguards. It could be possible to move towards an ethical recruitment policy without detriment to staffing levels by making a number of progressive changes to recruitment and retention policy and practice. An improved recruitment policy could be codified in an Armed Forces Recruitment Charter setting out the state's responsibilities to potential recruits.

This report has identified five major ethical deficiencies in armed forces recruitment practice in the UK, any one of which amounts to negligence in the state's duty of care to potential recruits. Recruitment literature and the application process:

- largely fail to inform potential recruits of the serious personal risks that are peculiar to a forces career;
- often fail to explain clearly to potential recruits the complex terms of service, and fail to inform recruits of certain further rights, privileges and restrictions, including the right of conscientious objection to military service, the privilege of discretionary discharge for under-18s, and the restrictions of civil liberties entailed in military law.
- depend on large numbers of the socially and economically vulnerable joining as a last resort; and
- capitalise on the impressionability of adolescents in order to attract large numbers of minors to a forces career, especially in the army.

The fifth deficiency is found in terms of service that severely curtail recruits' moral right to withdraw consent from their employment.

If young people can gain from a forces career in ways denied them in civilian life, they will gladly enlist; there is no need to mask the risks, oblige recruits to remain longer than they wish, promote forces careers to children, or recruit people as young as 16.

In order to move towards an ethical recruitment policy without detriment to staffing levels, the remainder of this report proposes a number of changes to policy and practice. It is suggested that the changes could be framed within a new Armed Forces Recruitment Charter set out the state's moral and legal responsibilities to potential and new recruits. A charter of this kind could benefit recruitment efforts and ensure that the needs and rights of potential recruits are placed at the heart of the process.

## 5.2 Improving recruitment materials – army

**Current recruitment materials do not seriously attempt to brief potential recruits on the character of a forces career. Whilst literature for potential recruits cannot fully describe forces life, it should include unambiguous information about: legal obligations; discharge options for minors; the need to consider ethical issues such as killing before enlistment; some of the principal risks of a forces career; the welfare and psychiatric support available; a description of the military covenant; the right, and its limits, of conscientious objection to military service; and the policy of exclusion of minors from hostilities. Literature for parents/guardians should also include advice about how to support their child by asking questions of recruiters and seeking independent advice. Literature should be more accessible to potential recruits with a low reading age.**

Recruitment literature misleads potential recruits by omitting, euphemising and de-emphasising the risks and restrictions that potential recruits would face if they enlisted. It therefore falls short of a serious attempt to present military life as it really is. There are many characteristics of a forces career that appeal to many young people: there ought to be no need to omit the 'down-sides' in order to attract recruits.

Some simple changes to recruitment materials would make them more appropriately descriptive of a forces career and, in turn, supportive of potential recruits' right to make an informed choice about enlistment. The literature cannot fully describe all the risks and restrictions of a forces career but should include clear and unambiguous information about:

- the legal obligations of minimum service, and the possibility of discretionary discharge for under-18s;
- the requirement to be prepared to kill once the recruit joins the trained strength, and the inevitable risk of civilian casualties;

- the main psychological and physical risks of combat and a forces career in general, and the support that recruits can expect;
- a description of the military covenant;
- an explanation of the right of conscientious objection to military service, and its limits; and
- the policy of exclusion of under-18s from hostilities and its limits.

Literature for parents/guardians should include the above and advice about how to support their child by asking questions of recruiters and seeking independent advice, for example from friends and school teachers.

Documents need to be shorter with a clearer hierarchy of information if potential recruits with low reading ages are to access them effectively.

## 5.3 Limiting outreach to children and young people

**Marketing to children below recruitment age commonly glamorises warfare. Outreach to children and young people should be de-linked from recruitment activity and restricted to older children. While promotional activity continues in schools, children should have the right: not to attend, to hear from a speaker presenting an alternative view, and to have peace and disarmament education integrated into the curriculum alongside education about the military.**

Despite government claims to the contrary, this report has shown that armed forces outreach to children serves a recruitment purpose. This practice commonly glamorises warfare, exploiting the undeveloped abilities of children to balance potential benefit with risk.

Education about the military is valuable when provided as impartially as possible and a range of views is represented; this might properly involve visits by forces personnel to schools. All work with schools should be for purely educational purposes, however; it therefore should not glamorise warfare and should be de-linked from recruitment and promotional activity. There is a case that all military outreach of any kind to children below secondary school age is inappropriate, even for purely educational purposes. Further, it is reasonable to expect schools to include peace education in the curriculum alongside any input from the military, in order that school students are better placed to make informed judgements about the issues. School-leavers are entitled to have information about forces careers; however, it is sufficient that schools careers services include such information in the mix of their advice to school-leavers.

While the armed forces continue to promote careers in schools, the demand of School Students Against the War is eminently reasonable:

If spokespeople for the military are allowed in to our school we demand that all students are informed in advance, have the right not to attend the event and that there should be a right of reply from an anti war military parent or a speaker from the anti-war movement.<sup>619</sup>

## 5.4 Changes to the recruitment of minors

Minors are especially vulnerable to joining the armed forces without due consideration of the risks. Existing safeguards to ensure that minors and their parents make informed choices about enlistment are deficient. A feasibility study into the sustainable phasing-out of the recruitment of minors, based on shifting the emphasis from recruitment to retention, could be commissioned. Raising the minimum age of recruitment to 17 and allowing minors to train as civilians, thereafter enlisting at 18, would be valuable first steps towards reducing the risks to minors. Direct contact between recruiters and a parent or guardian should be a requirement of the recruitment process for under-18s.

This report recommends that the government consider the following changes to the recruitment of minors without detriment to meeting the trained requirement:

- Adopting as a policy goal the phasing out of recruitment of under-18s would bring the UK into line with the spirit of international law that recognises that minors need special protection from risk.
- Raising the minimum recruitment age to 17 would be a valuable measure in its own right and would bring the UK closer to European norms. The Ministry of Defence or National Audit Office could conduct a study into whether a shift in emphasis from recruitment to retention could facilitate the sustainable phasing-out of recruitment of 16 year-olds, followed by 17 year-olds.
- Bearing in mind that most under-18 recruits are in training and form only 1% of the armed forces' trained strength, there is a case for allowing under-18s to undergo military training as civilians, then enlisting at 18. This would preserve them from the restrictive terms of military law. By comparison, training of nurses and teachers does not oblige them to work in the profession after qualifying, yet most choose to do so.
- It undermines recruitment efforts to discharge large numbers of personnel (mostly soldiers) for 'service no longer required' every year. Reducing the number of soldiers made redundant in this way would help to maintain staffing levels while lessening the need to recruit minors.

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<sup>619</sup> School Students Against War: 'Troops out of our schools' [leaflet], (nd), <<http://files.pcadvance.co.uk/ssaw/uploads/armed%20forces%20le.doc>>, accessed 19 May 2007.

## 5.5 Improving the terms of service

The minimum term of service is unethical and counter-productive: relaxing it could encourage more people to enlist and improve morale among serving personnel. Changes to the legal obligations of enlistment can be phased in and need not affect recruitment targets. These could include allowing: all recruits under 18 years of age to leave as of right; all recruits in their first year of service to leave as of right; and all other personnel to transfer to the reserve at a year's notice. A short cooling-off period after signing the enlistment papers could be introduced. The chain of command should continue to use discretion to release genuinely unhappy recruits, of any age, before the end of their minimum service, using advice from welfare agencies where appropriate.

In light of a potential recruit's right to make an informed choice about enlistment, this report has found that the terms of service are the most ethically problematic aspect of current recruitment and retention policy. The terms are extremely confusing, unnecessarily complicated and highly restrictive. Recruitment literature normally omits the terms, refers to them ambiguously or inaccurately, or misleads recruits in the view that it is easy to leave the forces once enlisted. Despite the best intentions of many recruitment staff, the applications process largely fails to ensure that potential recruits are fully aware of the terms before enlisting.

The terms of enlistment are also counter-productive, for they: probably prevent many potential recruits from enlisting; retain recruits who, unmotivated, hinder operational effectiveness and damage morale; and cast doubt on recruitment literature claims that a forces career is one that people would gladly and freely pursue.

Relaxing the terms of enlistment could encourage more people to enlist while enabling recruits who wish to leave to do so.

The following changes could improve the terms of enlistment for new recruits without a major impact on recruitment.

- Allow all recruits under 18 years of age to leave as of right, rather than at the discretion of the state as is the case now.
- Allow all other recruits in their first year of service to leave as of right at short notice (e.g. 14 or 28 days); and all other personnel to leave at 12-months' notice, regardless of length of service.
- Allow a two- to four-week cooling-off period after enlistment, during which time the recruit has a right to annul their obligations, as is common for consumer credit contracts in the UK.
- Continue to allow, but also to encourage, the chain of command to use their discretion in order to release genuinely unhappy recruits from service, seeking advice from welfare agencies and chaplains where appropriate.

These changes could be phased in experimentally by reducing the minimum period of service progressively over a period of years.

## 5.6 Improving retention

The armed forces have a poor retention record. For every two 16-22 year-olds joining the army, one is leaving.<sup>620</sup> A portion of the £2 billion now used to attract, enlist and train new recruits might be better used to improve conditions for existing personnel. Valuable improvements could be made to: pay, accommodation, equipment, leave entitlement, workload, and welfare including psychiatric support. All these measures would also benefit recruitment. At the same time, the government must recognise that the sustained over-extension of the armed forces is having an impact on morale, retention and recruitment.

The armed forces, and the army in particular, struggle to retain personnel; many feel that they are not rewarded appropriately for the risks of their work and the restrictive legal obligations of service. There are far too many cases in which the legal and moral rights of personnel have not been upheld; some have been outlined in this report.

The armed forces appear to place greater emphasis on marketing careers to potential recruits than on ameliorating the service conditions of existing personnel in ways that could benefit retention. At least one senior officer believes that it would benefit the army to increase the pay of forces personnel in order to improve the poor retention rate:

If politicians would only think about the investment the country has made in each trained man and woman, sometimes running into millions, they would realise that it makes hard-headed economic sense to pay more to keep them once we've got them.<sup>621</sup>

A shift in emphasis from recruitment to retention could rapidly facilitate reductions in recruitment targets and help establish the conditions for relaxing the legal obligations on new recruits.

It costs in the region of £25,000 to train a new recruit and the recruitment and training budget runs to more than £2 billion per year. If sums of that order were mainly devoted to improving conditions for personnel, more would choose to remain. Personnel are entitled to expect significant, progressive improvements to:

<sup>620</sup> Based on intake and outflow of recruits aged between 16 and 22 in FY2005-06, when 10,230 non-officer recruits aged 16-22 years old joined the army and 5,310 in the same age range left. Defence Analytical Services Agency, 'TSP 19 - Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces (Table 1 – Intake to UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2005-06 and Table 6 - Outflow from UK Regular Forces by Age and Service, FY2005-06)' [data tables], <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab1.html>> and <<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp19/tsp19tab6.html>>, accessed 5 February 2007.

<sup>621</sup> Anonymous senior officer cited in Hastings, Max: 'The plight of our armed forces is something we ignore at our peril', *The Guardian*, 8 January 2007, at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/military/story/0,,1984908,00.html>>, accessed 21 January 2007.

- pay, including a rise in the supplement awarded to compensate for the risks and limitations of a military career (known as the x-factor);
- accommodation;
- equipment;
- leave entitlement;
- workload; and
- welfare and psychiatric provision.

These improvements could be reflected in recruitment materials, thus attracting more potential recruits.

The armed forces are currently over-extended, which is having an impact on morale, retention and recruitment. It is reasonable to question why the UK spends more on the military than any other state after the United States — an amount proportionately five times more than our share of the global population. We might also ask whether the extent of the UK's military commitments is appropriate for one nation in a community of nations, and commensurate with the nation's ability and willingness to fund them. In a security environment of 'no direct military threat to the United Kingdom or Western Europe' and where no re-emergence of such threat is foreseen,<sup>622</sup> a long-term reduction in military commitments and of the overall size of the British armed forces are within the realm of reason. This would allow for a smaller trained requirement of personnel and release funds to provide more fully for their needs.

## 5.7 Reducing bullying and harassment

**Bullying and harassment remain major problems for the armed forces in their own right, and also adversely affect retention of personnel. The forces need to: acknowledge the problems, clarify to new recruits the policy on bullying, remove humiliating practices from all aspects of training, and restore faith in the complaints system by providing an independent complaints channel. Progress is being made in some of these areas.**

The Ministry of Defence is taking the problem of sexual harassment seriously by cooperating with the Equal Opportunities Commission to find ways of changing a culture that tolerates it. The Ministry has also commissioned the Adult Learning Inspectorate to review the duty of care issues in initial training establishments on two occasions in 2005 and 2007 with some measurable results.

An effective response to bullying and harassment will depend on the following.

- Acknowledging the problems frankly; recruitment literature that states that most bullies do not get recruited is misleading.
- Making clear to new recruits what the armed forces deem to constitute bullying, including physical and psychological abuse and misuse of authority.
- Purging the training regime of humiliating practices such as ‘beasting’ that could constitute bullying and which promote a culture of bullying.
- Restoring faith in the complaints system. The lack of faith among personnel in the chain of command to handle complaints fairly, confidentially and efficiently suggests that an independent process for complaints should be established, alongside the currently available formal and informal procedures.
- Commissioning research into the possible links between bullying and psychological problems such as depression and self-harm during training; and into the relationship between bullying within the armed forces and cases of maltreatment of detainees in the field.

## 5.8 Clarifying the right of conscientious objection and its limits

**The right of conscientious objection (CO) is recognised unevenly across the armed forces. The situation could be improved by: improving the policy on CO; including an explanation of CO and the procedure for making a claim in materials given to new recruits; training officers to recognise CO in personnel; and commissioning research into the possible links between CO, post-combat mental health problems and absence without leave.**

It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence to ensure that new recruits are aware of the right of conscientious objection and its limits, and aware of the procedure for applying to have an objection recognised. The following measures would improve recognition of conscientious objection:

- Accepting as a matter of policy that: conscientious objection will be treated as an honourable moral position to hold about war; that an objection may arise at any time in any person; and that person may hold a conscientious objection without articulating it as such.
- Including an explanation of conscientious objection in materials given to new recruits, together with the procedure for making a claim.
- Training officers in the nature of conscientious objection, and how to recognise it among personnel who are experiencing misgivings without articulating them as a conscientious objection.

- Publishing clear guidelines about what the armed forces regard to be legitimate grounds for a conscientious objection, in order that recognition of the right is consistent across the armed forces.
- Commissioning research into possible links between conscientious objection, post-combat psychiatric problems, and absence without leave.

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