
William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

20 March 2013

Dear Mr. Powell,

Child Soldiers International welcomes the decision of the Petitions Committee to consider the issue of recruitment activities in Welsh schools by the British armed forces.

Regrettably we are not able at present to provide a detailed response to the specific questions posed in your call for evidence. However, I have enclosed a few relevant documents from Child Soldiers International concerning the recruitment of minors by the British armed forces and the impact this has on their educational opportunities. Please find enclosed:

- Memorandum to the UK Defence Select Committee inquiry into the education of service personnel (January 2013)
- Mind the Gap: Education for minors in the British armed forces (July 2012)
- Catch 16-22: Recruitment and retention of minors in the British armed forces (March 2011)

Child Soldiers International is an international human rights research and advocacy organisation. We seek to end the military recruitment and the use in hostilities, in any capacity, of any person under the age of 18 by state armed forces or non-state armed groups. We advocate for the release of unlawfully recruited children, promote their successful reintegration into civilian life, and call for accountability for those who unlawfully recruit or use them.

We hope that this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Taylor
OPAC Project Manager

MEMORANDUM TO THE DEFENCE SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY

The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 4: Education of Service Personnel

January 2013

SUMMARY

1. Child Soldiers International¹ welcomes the call for evidence issued by the Select Committee in relation to its inquiry into the education of service personnel. Child Soldiers International is concerned that the education provided to minors (aged 16 and 17) in the armed forces fails to meet the standards recommended for this age group. As a result it narrows rather than broadens recruits' future opportunities, and compounds rather than alleviates long-term disadvantage.
2. Child Soldiers International requests that the Select Committee examine the nature, breadth and level of education available to (and achieved by) armed forces personnel aged below 18 years separately from the education of adult personnel. This should be compared with the national recommended standards of education for young people, the education options and outcomes of their peers in the mainstream (civilian) education system, and government policy on enhancing social mobility among young people.
3. The evidence presented in this submission contends that:
 - The literacy and numeracy curriculum for minors in the armed forces is set at a level lower than the minimum recommended for this age group in an independent review of education.
 - Too few recruits are able, in practice, to take advantage of additional, elective academic courses. Those who do so are penalised by burdensome additional return of service commitments.
 - Training consists predominantly of military skills which have limited or no transferable value to civilian employment, with consequent negative repercussions for post-service resettlement.
 - There is a lack of independent oversight of the education policy and curriculum.
4. Child Soldiers International concludes by recommending that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) raise the minimum armed forces recruitment age to 18 years, to ensure recruits enter the armed forces only after completing a full secondary level education. Such a measure would significantly enhance their operational effectiveness within the armed forces as well as their employability in future civilian life. It would also benefit the armed forces by reducing initial training time and costs by up to one third, and improve recruit retention rates.

¹ Child Soldiers International is a human rights research and advocacy organization, formerly known as the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Child Soldiers International seeks to end the military recruitment and use in hostilities of child soldiers (boys and girls below the age of 18) and other human rights abuses resulting from their association with armed forces or groups. We seek the release of child soldiers from armed forces or groups, promote their successful return to civilian life and accountability for those who recruit and use them. Child Soldiers International promotes global adherence to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

CONCERNS

5. The Army recruits far greater numbers of minors than the other two services combined² and the large majority of these now undertake Phase One training at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate (AFC Harrogate).³ This submission therefore focuses primarily on the educational provision at AFC Harrogate, as it accounts for the experience of the large majority of minors in the armed forces as a whole.⁴ Where relevant, the submission also refers to the Department for Business Innovation and Skills *Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study* (“the BIS study”) which concerns provision of basic skills education to recruits in the armed forces as a whole including, but not limited to, recruits at AFC Harrogate.⁵

I. The provision of education to new recruits including help with literacy and numeracy

6. Recruits at AFC Harrogate study Level 1 Functional Skills in English and maths, and a Level 2 Diploma for IT users.⁶ Over the 50 week period of the “Long Course” at AFC Harrogate, recruits spend a total of just five and a half hours a week studying for these qualifications.⁷
7. Child Soldiers International recognises that there is a high pass rate for the three basic courses undertaken by recruits at AFC Harrogate. Of all recruits training there between September 2010 and August 2011, 97 per cent passed the Level 1 literacy qualification and 87 per cent passed Level 1 numeracy.⁸ Recruits who achieve Level 1 Functional Skills in English and maths during the course “have the additional opportunity” to study them at Level 2. However, between September 2010 and August 2011, just 52 per cent of AFC Harrogate recruits achieved Level 2 literacy and 49 per cent Level 2 numeracy.⁹ MoD data does not indicate whether this is because fewer recruits undertake Level 2 courses, or because pass rates are lower. In either case, the figures indicate that there is a lower level of institutional support for recruits embarking on Level 2 study.
8. Prior to its closure to Junior Entry recruits in October 2012, recruits on the (23 week) course at Army Technical Foundation College Winchester (ATFC Winchester) studied only “functional skills in either [*sic*] numeracy or literacy, along with basic military training”.¹⁰ The pass rates for literacy and numeracy courses at ATFC Winchester were very low. Between March and September 2011, the pass rates for recruits taking Level 1 literacy and

² *UK Armed Forces - Annual Manning Report 2010/ 2011: Table 7. UK Regular Forces intake by Service and age*, available at www.dasa.mod.uk. In the financial year 2010/2011, the RAF recruited 90 under-18s, the Navy recruited 280, and the Army recruited 2,400.

³ Prior to October 2012, Junior Entry recruits (those aged 16 to 17 and a half at enlistment) could also undergo Phase One training at ATFC Winchester. ATFC Winchester now accepts Senior Entry recruits only (those aged over 17 and a half years) and all Junior Entry recruits train at AFC Harrogate. Between September 2010 and September 2011, 3,745 under-18s commenced Army Phase One training. Of these, 950 (25 per cent) attended ATFC Winchester and 2,114 (56 per cent) AFC Harrogate. See HC Deb, 8 December 2011, c427W and HC Deb, 10 January 2012, c12W.

⁴ Child Soldiers International’s 2012 report “Mind the gap: Education for minors in the British armed forces” explores in detail the education provided at AFC Harrogate and ATFC Winchester. The report is available at www.child-soldiers.org.

⁵ The recruits participating in the study were typically aged between 16 and 20 and had left school by the age of 16. Department for Business Innovation and Skills; *BIS Research Paper Number 78. Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study: Part 2*, June 2012, page 28 (hereinafter “*BIS Research Paper: Part 2*”).

⁶ These levels are intended to be broadly equivalent to GCSE grade D-G and GCSE grade A* - C respectively.

⁷ HC Deb, 18 July 2011, c578 W.

⁸ HC Deb, 10 January 2012, c12W.

⁹ *ibid.* The figures provided for those passing out with Level 2 qualifications in the BIS study sample vary significantly from the figures provided in Hansard. Hansard figures have been used in this document as they are taken from a larger data set. See *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 25 to contrast.

¹⁰ HC Deb, 30 November 2011, c976W.

numeracy qualifications were just 48 and 65 per cent respectively. For Level 2 the figures were even lower, with pass rates of 47 per cent for candidates enrolled in the Level 2 numeracy courses, and just 10 per cent for those undertaking Level 2 literacy.¹¹ Data is not yet publicly available on the current pass rates for recruits taking the “Short Course” at AFC Harrogate, which has replaced the ATFC Winchester training course.

9. Notwithstanding the high pass rate for Level 1 literacy and numeracy courses at AFC Harrogate, Child Soldiers International considers the literacy and numeracy provision to be inadequate as it consists solely of Functional Skills rather than GCSE qualifications. The BIS study also questioned the extent to which qualification achievement rates in armed forces basic skills education “are accompanied by significant and functional long term gains”.¹² The BIS study further expressed concern at pressure on tutors to “teach to the test” rather than focus on sustainable development of skills.¹³
10. In 2011 the Department for Education commissioned Professor Wolf to conduct a *Review of Vocational Education* (“the Wolf Report”). This report singled out Functional Skills qualifications for criticism, describing them as “conceptually incoherent”,¹⁴ suffering from “major and fundamental flaws”,¹⁵ “of highly variable standards”¹⁶ and “certainly not in themselves an adequate ‘maths and English’ diet for the 16 - 19 cohort”.¹⁷ The Wolf Report judged as “shocking” those educational institutions where - as is the case at AFC Harrogate - students without English and maths GCSE A* to C are “channelled into, or required to take, key or functional skills” instead of being supported to re-sit the GCSE exams. The Wolf Report concluded that this practice served “to deny rather than promote the acquisition of good English and maths qualifications”.¹⁸
11. In contrast, the vital importance of achieving GCSE qualifications in English and maths has been emphasised on numerous occasions. The Wolf Report was adamant that English and maths GCSEs were “of critical importance for employment”.¹⁹ The Department for Education’s response to the Wolf Report recognised that the failure of the “most vulnerable” young people to achieve “critical” GCSE level qualifications “harms their prospects for progressing in education or training and finding a job”.²⁰ A report by Centre for Cities noted a strong correlation between failure to attain GCSE English and maths at grades A* to C and high levels of youth unemployment.²¹ Furthermore, the BIS study found Army recruits with GCSE grade A* - C in English and maths had a better retention rate.²²
12. The Wolf Report concluded that a GCSE at grade A* to C was the only adequate qualification in these subjects for all young people, regardless of future education and career plans and that no lower level or theoretically “equivalent” level qualification was an adequate alternative. One of the Wolf Report’s main concluding recommendations was that:

¹¹ HC Deb, 10 January 2012, c13W.

¹² *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 103.

¹³ Department for Business Innovation and Skills; *BIS Research Paper Number 78. Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study: Part 1*, June 2012, page 11 (hereinafter “*BIS Research Paper: Part 1*”).

¹⁴ Wolf, A. *Review of Vocational Education - The Wolf Report*, 2011, page 170 (hereinafter “*The Wolf Report*”).

¹⁵ *The Wolf Report*, page 170.

¹⁶ *ibid*, page 171.

¹⁷ *ibid*, page 84.

¹⁸ *ibid*, page 82.

¹⁹ *ibid*, page 32.

²⁰ Department for Education, *Wolf Review of Vocational Education: Government Response*, 2011, page 7.

²¹ www.centreforcities.org, “Half of all young people in cities are not getting the grades in Maths and English GCSE to get them a job”. Accessed 01/12/2011.

²² *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 66. BIS recommended further investigation of the relationship between level of literacy and numeracy and retention rates.

“Students who are under 19 and do not have GCSE A* - C in English and/or Maths should be required...to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications, or which provide significant progress towards GCSE entry and success (...) Key Skills should not be considered a suitable qualification in this context”.²³

13. The BIS study highlighted the challenge presented to the armed forces by this conclusion and recommended a “substantial assessment” of the issue.²⁴
14. Both the Wolf Report and the Department for Education’s response recognised that some young people who had not achieved GCSE English and maths Grade A* - C by age 16 might not be ready to retake their GCSE exams immediately and would need to undertake other levels of study, such as Functional Skills, as a preparatory step. However, these alternative qualifications were endorsed only as a means of progressing towards GCSE qualifications, and not as an alternative to them. Despite this consensus on the importance of GCSE English and maths qualifications for all young people, GCSEs are not studied at AFC Harrogate. This is because literacy and numeracy training in the Army is matched directly to the skill level required to perform a junior soldier’s role and the GCSE curriculum currently exceeds this level.
15. There is currently no requirement for recruits to undertake literacy and numeracy training in Phase 2 except for those enrolled on an “apprenticeship”.²⁵ When questioned as to how many recruits undertook GCSE English and/or maths in Phase Two training or subsequently, the MoD was unable to provide figures.²⁶ This indicates that there is no policy to ensure that all Army recruits, including those enlisting under the age of 18 in particular, obtain GCSE English and maths qualifications.
16. Indeed, the MoD’s goal is only for Army personnel to achieve “at least Level 1” qualifications within three years of enlistment.²⁷ This target falls short of the minimum standard recommended for young people in mainstream education by the Wolf Report. Consequently, Child Soldiers International concludes that the education opportunities provided to minors in the armed forces are substantially inferior to those available in a mainstream school or college. In the BIS study, 10 out of 14 soldiers interviewed reported that “they would be happy to take a GCSE”,²⁸ indicating that recruits themselves wish to study to a higher level of qualification than that currently on offer.
17. It should be noted that some have argued that young people who join the armed forces as minors are of a particular social and educational profile likely to drop out of, or fail to achieve in, mainstream education and therefore general education targets are not relevant to them.²⁹ However, it is precisely this cohort of youth that the government’s April 2011 report on social mobility, *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers*, identified as most in need of encouragement to stay on in education, in order to arrest and reverse the widening gap in young people’s academic attainment and employment prospects. Minors in the armed forces are prevented from closing this gap by an education policy which sets lower targets than the minimum

²³ *The Wolf Report*, page 15. Key Skills were replaced by Functional Skills in 2010.

²⁴ *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 50.

²⁵ *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 55.

²⁶ HC Deb, 10 January 2012, c10W.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 52.

²⁹ The BIS study found that up to 50 per cent of recruits joining the Army in 2010 had literacy or numeracy skills at Entry Level 3 or below. The BIS study also reported that the more times a recruit had been suspended from school, the higher their drop-out rate from the armed forces. See *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 22; *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 242.

recommended for their (civilian) peers. As a result, an armed forces education is by definition of lower standard than that available in mainstream education.

18. Child Soldiers International also notes with concern the low ratio of professional teachers employed at AFC Harrogate compared to military training staff, and the negative consequences this may have on the quality of teaching. Just 51 of the 379 staff involved in training junior soldiers have qualified teacher status (42 civilian teachers and nine military education and training service officers).³⁰

II. The provision of education to service personnel throughout their careers

19. Elective study opportunities beyond the requirements of compulsory training are available to Army personnel. However, the transient nature of armed forces life, combined with demanding daily schedules and the pressures of preparing for – or deployment on – operations “significantly constrains opportunities to gain access to literacy and numeracy support.”³¹ The BIS study noted that “it can be difficult to fit educational provision into the busy military training lines”³² and “In the Army there are more urgent priorities than support for literacy and numeracy”.³³ Operational commitments, busy military training schedules and other demands “often prevent or dissuade personnel from accessing literacy and numeracy provision”.³⁴ None of the 14 soldiers in the BIS study qualitative sample had sought or taken any further educational provision once they had finished initial training.³⁵ It is evident that despite the substantial resources invested the Army is not the ideal institution, nor does it offer the most conducive environment, for providing broad, sustainable academic education for young people.
20. Furthermore, Army personnel can only undertake additional, elective courses if they extend their minimum service period beyond the terms of their original enlistment agreement.³⁶ This additional service period is up to one year for a course of two weeks to three months duration, or up to six years additional service for a course lasting more than three months. As a result, recruits must choose between committing to up to six years’ additional service in the Army (which would more than double the total minimum service period of a 17 year old recruit) or refusing all additional educational courses. In the latter case recruits retain the right to leave service sooner but could leave the Army no better qualified than when they joined.
21. Child Soldiers International considers that the burdensome additional service commitment imposed on Army personnel who wish to undertake supplementary study acts as a major disincentive to pursuing education.

III. The progress made by the armed forces in ensuring that training undertaken by service personnel leads to civilian qualifications

22. Child Soldiers International is deeply concerned that young recruits’ training results in few, if any, civilian qualifications and has very little transferable value to civilian employment. Apart

³⁰ HC Deb, 8 December 2011, c426W.

³¹ *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 24.

³² *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 43.

³³ *ibid*, page 104.

³⁴ *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 25.

³⁵ *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 44. Child Soldiers International suggests that the Defence Committee request the MoD provide annual data on the number of soldiers who seek, undertake, and successfully attain, further educational qualifications after completing Phase 1 and 2 training.

³⁶ The Army Terms of Service Regulations 2007, Regulation 15: *Return of service commitment*.

from the IT Level 2 Diploma (NVQ) there are no GCSE, AS level, A level, BTEC, HNC, HND or NVQ qualifications on the curriculum at AFC Harrogate.³⁷

23. Recruitment materials for AFC Harrogate emphasise the possibility and benefits of undertaking an “apprenticeship”. However, the “apprenticeships” referred to here and elsewhere by the MoD refer to the Functional Skills, IT diploma and specific military training listed below which, combined, are termed “an Army apprenticeship”. They are not apprenticeships in the commonly understood meaning of the term, i.e. transferable vocational training leading to a nationally recognised professional qualification in, for example, mechanics, plumbing, carpentry or electronics. The MoD has confirmed that vocational training in these areas is not on offer at AFC Harrogate.³⁸
24. Aside from the Functional Skills curriculum in English and maths, the predominant focus of education at AFC Harrogate - unsurprisingly - is on military training. Recruitment materials state that recruits spend “most of the course” learning basic military skills, including “weapon handling, fieldcraft, camouflage, survival...[how to] handle and shoot the SA80 rifle...drill...march and parade”.³⁹ This is particularly the case for recruits entering into “combat oriented roles” in the Infantry, Royal Armoured Corps, Royal Artillery and some Royal Logistic Corps.⁴⁰ Almost half of recruits enlisting as minors - 46 per cent - join the Infantry, which entails some of the most specialised combat-specific training of all.⁴¹
25. This specialised military training, whilst clearly essential for a combat-related career, does not lead to civilian qualifications and has very little, if any, direct transferable value to future civilian employment. In contrast, mainstream education offers young people the opportunity to undertake training with far greater transferable value and therefore better long-term employment prospects.

IV. The impact of education on the resettlement of armed forces personnel

26. Recruits who enlist as minors have a high dropout rate from the armed forces and are therefore more likely than adults to need to find alternative civilian employment.
27. In 2010/2011, 27 per cent of minors in initial armed forces training (Phase One and Phase Two) dropped out.⁴² The BIS study also found that “younger recruits [in the quantitative sample] were more likely to leave as compared to their older peers”⁴³ and that “trainees from AFC(H) and ATFC(W) were more likely to leave”.⁴⁴ In 2010/2011 36 per cent of all Early Service Leavers⁴⁵ had enlisted below the age of 18. Early Service Leavers are known to be at greater risk than longer serving armed forces personnel of experiencing serious difficulties transitioning to civilian life, including greater vulnerability to unemployment (as well as other

³⁷ HC Deb, 30 November 2011, c966W; HC Deb, 30 November 2011, c977 W; HC Deb, 18 July 2011, c578 W; HC Deb, 19 July 2011, c862w.

³⁸ HC Deb, 13 September 2011, c1147W.

³⁹ See “Army Colleges” brochure available at www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/ArmyJuniorE-LowRes.pdf.

⁴⁰ The combat-focused nature of these roles is highlighted by the fact that the corps which Harrogate “Long Course” graduates enter have consistently had the highest death and injury rates throughout the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan – HC Deb, 6 December 2010, c2W.

⁴¹ HC Deb, 10 January 2012, c12W.

⁴² HC Deb, 7 February 2011, c26W. This is a substantially higher drop-out rate than for adult personnel.

⁴³ *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 100.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, page 242.

⁴⁵ Early Service Leavers are armed forces personnel discharged within four years of enlisting or who have been compulsorily discharged.

forms of social exclusion such as homelessness, criminality, and substance misuse).⁴⁶ MoD guidelines for resettlement staff recognise minors as a sub-group of Early Service Leavers at especially high risk of such exclusion.⁴⁷

28. For those who successfully complete initial training, the average length of service for Infantry soldiers who enlisted below the age of 18 is 10 years.⁴⁸ This means that most recruits who enlisted as minors will be seeking alternative civilian employment by the age of 26 or 27, with some 40 years of working life ahead of them. Civilian qualifications and transferable skills are therefore essential for their successful resettlement.
29. The essential importance of “generalisable and transferrable skills” to allow young people to succeed in employment - in both the short-term and throughout their lives - was emphasised in the Wolf Report, in the Department for Education’s response, and in submissions to the Wolf Report from employers’ bodies and the Confederation of British Industry.⁴⁹ The Wolf Report recommended that:

“16 – 19 year old students pursuing full time courses of study should not follow a programme which is entirely ‘occupational’”.⁵⁰

30. In this respect, the Wolf Report explicitly distinguishes between the suitability of specialised training programs for adult versus teenage employees or apprentices. Job-specific training which is necessary for adults in skilled trades is not a suitable substitute for the general educational needs of minors, as it severely restricts their future employment and education options. The Wolf Report noted that occupation-specific training programs and qualifications:

“may be appropriate for adults who are in employment or have made definitive decisions about their occupation and job of choice, [but they] should not be the main, let alone the only, type of vocational qualifications offered to 14 - 19 year olds in education and training”.⁵¹

31. In conclusion, the Wolf Report argues that:

“all young people should receive a high quality core education which equips them to progress, whether immediately or later, to a very wide range of further study, training and employment...**We have no business, as a society, placing 16 year olds...in tracks which they cannot leave**”.⁵² (Emphasis in original.)

32. What is true of vocational education in general is even more pertinent to military training which, due to its highly specialised nature, has no direct transferable value to any other field of employment. The military skills which constitute “most of the course” at AFC Harrogate clearly have no direct civilian use and so cannot be interpreted as providing the “generalisable and transferable” skills identified as essential for successful civilian employment.
33. These concerns about young recruits’ prospects for successful transfer to civilian life are borne out by an investigation by the Royal British Legion in 2006 which found that the

⁴⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Early Service Leavers: Guidance notes for resettlement Staff*, JSP 575 Issue No: 4. March 2010.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ HC Deb, 12 September 2011, c1007W.

⁴⁹ *The Wolf Report*, page 107 and page 122; Department for Education, *Wolf Review of Vocational Education: Government Response*, p.6.

⁵⁰ *The Wolf Report*, page 115.

⁵¹ *ibid*, page 86.

⁵² *ibid*, page 141.

unemployment rate of 18 - 49 year old ex-service personnel was double the national unemployment rate for civilians in the same age group. Significantly, the study found that “lack of training, qualifications or skills is also more of a problem among this age group”.⁵³

V. The adequacy of oversight of the education of armed forces personnel

34. Child Soldiers International considers that there is inadequate independent oversight of education for minors in the armed forces. Since 2009 Ofsted has produced four reports on armed forces initial training, but all four related to welfare and duty of care issues rather than the suitability and quality of the educational curriculum. There has been no specific review of these areas since the 2005 Adult Learning Inspectorate report into the ICT curriculum at the Army Foundation College Harrogate, and the MoD has not commissioned any specific research into the education and transferable skills acquired by minors in the Army.⁵⁴ As a result, there is no independent, objective evidence base on which to assess the quality of education provided to armed forces personnel and to minors in particular.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

35. Child Soldiers International considers that young people, including those with low prior educational attainment, have greatly reduced opportunities in the armed forces to achieve qualifications regarded as “fundamental” than they would have in mainstream education. Despite the substantial resources invested, the armed forces are not institutionally or environmentally suited to providing minors with the range and depth of education required for successful long-term employment.
36. Child Soldiers International therefore concludes that raising the minimum recruitment age to 18 years would be in the best interests of recruits’ educational attainment and long-term employment prospects. This measure would ensure that all recruits had completed a broad, transferable secondary level education with the opportunity to attain GCSEs in English and maths under the guidance of professionally qualified, subject-specialist teachers before joining the armed forces. This would ensure that government strategies on education and social mobility are implemented consistently across all government departments, to the benefit of all young people irrespective of their prior level of educational attainment and future career path. It would also address the need identified by the Strategic Defence and Security Review to recruit better educated and more highly trained personnel.
37. By recruiting only from age 18 and above the MoD would ensure that personnel leaving the armed forces (at any stage in their training or career) would be able to resettle into civilian life more easily than at present, as their employment options would no longer be limited by early specialisation in military training to the exclusion of broader, more transferable skills. Their military training would therefore act as an additional qualification, rather than a substitute for a full secondary level education, as is the case at present. This should reduce some of the post-service welfare problems experienced by many veterans and Early Service Leavers in particular.
38. Raising the recruitment age would also save MoD resources. The BIS study found that there were higher retention rates among Army recruits who had “stayed in full time education for longer”.⁵⁵ The BIS study also noted that “delivering literacy and numeracy education to

⁵³ Royal British Legion, *Profiles and Needs: Comparisons between the Ex-Service Community and the UK Population*, 2006. Section 4.9.

⁵⁴ HC Deb, 10 July 2012, c197W.

⁵⁵ *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 100.

recruits with Entry Level skills represents a large claim on resources, including funding for provision and military training time for literacy and numeracy programmes⁵⁶ and recommended that the MoD “Seek to reduce the Services’ literacy and numeracy skills training liability for recruits by adjusting minimum literacy and numeracy standards for joining”.⁵⁷ Recruiting only those who have already completed their secondary level education would therefore benefit the armed forces by significantly reducing MoD expenditure on basic education. At present this is, on average, three times higher for recruits aged under 18 than for adults.⁵⁸

39. Raising entry standards would also improve operational efficiency in the armed forces, by reducing the time and resources spent supporting those with poor literacy and numeracy skills. This support, where extensive and routine, was identified as “likely to corrode...operational efficiency”, particularly on active service.⁵⁹ The BIS study questioned to what extent junior personnel could be considered “operationally effective” when they required extensive literacy and numeracy support on a consistent basis.⁶⁰ In contrast, it noted that “Trainees with sound literacy and numeracy skills are more flexible in the roles they can undertake and are able to work more effectively without supervision...improving levels of literacy and numeracy will improve the employability of recruits within the Services”.⁶¹ They also have far better prospects of successful promotion and consequently a longer armed forces career.

⁵⁶ *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 36.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, page 14.

⁵⁸ HC Deb, 15 Dec 2011, c866W. Average expenditure per recruit (Junior Entry) on Phase One training at AFC Harrogate is £64,458 and was £53,985 at ATFC Winchester. Average expenditure per recruit for Phase One Training Standard Entry (i.e. for adult recruits) is £21,318 at the Army Training Centre Pirbright, £26,992 at the Army Training Regiment Bassingbourn and £26,543 at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick.

⁵⁹ *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 10; *BIS Research Paper: Part 2*, page 207.

⁶⁰ *BIS Research Paper: Part 1*, page 59.

⁶¹ *ibid*, page 60.