

Submission by Cymdeithas y Cymod (the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales) to the Petitions Committee of the National Assembly for Wales on the fellowship's petition, which asks the Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to recommend that the armed forces should not visit schools to recruit children.

Cymdeithas y Cymod has presented this petition to the committee on the basis of children's rights and education.

Article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child declares: "The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice." This makes it the responsibility of the Welsh Minister for education to ensure that careers information in Welsh schools provides an accurate and balanced picture of all careers, including a career in the armed forces. Not all employers go into schools, but the armed forces do so in order to recruit children. Over the last two years, the Army visited secondary schools in Wales 1,200 times, visiting 74% of all secondary schools in Wales. In the same period, the Armed Forces in their entirety visited only 30% of schools in London. Obviously, as a poor country, Wales is being targeted by the Army.

The Armed Forces also hold open days for school children, particularly in Bala and Margam Park on an annual basis. The Armed Forces do not provide balanced and accurate careers advice because they do not talk about the right to leave, the period of service, or the extent of the risk of injury or death. Also, schools that allow their pupils to go to the open days held by the Armed Forces deprive those children of a full day of education in school. Missing a whole day of school is considered to be a serious matter if a parent keeps a child at home for no reason or when teachers strike according to the education Minister himself. These open days include an exhibition showing tanks playing at war in an appealing way, whereby nobody is injured or killed. Here is a link to an event held by the Army for school children in Bala:- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0G68Ug45Hyc>

The British Government has admitted in its submission, under Article 8 paragraph 1 of the UNCRC Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, that "Army recruiting initiatives include presentations in schools by Army careers advisers (ACA), a variety of Army youth team and Army recruiting team activities, attachments and visits to units, school fairs, Combined Cadet Force (CCF), advertising and marketing initiatives, membership of the Army's Camouflage Club."

Britain is the only European Union member state that recruits children to the Armed Forces or allows their Armed Forces to go into schools. The UNCRC said in 2008 that Britain should reconsider its policy of recruiting children to the Armed Forces. We are aware, of course, that the Armed Forces are not devolved but the National Assembly could at least encourage schools not to invite the armed forces into schools to recruit Welsh children nor to allow children to miss a day of school to go one of the Armed Forces' open days.

There is an educational argument, in that the level of education that is available to children who join the Armed Forces is lower than that which is available in state schools according to the Wolf Report 2011 by the Department for Education in England. The level of the numeracy and literacy curriculum in the Armed Forces is lower than the recommended level for that age group. Most of the education that is provided comprises military skills, such as using arms, which are not transferrable to the world outside the forces. Training children to use arms that can kill people is also repellent and immoral in our view, as a fellowship of pacifist Christians. We are aware that education in the Armed Forces is not a devolved matter in Wales but recommending that the Armed Forces should not go to recruit children in the first place would be a step towards keeping Welsh children in schools, where they can receive the best possible education.

Arfon Rhys

Secretary

Cymdeithas y Cymod (the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales)

To demand an end to a morally indefensible practise that needs to be contested.

Following last year's successful referendum on delivering greater legislative powers to Wales, and since education falls under the Assembly's remit, there can be no better time or place in which to raise the issue of MOD recruitment in schools. The petition that we are launching this evening will hopefully raise awareness of such practises, but also aims to have the issue debated by the Assembly, utilising its concession to direct democracy, the e-Petition facility.

At the moment it's the head teachers prerogative who goes into schools. In Wales we have a political chamber, a democratic sphere, our own elected representatives who should debate the issue. We should catch up with the other states who don't recruit on schoolyards, and with the recommendations of expert international human rights bodies. There has been no formal government review or parliamentary debate on this issue in the UK for the past one hundred years and we feel the time should come to discuss it.

My co-organizer Leon and myself have found many obstacles along the way, one being that out of the many Labour AMs we wrote to, we received only one reply back and that was to inform us this individual would not be involved in debating such practises. Labour deems such a campaign as extreme or outlandish, yet outlawing of MOD recruitment in schools would only bring Wales up to speed with prevailing international standards and previous comments by the United Nations.

Out of the 27 EU countries, the United Kingdom is the only one to recruit within schools. Doubters about a prospective ban, those who often argue in favour of 'opportunities for poverty-stricken youth' and overseas adventure, need be informed that this cause is not a general comment aimed at the armed forces as a whole, but aimed at the more pointed target, the specific issue of the MoD's active pursuit of minors.

Why must there be an MoD presence in schools when there is no presence in other EU countries? Compared with minors in Britain, children across the European Union have some protection from eager military recruiters. They are deemed perfectly capable of walking down to the recruitment offices on their own prerogative at a more suitable age for making such major decisions. Why can't UK children be the same? The contrast between UK practises and standards elsewhere is as stark as it is shameful.

In 2008 the National Union of Teachers voted to ban misleading propaganda in schools, calling for a more balanced view of army life to be given to children. The image of military life that is currently presented is false, and fails to mention any of the potential enormously negative consequences of signing up. Having succumbed to the glamorised picture of military life as a source of unique learning opportunities and the world as an endless adventure playground, youngsters face the very real prospect of Post Traumatic Stress, long term mental illness, poverty and homelessness. The stories from post traumatic stress charities are all similar in the sense, many go away at 18, come back at 21, but their lives are over. And none of them had been prepared for such devastating consequences.

In 2007 the government spent a record £89 million on army recruitment campaigns – almost £7,000 per recruit, and an increase of £3.6 million on the previous year. We feel that, when it comes to the government spending aimed at our youngsters' future prospects, there are far more positive available options. More positive options than tying those under the age of 18,

still considered children into a legally binding contract, which after a six month trial period is very hard to break.

In terms of children getting a further education, what kind of a country do we live in if the only way a teenager can get an education is with the permanent risk of death lurking around the corner? No young person should feel obliged to join the armed forces in order to fill an educational vacuum, nor should the MoD be required to fill a gap left by the inadequacies in the educational system.

Freedom of Information requests have proven how MOD recruiters disproportionately target the poorest communities. And considering that Wales is one of the poorest regions of the UK and Europe, there should be no surprise to learn that Wales ends up sending a disproportionate number of youngsters into the military relative to its size of the UK population. Why should the poor be expected to risk their lives much more than children from better-off areas, simply as means for paid work?

The bottom line of the argument is if you're not old enough to vote, how can you be old enough to decide if you want to give your life? One can't be an economic asset in one sense but not another.

Wales has an image of itself as a relatively progressive country. The Welsh Government should take a stand, and take the moral lead on the issue; not wait, as ever for Scotland to first. Will Welsh politicians have the guts to forge ahead on something the UK-level government drags its heels on – and for all the wrong reasons.

Finally we would like to thank Arfon Rhys of Cymdeithas Y Cymod for agreeing with our request that he head this campaign.

1. Introduction to ForcesWatch
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1. Introduction to ForcesWatch

ForcesWatch is a British-based campaigning organisation. We seek to hold the state to account on the ethical integrity of its recruitment of young people into the armed forces. We advocate changes to policy, raise public awareness of the issues and challenge the armed forces on their recruitment practices, especially those aimed at the youngest and most disadvantaged groups.

2. Overview of this evidence

One of our main areas of concern is the extent to which the armed forces are given access to young people within education. We are undertaking research on the extent and character of this activity using information within the public domain and through Freedom of Information requests to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Department for Education.

We are aware that other organisations submitting evidence to this consultation have cited reports and recommendations relating to this issue, such as the 2008 UN report on UK's compliance with Convention on the Rights of the Child optional protocol relating to children in armed conflict ¹, *Informed Choice? Armed forces recruitment practice in the United Kingdom* ² (written by a member of the ForcesWatch Steering Committee), *Mind the Gap: Education for minors in the British armed forces* ³ and others. These documents are essential to any consideration of the issue and they outline key arguments supporting our claim that military engagement with young people should be avoided as it is not benign and is potentially damaging to the future interests and opportunities of those the young people they seek to influence.

Our evidence does not aim to further explain these arguments, but to detail the extent of the presence of the armed forces in schools and other educational institutions during the last two full academic years: 2010-11 and 2011-12.

We then consider the argument presented by the armed forces and the MoD that the visits to schools are not for recruitment purposes. We argue that they constitute activities leading towards recruitment with many of the activities being specifically about careers in the forces. We also state that the armed forces are using visits to schools in order to positively influence young people's opinions and that more balanced view of life in the armed forces and its activities needs to be presented within educational environments.

3. Armed Forces visits to schools in Wales, 2010 to 2012

The data presented here was received from the British Army under the Freedom of Information Act. The data relates to the academic years of 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. The original information received included details of visits made to FE Colleges, schools for special needs and primary schools, but for the needs of this submission only data for state and independent secondary schools is considered. It is worth mentioning, however, that FE Colleges are visited significantly more often than any other education institution. In the original information received there were many visits that were not to one specific institution, but rather to

the town hall, or a youth club, or, in one instance - a twice-weekly running club in a small town. None of these visits are counted in the analysis submitted here. Finally, when comparing with data from other areas, it is important to note that the data for Wales refers only to the army and not all three forces.

For general information about the type of visits made to schools and the activities undertaken, please see the *Military Activity in UK Schools* briefing in Appendix 1.

Welsh secondary schools were visited by the army just over 1200 times during the two year period. The break-down by percentage of the types of visits made to Welsh secondary schools is presented in Table 1 below. The greatest number of visits made by the army were focused on mock interviews and interview techniques, general presentations (which include a section on the types of careers available in the military), and Personal Development Activities (generally outdoor, team-building activities). Presentations and activities exclusively focused entirely on careers (such as stalls at careers fairs, presentations about early entry to the military, etc...) made up 7.5% of visits (equivalent to nearly 100 visits).

The Challenge Index for Wales lists 219 state secondary schools in Wales for the academic years 2010-11 and 2011-12. During that time, the Army had visited 163, or 74%, of them. To put this in a national context, in London all three armed forces had visited less than 30% of state schools and in Scotland over 85% were visited by the three forces. The army alone visited Welsh state schools an average of twice a year during that period (compared with just once in London for all three services and twice in Scotland).

Within Wales schools with a more disadvantaged demographic (based on the Welsh Multiple Deprivation Index and measuring the average percentage over a three year period of students eligible for free school meals, and the percentage of students living in the most deprived 20% of Wales) were not visited a significant number more times than those with less deprived demographics. However, the high average number of visits during a year compared to other areas in the UK suggests that there is increased engagement of the armed forces with local authority schools in Wales as a whole compared to, for example, the South East of England where the number of visits is substantially lower.

There is however, a very striking difference between the level of engagement with independent schools compared to that with state schools. Of the 21 independent schools registered with the Welsh Independent Schools Council, only six, or 29% have been visited by the army compared to 75% for state schools. Furthermore, these schools were visited an average of just 1.5 times over the two year period, less than half that of their state equivalents.

Table 1 - Breakdown of type of visits to Welsh secondary schools 2010 to 2012

Type of visit	Percentage	Further notes
Interview techniques/Mock interviews	22.6%	One-on-one interview practice and whole classroom workshops
General Presentations	21%	General overview of Army work/role, with section on types of careers available in Army
Personal Development Activities	20.6%	Mostly outdoor activities focusing on team-building and leadership
Curriculum enrichment	12%	Including presentations to engineering, public services, and other vocational courses students
Participation in routine school activities	8.3%	Including induction days, industry days, certificate presentations, staff meetings, etc...
Careers focused activities	7.5%	Events with careers in title, including 'early joining' presentations to under-16s
Army focused workshops	2.4%	Activities with Army focus, such as 'Build a Barracks', 'Force Multiplier', etc...
Citizenship & Terrorism presentation	1.9%	Specific presentation apparently delivered to 24 schools during this period

Enterprise/business activities	1.6%	Common across country - Armed Forces regularly invited by schools to deliver and contribute to business/enterprise focused events
Fitness/sport focused activities	1.3%	Running clubs, fitness assessments, etc...
Mentoring	1.3%	Unknown what this actually looks like
Combined Cadet Forces	0.1%	Only one visit recorded to CCF

Further analysis of this data is available on request.

4. Unpacking recruitment

It is likely that in response to the Petitions Committee's call for evidence, the MoD or one of the three services will respond with a statement that they do not 'recruit' in schools and that they are only invited in at the bequest of a teacher. This statement has been issued numerous times in response to the research undertaken by ForcesWatch. Here is our statement on their activities in schools should be considered to be recruitment.

- i. *The MoD state that the armed forces only visit schools following an invitation from a member of staff*

This statement means very little as no external visitor would ever visit a school without an invitation. The key point to consider is the terms by which an invitation is gained. Following extensive consultation with colleagues who work in delivering Information, Advice and Guidance on Higher Education (IAG), an invitation to a school is gained by approaching them first offering what services you can.

The armed forces, like any organisation regularly visiting schools, normally has to approach them first. The aim is to build up a relationship with staff at the school and establish regular annual (or more frequent) visits. Of course, it does happen that some schools get in touch requesting services, but this occurs on a minority of occasions, as generally (with the exception of careers advisors whose job is to contact organisations like these) teachers are too busy to actively pursue external visitors. ForcesWatch has evidence of the letters sent by the Armed Forces to local schools offering their services to corroborate this claim.

- ii. *The MoD state that the armed forces under no circumstances undertake recruitment activities in schools*

For a full analysis of why we know this to be untrue, see our briefing on *Military Activity in UK Schools* (Appendix 1). Briefly, the evidence for our claim that recruitment is at the heart of armed forces engagement with education comes from the MoD itself; the Defence Youth Engagement Review of 2011 and various other internal MoD reports and documents are quite clear that the overarching rationale for engaging with young people is one of recruitment and the need to influence 'future opinion-formers'. ForcesWatch has also made multiple Freedom of Information requests, which all demonstrate that a significant proportion of armed forces' visits to schools include attending careers-related events and activities, such as presentations about the work of the forces (which include detailed descriptions of the different careers available in the armed forces) and offering more general careers advice such as mock interviews and CV workshops. Some young people go on to pre-recruitment activities such as Insight interviews and courses which are designed to offer a taste of what life is like in the army.

However, the main point to consider is the absurd distinction the MoD is making by claiming that recruitment is only the act of signing on the dotted line. Other organisations visiting schools, attending the exact same events as the Armed Forces including universities, local employers and major national firms, would all define

this activity as recruitment but none of which would 'recruit' in the sense that students would sign a contract or have an interview in situ.

ForcesWatch
16 April 2013

¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2008) *Concluding Observations on the initial report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict* (UN Doc: CRC/C/OPAC/GBR/CO/1), para.13.

² David Gee, *Informed choice? Armed forces recruitment practice in the United Kingdom*, www.informedchoice.org.uk accessed 19.3.13

³ *Mind the Gap: Education for minors in the British armed forces*, Child Soldiers International, July 2012,

Appendix 1

Military activity in UK schools

October 2012

This briefing outlines the methods and rationale of the military's engagement with young people within the education system and highlights potential developments in this area, including projects under consideration or development by the Armed Forces and the Department of Education.

Armed forces activities in schools and colleges

Each of the three services that make up the Armed Forces, as well as the Ministry of Defence, have their own education and outreach programmes to engage with young people. Of the three, the Army has the most extensive programme of activities, reflecting their need to recruit more young soldiers.

Although it is often refuted that the overall rationale for engaging with young people is one of recruitment, particularly following the beginning of ForcesWatch's national series of debates, internal documents and publicly available reports demonstrate that interesting potential recruits, coupled with the need to influence future decision makers and opinion formers, is a primary part of the rationale (1). The recent report by ResPublica, *Military Academies: Tackling disadvantage, improving ethos and changing outcome*, is explicit in suggesting that a major benefit of more interaction between the armed forces and education would be "assuring and extending the future Reserves' intake".

A key task for ForcesWatch has been to establish the mechanisms and practice of the military's engagement with schools, including the ways in which they approach schools or schools approach them, the activities on offer, the type of schools/students they generally work with and localised information on their engagement with schools. While it is difficult to assess the scale of activity nationally, it is estimated that around 900,000 young people come into contact with the armed forces within the education system each year. See below for details and types of activities undertaken.

Pushing a 'military ethos'

In addition to the current challenges facing those concerned with this issue, there are greater challenges yet to come. In the past six months there has been an increase in visible efforts to integrate the military into national education policy. The Department for Education's "military skills and ethos programme encompasses Cadets, Troops to Teachers, the cadet version of the National Citizen Service and alternative provision with a military ethos." (FOI request, 13/07/12). On Armed Forces Day 2012, the Government announced a budget of nearly £11m to expand cadet units into state schools.

'Alternative provision' includes the Military to Mentors programme run by Skillforce and a £1m grant for work from September 2012 "supporting military ethos in schools", working with "pupils who are either disengaged with education or at risk of becoming disengagedutilising the skills of a high proportion of former armed services personnel or other staff with experience in this field of work".

The Department for Education states that "these programmes will give young people the opportunity to develop teamwork, self-discipline, resilience and leadership" but do not explain what is meant by 'military ethos' or why a military framework will develop these skills more effectively than one based in other 'service' contexts. Furthermore, that there may be aspects of a 'military ethos' that are not appropriate to education does not seem to have been considered.

Military Academies / Service Schools

Following the ResPublica report calling for the establishment of Military Academies, a number of politicians (from Labour and the Conservative Party) have supported the idea of 'service schools', which would be primarily or entirely staffed by ex-servicemen and women. The rationale would be to provide ex-forces with employment opportunities, introduce a more disciplinarian ethos to schools in need of it and increase recruitment capacity (especially to the reserve forces). The politicians interested in this scheme speak almost exclusively about the second of these recommendations in what seems to be very much a reaction to the riots in summer 2011.

Summary of activities across the UK:

There are no national figures that provide a reliable overview of the number of young people that take part in armed forces related activity within education. However, youth/schools engagement surveys conducted by the MoD suggest that, at a minimum, around 900,000 children (mainly 8-19 years old) are contacted each year, which is about 15% of the age group.

Army

- Presentations - These can cover various topics such as the role of the Army as well as topics such as peacekeeping and presentations on Afghanistan.
- Insight Interviews - The Army run Insight Courses which are designed to offer a taste of what life is like in the Army. The interviews with students who want to attend a course provide information on the course and what is expected of them so they get the most from the course.
- Careers Fair - The Army having a stand at a school fair with other businesses.
- Careers Day - A whole day in the school to discuss Army Careers.
- Careers Brief - A single presentation on Careers in the Army (could be recorded as a presentation).
- Team Visits - Support of the National Curriculum
- Schools Challenge - This is a regionally run competition between schools run by the Army Careers Adviser pitting the schools against each other in a competition based around command tasks (such as getting across an area using ropes and planks etc.).

In addition, a large number of curriculum resources are provided on the Army in Education website.

Navy

Schools received a wide variety of activities, including:

- Careers Conventions/Jobs Fairs
- Shows & Exhibitions & Carnival (or Parade)
- Presentations about the work of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines
- Displays by the Royal Marine Commando Team
- Team-Building exercises
- Physical Training and sports instruction (including a programme called Fit 4 Life)
- Careers presentations
- Alternative curriculum events such as 'leadership tasks'

RAF

All visits prior to the most recent academic year were made by the RAF Presentation Team which no longer visits schools. It is unclear how the RAF's outreach will progress.

Quotation from letter sent to ForcesWatch regarding RAF visits to schools:

All schools received the same 40 minute presentation, a series of narrative and DVD presentations that cover who the RAF are, what they do and how they do it. The 'who we are' section covers a few facts and figures about the trades within the RAF. The 'what we do' section focuses on the four pillars of air power

(Intelligence & Situational Awareness, Control of the Air, Attack and Air Mobility & Lift). The 'how we do it' section covers training, specialist roles and welfare. There is Q&A session at the end.

Notes

1. On the reasons to provide armed forces related activities within education:

- The MoD have stated that curricular activities are "a powerful way to facilitate recruitment". *MoD Strategy for Delivery of MOD Youth Initiatives. Directorate of Reserve Forces and Cadets, 2005*
- "Our overall rationale for engaging with schools is to encourage good citizenship, provide an environment which raises awareness of the MOD and Armed Forces among young people, provide positive information to influence future opinion formers, and to enable recruiters to access the school environments." *Engagement with UK schools, MoD, 2007*

22nd March 2013

Re: Petition P-04-432

As conscientious citizens of Wales we welcome this opportunity to express our views to the committee.

The Assembly has taken public pride in protecting the rights of children, not least in its innovative role as the first legislature in Britain to appoint a Children's Commissioner. That the Commissioner's work must follow the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), encourages expectation of a positive outcome for the petition. The stance of the UNCRC towards the British military's recruitment of children is very clear.

In its 2008 report to the UK, the UNCRC expressed concern at recruitment practices relating to under-18s (the UN uses the term **child soldiers**) and called for the minimum recruitment age to be raised to 18. In 2009 this recommendation, and others relating to young people in the armed forces, was endorsed by Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights. The report also highlighted evidence that the experience of recruits in the 16 – 18 age bracket is adversely affected by their relative lack of maturity, and that their high drop-out rate results in millions of pounds in wasted expenditure.

The outcome of the petition has broader relevancy than the question of MOD recruitment in schools, and may serve as something of a test-case for the depth of autonomy of the Welsh legislature, following the March 2011 referendum for increased powers.

We feel that this petition faces Welsh politicians with the dilemma over whether to truly represent the interests and values of the people of Wales, or to simply serve other interests. Has the Assembly become sufficiently democratic that it legislates on behalf of the welfare of the children under its care, in opposition to the requirements of the UK military-industrial complex? The Labour Party has transformed considerably in recent decades in pursuit of votes in English constituencies; this petition offers an opportunity to prove publicly that it has not cut loose completely from its founding values.

The question of Ministry of Defence recruiters' pursuit of minors in the school environment offers a very clear case for legislative change on moral grounds alone. However, should the Petitions Committee find cause to close the petition, our campaign will continue apace, armed with documented evidence of Welsh politicians' reluctance to take action where they should. We trust that our representatives would much prefer to spare themselves such public embarrassment.

Although members of Cardiff & District United Nations Association, we write in our personal capacity and as initiators of the petition and campaign.

Yours sincerely

Leon Russell and Sara Hawys

United Nations Association, Cardiff

