



Cymdeithas y Cymod

Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales

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Annwyl Syr

Diolch am y cyfle yma eto i ymateb i'r ddeiseb yn erbyn recriwtio'r fyddin mewn ysgolion. Gan na chawsom fwy na dau ddiwrnod i ymateb y tro yma, nid ydym wedi cael yr amser i ymateb yn llawn yn y Gymraeg. Felly gan ymddiheuro am hynny, dyma ein ymateb yn Saesneg yn unig i'r ymatebion gawsoch yn Saesneg:-

Ministry of Defence response

Although the correspondence with the Ministry of Defence states that the armed forces do not conduct recruitment activities in schools – 'no pupil or school student is ever 'signed-up' or otherwise make a commitment to become a recruit into the armed forces during the course of any school visit by our representatives' – we are concerned that the activities are, for some students, the first stage towards recruitment. We do not suggest that students are signed up there and then, but that they are engaged in **pre-recruitment activities** that encourage them to actively consider a career in the armed forces. There are a considerable number of armed forces careers orientated activities taking place in schools including 'Insight' courses which is a residential course taken at a barracks providing "hands-on experience of the jobs you're interested in". Interviews for Insight courses take place in schools with students who have expressed interest within the school.

Role of the school

While it is the role of the school to provide a range of career information to students, it is also their duty to act 'in loco parentis' – with all the considerations of the best interest of the child that a parent would have. No single career provider should be given more access to their students than another and that access should be monitored and full information on the nature of the career should be provided by the school in its role as gatekeeper.

Schools act as a seal of approval for young people and the information provided to them within the school environment is viewed as authoritative. Parents and

guardians are not on hand to have an input. It is the duty of the schools to ensure that the information provided about a career in the armed forces and armed forces activities is verified, debated and balanced by schools.

Careers Wales response

The letter from Careers Wales letter is correct in that most visits will be arranged directly between the school and the armed forces so are not a matter that Careers Wales can influence.

1. However, data from the Army indicates that schools took part in careers fairs and other events run by Careers Wales at which the Army is present. This is an opportunity for Careers Wales to ensure that a wide array of opportunities are given to young people and industries that do not have the budget for promotion available to the armed forces are none-the-less encouraged to take part.

2. Other activities provided by the armed forces take place away from school (visits to training camps etc). These should be adequately supervised by the school and material and activities undertaken should be subject to debate and discussion in the same way that visits to other amenities would be.

3. Headteachers have full discretion about whether or not they take up an offer from the armed forces to visit the school. They should use this discretion to consider if the activities on offer:

- are in the best interests of their students
- are appropriate to the curriculum
- provide a balanced view of life in the forces and military activities
- should be balanced with alternative perspectives from another source
- are, or could lead to, pre-recruitment activities
- and, how can critical awareness around the issues be introduced alongside the activities

4. Headteachers should be provided with guidance about concerns relating to visits/activities of the armed forces:

- that they can glorify or sanitise involvement in warfare
- that there is a need for balance in the range of activities provided
- that an approach towards armed forces presentations and discussions that develops student's critical awareness around the issues should be encouraged

5 Teachers should be guided to actively participate in any activities run by the armed forces in their classes and discussions around armed forces material/presentations in order to assist students with interrogating the materials and to create a balanced discussion.

6. Schools should be given resources to provide an alternative and balanced view such as curriculum materials and contacts for organisations involved in peace education and veterans groups that can provide an independent viewpoint.

Risks to young people in conflict

Finally, we would like to take the opportunity of drawing the committee's attention to recent research carried out by ForcesWatch and Child Soldiers International, which indicates that those who join the armed forces at the youngest age are most at risk.:

- ***Young age at Army enlistment is associated with greater war zone risks: An analysis of British Army fatalities in Afghanistan*** (<http://www.forceswatch.net/content/youngest-soldiers-face-greatest-risks>) This

paper, published by ForcesWatch and Child Soldiers International, indicates that the risk of fatality in Afghanistan for British Army recruits aged 16 who have completed training has been twice as high as it has for those enlisting at 18 or above. This increased risk reflects the disproportionately high number of 16 year olds who join front-line Infantry roles. This is mainly the result of recruitment policies which drive the youngest recruits into the Army's most dangerous roles

- ***The Last Ambush? Aspects of mental health in the British armed forces*** (<http://www.forceswatch.net/content/last-ambush>) This report, published by ForcesWatch, shows that post-war mental health problems are most common in young soldiers from disadvantaged backgrounds. It draws on over 150 sources, including 41 British military mental health studies, as well as testimony from veterans.

Diolch eto am y cyfle i ymateb er na chawsom llawer o amser i wneud hynny y tro yma. Edrychwn ymlaen nawr i gael ymateb cadarnhaol i'r ddeiseb gan eich Pwyllgor.

Yn gywir

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