

ALTERNATIVE REPORT TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE UK'S FIFTH PERIODIC REVIEW REPORT

## PEACE EDUCATION AND THE PROMOTION OF THE ARMED FORCES IN UK SCHOOLS

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

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1 ForcesWatch critically scrutinises the ethical basis of the recruitment of young people into the armed forces. We advocate changes to policy, raise public awareness of the issues and challenge the armed forces on their recruitment practices, especially those aimed at the youngest and most disadvantaged groups. See <http://forceswatch.net>

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Peace education is not being promoted in schools by the UK Government and is not a part of the education curriculum. This raises concerns particularly as the UK Government is increasing the promotion of the military within schools through the Department for Education's 'military ethos' in schools programme and free military-related learning resources, and as the armed forces continue to conduct a substantial 'youth engagement' programme that involves many thousands of visits to schools annually. This is counter to the aims of education as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention), the recommendations given by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to the UK Government and the content of CRC General Comment No. 1 that specifies that education must promote non-violence in school and ensure that children have the skills to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner.

This report focuses on:

1. The absence of a compulsory and organised curriculum of peace education within UK schools.
2. The increased promotion of the military within the educational system by the Government and by the armed forces.
3. Concerns regarding this activity taking place within education, including the process of recruitment to the armed forces.

This report concludes that none of the relevant recommendations made by the CRC in 2008 have been implemented by the UK Government. Not only is peace education not promoted but learning resources in support of the military are emphasised above others by the Department for Education. Schools and colleges form a significant part of the armed forces awareness-raising and recruitment process, providing direct access to students without the oversight of parents or guardians. Schools in disadvantaged parts of the UK are more likely to be visited by the armed forces and are actively targeted by the military ethos programme.

A significant development since the 2008 Concluding Observations of the CRC, is the Department for Education's 'military ethos' programmes, which structurally integrates a military presence within parts of the education system, making it difficult for certain students to avoid significant exposure to the influence of the military on their education.

We therefore conclude that none of the CRC's recommendations from 2008 referenced in the Background section of this report have been implemented by the UK Government.

ForcesWatch strongly recommends that:

1. The UK Government should take immediate steps to implement the recommendations given by CRC in their Concluding Observations of 2008 and 2002 regarding peace education, human rights education and the recruitment of children into the armed forces.
2. The UK Government should consult civil society on the peace education initiatives they have developed for schools so as to incorporate peace education into all curriculum at a primary and secondary level and at teacher training institutes.
3. The UK Government should provide free peace education and human rights education resources to schools which have been developed in collaboration with civil society. This would balance the distribution of free resources about the armed forces which have been offered to schools.
4. The UK Government and armed forces should refrain from recruitment-related activities within education.

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5. The UK Government should refrain from promoting military-related materials within schools that present a one-sided view of military activity. If such materials are promoted, schools should be provided with balancing materials and guidelines for how to approach the topic.
  6. The UK Government should ensure that parents are consulted about military-related activities that are part of their children's education.
  7. The UK Government should ensure that the education system is not used to target children from low-income areas for military recruitment.
  8. The UK Government should instigate a thorough inquiry to scrutinise its policies of promoting military ethos in schools.

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## INTRODUCTION

*“Peace is described as the absence of physical and structural violence, and the presence of justice; therefore, students [of peace education] should explore the root causes of conflict, know international humanitarian and human rights laws, envision alternative structures of security, and learn skills for managing micro/macro conflict without violence<sup>2</sup>.”*

Peace education is not being promoted in schools by the UK Government and is not a part of the education curriculum. This raises concerns particularly as the UK Government is increasing the promotion of the military within schools through the Department for Education's 'military ethos' in schools programme and free military-related learning resources, and as the armed forces continue to conduct a substantial 'youth engagement' programme that involves many thousands of visits to schools annually. This is counter to the aims of education as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention), the recommendations given by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to the UK Government and the content of CRC General Comment No. 1 that specifies that education must promote non-violence in school and ensure that children have the skills to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner.

This report focuses on:

1. The absence of a compulsory and organised curriculum of peace education within UK schools.
2. The increased promotion of the military within the educational system by the Government and by the armed forces.
3. Concerns regarding this activity taking place within education, including the process of recruitment to the armed forces.

This report concludes that none of the relevant recommendations made by the CRC in 2008 have been implemented by the UK Government. Not only is peace education not promoted but learning resources in support of the military are emphasised above others by the Department for Education. Schools and colleges form a significant part of the armed forces awareness-raising and recruitment process, providing direct access to students without the oversight of parents or guardians. Schools in disadvantaged parts of the UK are more likely to be visited by the armed forces and are actively targeted by the military ethos programme.

A significant development since the 2008 Concluding Observations of the CRC, is the Department for Education's 'military ethos' programmes, which structurally integrates a military presence within parts of the education system, making it difficult for certain students to avoid significant exposure to the influence of the military on their education.

Finally we make a number of recommendations in line with the observation that the combination of the absence a peace education curriculum within schools and the presence in schools of the armed forces and military-related activities and materials, is counter to the recommendations of the CRC.

ForcesWatch also conduct research on the recruitment of under-18s to the UK armed forces. We share the view of Child Soldiers International and Children's Rights Alliance for England that the UK should raise the minimum age for recruitment into its armed forces to 18 years and ensure that the best interests of the child are paramount in all policies relating to the armed forces.

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<sup>2</sup> Kester, K (2010). 'Education for Peace: Content, Form, and Structure: Mobilizing Youth for Civic Engagement'. *Peace and Conflict Review* 4(2): 1-10, 1

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## BACKGROUND

In 2008 the CRC made the following recommendations to the UK Government regarding peace education:

1. *To intensify its efforts to tackle bullying and violence in schools, including through teaching human rights, peace and tolerance. (para 67)*<sup>3</sup>
2. *To develop and implement training programmes and campaigns to promote the values of peace and respect for human rights and include the subject of peace education and human rights as a fundamental subject in the education system, in collaboration with civil society organisations. (para 20)*<sup>4</sup>

The importance of utilising education for peace is detailed within the Convention and further expanded within General Comment No. 1.

Article 29 of the Convention details that education shall be directed towards:

- *The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin. (sub-para 29.1.d)*

General Comment No. 1 on the aims of education clarifies that<sup>5</sup>:

- *Education must also be provided in a way that respects the strict limits on discipline reflected in article 28.2 and promotes non-violence in schools. (para 8)*
- *Education must also be aimed at ensuring that essential life skills are learnt by every child. Basic skills include... life skills such as the ability... to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner. (para 9)*
- *Article 29.1 emphasizes the need for education to be designed and provided in such a way that it promotes and reinforces the range of specific ethical values enshrined in the Convention, including education for peace, tolerance, and respect for the natural environment, in an integrated and holistic manner. (para 13)*

In its *Fifth Periodic Report to CRC* (May 2014) the UK Government responded only to its implementation of the CRC recommendation regarding peace education within the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC). Their response regarding peace education was as follows:

*Peace Education CRC/C/OPAC/GBR/1*

4. *The UK Government has issued a revised citizenship programme of study for schools in England which emphasises democracy and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. The UK Government does not prescribe what schools should teach, leaving it to them to raise issues with pupils according to their age, needs and interests.*<sup>6</sup>

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3 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008), *Concluding observations on the report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, UN Doc: CRC/C/GBR/CO/4

4 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008), *Concluding observations on the report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, UN Doc: CRC/C/OPAC/GBR/CO/1

5 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001), *General Comment No.1: The Aims of Education*, UN Doc: CRC/GC/2001/1

6 UK Government (2014), *The Fifth Periodic Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*, App 1, para 4

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In 2008 the CRC also made the following recommendations to the UK Government regarding the recruitment of children<sup>7</sup> into the armed forces<sup>8</sup>:

- *To reconsider its active policy of recruitment of children into the armed forces and ensure that it does not occur in a manner which specifically targets ethnic minorities and children of low-income families. (sub-para 15.a)*
- *To ensure that parents are included from the outset and during the entire process of recruitment and enlistment. (sub-para 15.b)*

These are relevant in considering the impact of promoting the armed forces within education.

## THE ABSENCE OF PEACE EDUCATION WITHIN UK SCHOOLS

Within the school curriculum, there is much scope for the inclusion of initiatives which cover education *about* peace and education *for* peace in the subjects of Citizenship and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE). This section highlights how these established educational channels have not been utilised by the UK Government to teach peace education and how peace education is not promoted in schools more generally.

### Citizenship education

A new Citizenship curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4 in England was released by the Department for Education in 2013. The content is focused on 'democracy, government and how laws are made and upheld'.<sup>9</sup> Within the curriculum overview there is no mention of a peace education framework or content. Instead the aims of the curriculum focus heavily on gaining an understanding of the political system, governance, the role of law and financial matters. Critical thinking is cited as an aim but only in the context of debating political questions. Material covering the issue of bullying and violence in schools, peace and tolerance, and basic life skills such as the ability to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner, are not included within the curriculum.

In responding to the CRC recommendation about peace education, the UK Government's *Fifth Periodic Report to CRC* only referenced the citizenship programme in England which was described as 'emphasis[ing] democracy and the rights and responsibilities of citizens'.<sup>10</sup> The inclusion or exclusion of peace education within the UK educational system was not addressed in the report even though it came under the title of peace education. While this suggests that this is the framework within which peace issues should be addressed, the curriculum does not mention them.

Under the section 'Dissemination, training and awareness-raising', the UK Government addressed briefly how the content of the Convention has been disseminated through Citizenship programmes in schools in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and in Wales to the general public.<sup>11</sup> However it does not detail the inclusion of peace education within the educational systems of any of the four UK nations.

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7 Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years.

8 See 3.

9 Department for Education (2013), *National curriculum in England: citizenship programmes of study - key stages 3 and 4*. (London: HM Gov). Available from: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/239060/SECONDARY\\_national\\_curriculum\\_-\\_Citizenship.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239060/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Citizenship.pdf)

10 See 6, appendix 1, para 4

11 See 6, paras 31-35

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## Personal, Social, Health and Economic education

All schools are guided to make provision for PSHE education. However it remains largely a non-statutory subject and teachers have the flexibility to decide what is taught within PSHE education in their schools. The only statutory content is sex and relationship education. Other PSHE content could include 'drug education, financial education... and the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle'.<sup>12</sup> As with the Citizenship curriculum there is no reference to the issues of peace and tolerance, or basic life skills such as the ability to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner.

## Human rights education

The UK Government has specific requirements under the Convention related to the inclusion of human rights education within the educational system and has been reminded by the CRC to implement these requirements.

In 2002 the CRC recommended that the UK Government<sup>13</sup>:

- *include the Convention and human rights education in the curricula in all primary and secondary schools and teacher training, considering the Committee's General Comment No. 1 on the aims of education. (para 48)*

Article 29 of the Convention details that education shall include:

- *The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. (sub-para 29.1.b)*

The UK Government states in the *Fifth Periodic Report* that it provided funding to the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) programme between 2008 and 2010.<sup>14</sup> Over 1,000 schools across the UK have gained RRSA status.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the brief mention of disseminating the content of the Convention through Citizenship or other educational programmes, funding RRSA is the only dedicated human rights scheme which the UK Government states it has supported.

Whilst it is commendable that the UK Government contributed to funding RRSA, it is regrettable that the funding was only for two years and that the award is not accessible to all schools. Schools have to purchase special teaching resources and materials. The RRSA programme does not, therefore, satisfy the recommendation by the CRC 'to include the Convention and human rights education in the curricula in *all* primary and secondary schools'.<sup>16</sup>

## Peace education

Citizenship and PSHE are both subjects which could be utilised to 'promote the values of peace and respect for human rights', as recommended by the CRC to the UK in 2008. Education *about* peace is particularly relevant to the subject of Citizenship and education *for* peace would complement the aims of PSHE. However the UK Government has failed to incorporate peace education or human rights education within the framework and learning aims of either of these subject areas.

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12 Department for Education (2013), *Guidance: Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education*. (London: HM Gov). Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-pshe/personal-social-health-and-economic-pshe-education>

13 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2002), *Concluding Observations on the report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, UN Doc: CRC/C/15/Add.188

14 UNICEF, Rights Respecting School Award. Available from: <http://www.unicef.org.uk/rrsa>

15 See 6.

16 See 13, para 48



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In relation to peace education, the UK Government states in the *Fifth Periodic Report* that, 'it does not prescribe what schools should teach, leaving it to them to raise issues with pupils according to their age, needs and interests'.<sup>17</sup> However, the CRC recommended that the Government develop and implement training programmes and campaigns to promote the values of peace including the subject of peace education as a fundamental subject in the education system.<sup>18</sup> Leaving schools with the choice of whether or not to include peace education within lesson content does not satisfy this recommendation.

Furthermore, the UK Government does actively promote other resources to schools, including a number of military-related resources (see below). It therefore appears that there are some areas in which the Government are willing to suggest what 'schools should teach'. Not only does this contravene the spirit of the Convention on a number of counts but it also creates an imbalance in that pro-military resources are promoted and peace resources are not.

## Existing peace education resources

Peace education can be divided into two broad groups. Education *about* peace explores political topics including the issues of war, arms and disarmament, conscientious objection to military service, human rights, citizenship and social justice. Education *for* peace is more practical in its nature, teaching the more personal skills of peacemaking such as conflict resolution, mediation and problem solving skills and techniques.

There are many organisations and NGOs in the UK which have developed peace education initiatives and programmes that could be integrated into the national curriculum in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and could be incorporated into teaching material in Scotland, which does not have a national curriculum. Examples include the Peaceful Schools Movement, Peacemakers, Conflict Resolution Education in Sheffield Schools Training, the Peace Pledge Union, Quaker Peace and Social Witness and Pax Christi.<sup>19</sup> The Peace Education Network is a national network that brings together people and organisations committed to education for peace.<sup>20</sup> They recently launched *Teach Peace*, a free resource designed for primary schools.<sup>21</sup>

## THE PROMOTION OF THE MILITARY IN EDUCATION

There are a number of Government and armed forces programmes which operate within education:

1. visits to schools across the UK by the armed forces
2. the 'military ethos' programme in English schools
3. the provision of free military-focused learning resources

These initiatives raise a number of concerns relevant to the Convention and to the CRC recommendations.

### 1. Armed forces visits to schools

The UK armed forces make visits to schools for a variety of activities including for:

- careers related activities

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17 See 6, appendix 1, para 4

18 See 4, para 20

19 See more information at: <http://www.spiritualengland.org.uk/peaceful-schools/>; <http://www.peacemakers.org.uk>; <http://www.cresst.org.uk>; <http://www.ppu.org.uk/>; <http://www.quaker.org.uk/education>; <http://www.paxchristi.org.uk>

20 <http://peace-education.org.uk/>

21 Peace Education Network, *Teach Peace*, available at <http://peace-education.org.uk/teach-peace>

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- curriculum related military-focused materials
  - student development activities such as team building, leadership or interview techniques

In 2011-12 there were nearly 11,000 visits made by the armed forces to secondary schools and colleges in the UK.<sup>22</sup> In 2007 the Ministry of Defence (MoD) estimated that approximately 804,000 school students, mostly aged 8-19 years, came into contact with one of 47 MoD stakeholders each year.<sup>23</sup> Data obtained under Freedom of Information legislation from the armed forces for 2010-12 shows that, for areas where analysis has been undertaken, the majority of state secondary schools in the UK were visited by the armed forces and a far lower proportion of private schools are visited.<sup>24</sup>

For example, across Scotland, 83% of all state secondary schools were visited at least once during the two year period and 31 state secondary schools were visited 10 times or more. In half of all local authority areas, every state secondary school, or almost every school, was visited. By comparison, visits to independent schools accounted for only 5% of all armed forces visits to secondary schools and only half of all independent schools were visited.<sup>25</sup>

The Scottish study found that careers-related activities accounted for 35% of all visits by the armed forces; visits described as mainly curriculum-related accounted for 20% and those that focus on the development of the students accounted for 42%.

## 2. The 'military ethos' programme

In 2012 the Department for Education created a number of policies to promote a 'military ethos' in state schools in England.<sup>26</sup> The then-Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove said, 'Every child can benefit from the values of a military ethos. Self-discipline and teamwork are at the heart of what makes our armed forces the best in the world - and are exactly what all young people need to succeed.'<sup>27</sup>

ForcesWatch estimate that over £45 million of Department for Education funding has gone into 'military ethos' projects since 2012. This is in addition to the £180 million each year that the Ministry of Defence spend on running the Combined Cadet Forces in schools.

The four main aspects of the military ethos programme are:

- a) Cadet Expansion Programme
- b) Troops to Teachers
- c) Alternative provision with a military ethos
- d) Military-sponsored academies and free schools

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22 [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130415/text/130415w0003.htm#130415w0003.htm\\_spnew10](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130415/text/130415w0003.htm#130415w0003.htm_spnew10).

23 MoD (2007) *Engagement with UK Schools*. 'Army Recruiters and Army others' accounted for 63% of these students, Royal Navy 'Recruiters and RN others' accounted for 16%, Royal Air Forces 'Recruiters and RAF others' accounted for 7%, The Combined Cadet Forces and Army Cadet Forces in schools accounted for 6%.

24 [http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Military\\_in\\_UK\\_schools\\_May\\_2013.pdf](http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Military_in_UK_schools_May_2013.pdf)

25 Sangster, E. (2014). *Armed forces visits to secondary schools in Scotland* (London: ForcesWatch). Available at: [www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-visits-schools-scotland](http://www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-visits-schools-scotland), 13

26 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ex-military-personnel-to-drive-up-standards-among-disengaged-pupils>

27 Ibid

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### **a. Cadet Expansion Programme**

The Combined Cadet Forces (CCF) are based in state and independent schools and colleges. Each CCF contingent is made up of one or more units from the Army, Navy and Royal Air Force. There are currently around 350 CCF contingents and the UK Government is funding a Cadet Expansion Programme which has seen 100 new contingents starting in state secondary schools.<sup>28</sup> A new target of 500 CCF units by 2020 has recently been announced.<sup>29</sup> The Ministry of Defence provides uniforms, weapons and ammunition, training advice and assistance, loans of equipment, access to military transport and remuneration to the volunteer school staff instructors and officers.

### **b. Troops to Teachers**

'Troops to Teachers' is a UK Government scheme that gives ex-service personnel a quicker route into teaching than people from other backgrounds. It is unique in that non-university graduates can become teachers if they have served in the forces. Ex-armed forces members training as teachers are paid a salary while they study and pay no tuition fees for their education. Graduates of the programme have gone on to run cadet forces in their schools alongside their teaching roles.<sup>30</sup>

### **c. Alternative provision with a military ethos**

Previous to 2012, some mentoring schemes employing ex-service personnel were operating in schools. In 2012, this provision was significantly expanded with eight external providers employing former armed forces personnel to provide 'alternative provision' in education for students who are either 'disengaged with education or at risk of becoming disengaged'. More recently, this funding has been increased as 'military ethos' is equated with 'character' building. While such provision was originally aimed at children at risk of failing, these agencies are also providing whole-school or whole-class activities, are present in primary as well as secondary schools and are being used by schools to generally support teachers with discipline issues.

### **d. Military Academies and Free Schools**

The UK Government are encouraging academies and free schools to be sponsored by a part of the military such as the Reserves and Cadet Associations. Such schools would have a high proportion of ex-forces staff and have military-led activities for students. Although no such school has yet been set up, a number of University Technical Colleges (UTCs), which offer specialist education for 14-18 year olds, are sponsored by part of the Army or Navy<sup>31</sup>. Sponsors have significant influence on the ethos and direction of the school or college and will have access to students within them.

## **3. Free military-focused learning resources**

The Ministry of Defence and the armed forces provide free curriculum resources for teachers based on military activities and careers<sup>32</sup>. The resources cover Geography, History, Citizenship, PE, assemblies and skills such as leadership for age groups between 7 and 18 years. The Army also now offer resources about the

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28 Parliamentary Question, 2 June 2015, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-06-02/900130/>

29 Ibid

30 Abrams, F. (2014). 'Troops to Teachers scheme failing to entice ex-soldiers into the classroom', *The Guardian*. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/aug/05/troops-to-teachers-not-putting-ex-soldiers-in-classrooms>

31 <https://caatekent.wordpress.com/2015/06/02/free-schools-for-arms-companies/>

32 ForcesWatch (2014). *Military activities in UK schools & colleges: what are the issues and what you can do*. Available from: [http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/military\\_UK\\_schools\\_briefing-web.pdf](http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/military_UK_schools_briefing-web.pdf)

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First World War, sends 'soldiers to schools' to support teachers with the curriculum and places a soldier on each coach of school children visiting WW1 battlefields.<sup>33</sup>

In 2014, the Department for Education promoted *The British Armed Forces: Learning Resource 2014* to all schools<sup>34 35</sup>. The resource was produced by the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Defence. It is framed as a History, English and Citizenship resource for Key Stages 1-4 (5-16 year-olds), 'to educate children about the work of the UK armed forces', and was promoted to all schools by the Department for Education.

In a critical response to the resource ForcesWatch, with contributions by educationalists and others specialising in learning materials, concluded that *The British Armed Forces: Learning Resource 2014* is<sup>36 37</sup>:

- A partisan presentation of the armed forces, covering politically controversial topics in a simplistic and partial way, without acknowledging important areas of debate around them. As such, the learning resource amounts to political interference.
- A poor learning resource which was produced within a month without the involvement of teachers.
- Promotes recruitment to the armed forces and champions the Government policy of promoting military-led activities in schools.
- The resource amounts to political interference in children's education and therefore breaches sections 406<sup>38</sup> and 407<sup>39</sup> of the Education Act 1996. By promoting the resource the Department of Education is failing in its legal duty, under the Education Act, to safeguard children from the promotion of partisan political views within schools and to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Schools were also sent materials about the NATO summit in Cardiff in September 2014 and free resources are also available for national events such as Armed Forces Day.

## CRC-RELATED CONCERNS RAISED BY PROMOTING THE MILITARY IN EDUCATION

ForcesWatch and organisations with whom we work have identified a number of issues of concern about the promotion of the military and armed forces careers within schools and colleges that contravene the Convention and the recommendations of the CRC:

Military activities and materials in schools:

1. are counter to the aims of peace education and are not balanced with alternative approaches to the resolution of conflict

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33 [http://www.army.mod.uk/training\\_education/25813.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/25813.aspx)

34 Parliamentary Question, 13 October 2014, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answersstatements/written-question/Commons/2014-10-13/210169/>; Parliamentary Question, 13 October 2014, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answersstatements/written-question/Commons/2014-10-13/210123/>

35 <http://www.armedforceslearningresources.co.uk/>

36 ForcesWatch (2015). *A critical response to the 'The British Armed Forces: Learning Resource 2014'*. Available at: <http://www.forceswatch.net/armed-forces-learning-resource>

37 Rowe, D., (2014). *Why the Department for Education is wrong to endorse a booklet on the British Armed Forces*. Available at: <http://www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Why-DfE-wrong-to-support-booklet-on-Armed-Forces.pdf>

38 Education Act 1996, section 406: 'Political indoctrination. (1)The local education authority, governing body and head teacher shall forbid—(b) the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school.'

39 Education Act 1996, section 407: 'Duty to secure balanced treatment of political issues. (1)The local education authority, governing body and head teacher shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils while they are—(a)in attendance at a maintained school, or (b)taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised for registered pupils at the school by or on behalf of the school, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.'

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2. are part of the recruitment process for under-18s
  3. seek to bypass the influence of parents and guardians
  4. target students from low-income families

## 1. Peace education and alternative approaches to resolution of conflict

*CRC recommendation to the UK Government 2008:*

*To intensify its efforts to tackle bullying and violence in schools, including through teaching human rights, peace and tolerance. (para 67)<sup>40</sup>*

*To develop and implement training programmes and campaigns to promote the values of peace and respect for human rights and include the subject of peace education and human rights as a fundamental subject in the education system, in collaboration with civil society organisations. (para 20)<sup>41</sup>*

The preceding discussion explored the absence of a consistent programme of peace and human rights education in UK schools as recommended by the CRC. In addition, military-related activities and materials are present in many schools and are being actively promoted by the UK Government.

Not only does this go against the CRC recommendations from 2008, it also calls into question concerns under the UK's 1996 Education Act which states that pupils must be given a 'balanced presentation of opposing views' when looking at 'political issues'. Education should encourage critical thinking, but military activities and resources frequently present an unbalanced and sanitised version of military action and they also promote armed forces careers. *The British Armed Forces Learning Resource* is a clear example of this.

There is also a growing body of concern that visits to schools by the armed forces do not present an appropriate balance to students in an educational context.<sup>42</sup> In 2007, the head of the Army's recruitment strategy stated that: 'We don't do primary schools... It would be improper to hard-sell a military career at that point. We prefer outreach. Our recruiter will go and visit somebody who has expressed an interest - whether we've got an email address, an SMS or a home address - and follow it up in a sensible, unhurried fashion. That demands a very different skill set to just being a soldier. It demands that those people in recruitment have to become ever more professional at selling the army's offer. The army careers advisers who operate in schools are skilled salesmen.'<sup>43</sup>

After a public campaign about armed forces visits to schools in Wales, a Welsh Assembly report from June 2015 has raised concerns about the high level of visits made to Welsh secondary schools when compared to other parts of the UK. It also questions whether the visits are providing pupils with a fair and balanced view of military life and recommends that guidance is given to schools about how to balance the armed forces message with other materials.<sup>44</sup>

Armed forces activities in schools focus on adventure and personal development with little information on the risks and obligations involved. School pupils aren't encouraged to explore the ethical or emotional issues

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<sup>40</sup> See 3.

<sup>41</sup> See 4.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Quakers in Britain (2015) *The Unseen March*. A film questioning the militarisation of schools. Available at: <http://www.quaker.org.uk/unseenmarch>

<sup>43</sup> Armstrong, S. (2007), 'Britain's Child Army', *New Statesman*. Available at: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/02/british-army-recruitment-iraq>

<sup>44</sup> National Assembly for Wales Petitions Committee (2015), *Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools - Report on the Consideration of a Petition*. Available at: <http://www.assembly.wales/NAfW%20Documents/News%20section%20documents/Stop%20the%20Army%20Recruiting%20in%20schools.pdf>

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involved with military action, such as killing or seeing civilians or colleagues suffering or being killed. The presence of the military in education normalises military approaches and war, and reduces the space for alternatives to armed conflict to be explored in a learning environment. This is particularly important for the young people who become recruits as being in the armed forces can involve a significant risk of death, serious physical injury, and mental health problems especially for those most exposed to combat. Without developing a critical awareness of the issues at stake, young people can not make an informed choice about joining up. This may have serious consequences; our research on the risk of fatality for those who enlisted at 16 versus adult recruits, and on how the experience of mental health issues differs for particular groups within the military and veteran community, indicate that the youngest and most disadvantaged recruits are especially at risk because they are over-represented in these frontline sections and have less access to support networks.<sup>45</sup>

## 2. Recruiting under-18s

*CRC recommendation to the UK Government 2008:*

*To reconsider its active policy of recruitment of children into the armed forces and ensure that it does not occur in a manner which specifically targets ethnic minorities and children of low-income families. (sub-para 15.a)*

We share the view of Child Soldiers International and Children's Rights Alliance for England that the UK should raise the minimum age for recruitment into its armed forces to 18 years in line with the above recommendation. Furthermore, we are concerned that armed forces activities in schools greatly facilitate the recruitment of under-18s. A study of these visits to schools in Scotland found that 35% of all visits to secondary schools were explicitly for careers-related activities.<sup>46</sup>

Despite assurances by the Ministry of Defence and the three armed services that the armed forces do not recruit in schools (based on the fact that recruits do not sign up on school premises)<sup>47</sup>, it is also evident that the recruitment potential of visits is a key purpose of many, if not most, of their visits to schools. The House of Commons Defence Select Committee's report on *Recruitment and Retention* in 2008 made it clear that, not only do the military perceive the service personnel who go into schools as 'recruiters', but that they and the Defence Committee have sought to establish a more systematic approach to engaging with school pupils for the purpose of recruiting.<sup>48</sup>

The Ministry of Defence's *Youth Engagement Review* of 2011, also makes an explicit link between armed forces activities in schools and recruitment, which in tandem with raising 'awareness of the Armed Forces' role in the world and the quality of its work and people, in order to ensure the continued support of the population', make up two 'defence outcomes'.<sup>49</sup>

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45 Gee, D. (2013). *The Last Ambush? Aspects of mental health in the British armed forces* (London: ForcesWatch), available at: <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/last-ambush>; Gee, D. and Goodman, A. (2013), *Young age at Army enlistment is associated with greater war zone risks: An analysis of British Army fatalities in Afghanistan* (London: ForcesWatch and Child Soldiers International), available at <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/youngest-soldiers-face-greatest-risks>

46 See 25.

47 See letter from Mark Francois MP, Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans to the National Assembly for Wales, 30 September 2013. Available at: <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21391/30.09.2013%20Correspondence%20-%20Ministry%20of%20Defence%20to%20the%20Chair.pdf>

48 Ministry of Defence (2008), *Memorandum from the Ministry of Defence' in House of Commons Defence Committee Recruiting and Retaining Armed Forces Personnel*, (Fourteenth Report of Session 2007-08) page 27. Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmdfence/1074/107402.htm>.

49 Ministry of Defence (2011), *Youth Engagement Review and Ministry of Defence* (2012), *Youth Engagement Review: a summary and way forward*. Both available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-engagement-review>

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The UK Government have stated that 'similar contributions to schools [are] made by the police, fire, ambulance and other emergency services'.<sup>50</sup> Freedom of Information requests to the emergency services in Scotland suggest that few there, if any, have the level of engagement with schools and colleges that is maintained by the armed forces.<sup>51</sup>

The development of many new cadet units under the Department for Education's military ethos in schools programme is also a cause for concern as there is significant evidence that the armed forces view the cadet forces as a pool of potential recruits to the regular and reserve forces. For example, the Ministry of Defence stated in February 2014 that, 'cadet units are beneficial to both society and for recruitment into the Armed Forces, that is why we want to increase the number of them.'<sup>52</sup>

### 3. Bypassing the influence of parents and guardians

*CRC recommendation to the UK Government 2008:*

*To ensure that parents are included from the outset and during the entire process of recruitment and enlistment. (sub-para 15.b)*

We share the concern of Child Soldiers International that the recruitment procedure for under-18s fails to ensure that consent from parents is genuine and fully informed and that the above recommendation has not been implemented. Furthermore, we are concerned that recruitment-related activities in schools give an unfair advantage to the armed forces as they are able to use the school environment to bypass the influence of parents and guardians. The school context gives an authority to information that the student receives and generally excludes the parent from consultation and choice about whether their child shall take part in activities.

There is evidence that the armed forces are also very aware of the need to influence schools themselves in order to maintain this privileged access. A Royal Navy promotional pack addressed to 'Teachers and Influencers' has been sent to all schools.<sup>53</sup> The Royal Air Force uses the term 'Gatekeeper Events' for those activities aimed at 'those who hold knowledge and influence decisions, be it teachers or parents'.<sup>54</sup>

In relation to wider education policy, there was no public consultation around the implementation of the military ethos programme introduced by the Government in 2012 and it has received no scrutiny through parliamentary bodies. There are also concerns about the rigorousness of some of the claims that are being made about the effectiveness of the programme in regards to the stated objective of improving educational attainment.<sup>55</sup>

### 4. Targeting students from low income families

*CRC recommendation to the UK Government 2008:*

*To reconsider its active policy of recruitment of children into the armed forces and ensure that it does not occur in a manner which specifically targets ethnic minorities and children of low-income families. (sub-para 15.a)*

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50 Hansard, HC (2013). 15 April 2013. Armed Forces: Schools

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130415/text/130415w0003.htm>

51 See 25.

52 Swinford, S. and Farmer, B. (2014), 'Public school funding for military cadet forces diverted to state sector', *The Telegraph*. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/10640052/Public-school-funding-for-military-cadet-forces-diverted-to-state-sector.html>

53 See <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/178452/response/457452/attach/5/Bilingual%20email%20design%2003.06.13.jpg>

54 See [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/army\\_visits\\_to\\_scottish\\_schools](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/army_visits_to_scottish_schools)

55 See <http://www.forceswatch.net/blog/alternative-provision-military-ethos-receives-more-funding-response>

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There is sufficient evidence (see below) to suggest that, to some extent, the armed forces target their visits to schools to more deprived areas, although the spread of visits is also governed by other factors such as the relationship built up with individual schools and the location of armed forces bases and Armed Forces Careers Offices. The Department for Education's military ethos programme is, however, more explicitly aimed at schools in disadvantaged areas and, within each school, those students more at risk of failing.<sup>56</sup> Whilst it is not the stated aim of the military ethos programme to promote a career in the armed forces, there are significant elements of it that expose young people to the influence of the armed forces within education and open up the possibility of a forces career. We therefore consider that the UK Government are not implementing the CRC recommendation against targeting children of low-income families.

Data for 2011-12 from the Ministry of Defence showed that schools in the economically more deprived areas of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland received a higher proportion of armed forces visits than England; 22% of visits for the UK were made to these three countries which represent only 16% of the UK population.<sup>57</sup>

A study of Army visits to schools in London found that, 'Army recruiters were particularly likely to visit the most disadvantaged schools: 51% in the most disadvantaged fifth were visited vs. 29% in the middle fifth and 40% of schools in the richest fifth'.<sup>58</sup> Our analysis of Army visits to schools in different parts of Wales was noted by the Welsh Assembly report on armed forces visits to schools (June 2015): 'There does seem to be evidence that the armed forces disproportionately visit schools in areas of relatively high deprivation. However, there is no compelling evidence that shows that the armed forces deliberately target schools in these areas.'<sup>59</sup> They go on to state that further research is needed. While it is difficult to conclusively demonstrate intent in visiting poorer schools, that these schools do receive more visits is of concern.

What is known is that enlistment into the armed forces is concentrated in socio-economically deprived regions of Wales, Scotland and the north of England.<sup>60</sup> While the Ministry of Defence state that they do not collect data on socio-economic background of their recruits, it is known that most army enlistees have a low or very low reading age and/or arrive with multiple vulnerabilities associated with adverse childhood backgrounds.<sup>61</sup> See the Child Soldiers International submission for more detail.

The military is often thought of in wider society as the only option for young people in economically deprived regions.<sup>62</sup> The Ministry of Defence and armed forces emphasise this by recruitment advertising that suggests that a military career is the only opportunity many people will get to advance their career prospects.<sup>63</sup> Drawing on Ministry of Defence data and analysis, the 2007 report *Informed Choice? Armed forces recruitment practice in the United Kingdom* concluded that, 'The armed forces draw non-officer recruits mainly from among young people with low educational attainment and living in poor communities. A

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56 [T]hese projects are aimed at addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils, such as those receiving free school meals (FSM) or with special education needs (SEN), and disengaged pupils, such as those struggling with learning or who have poor behaviour issues both inside and outside the mainstream school system. In some instances schools will also include pupils that are not educationally disadvantaged but will benefit from the provision through increased social skills. From Department for Education (2014), *Review of military ethos alternative provision projects: research report*.

57 Parliamentary Question, 15 April 2013, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130415/text/130415w0003.htm#130415w0003.htm\\_wqn10](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130415/text/130415w0003.htm#130415w0003.htm_wqn10)

58 See Gee, D. and Goodman, A. (2010). Army recruiters visit London's poorest schools most often. Available at <http://www.informedchoice.org.uk/armyvisitschools.pdf>

59 See 44.

60 Information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, Ref. FOI2015/00374, 4 February 2015. Available at: <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/247631/response/613728/attach/3/20150112%20FOI00374%20Scott%2074302%20Sec%2004%2002%200.pdf>.

61 Information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, Ref. FOI2015/03426, 21 April 2015. Online at: [http://child-soldiers.org/research\\_report\\_reader.php?id=822](http://child-soldiers.org/research_report_reader.php?id=822).

62 Tannock, S., Burgess, S., and Moles, K. (2013), *Military recruitment, work and culture in the South Wales valleys: a local geography of contemporary British militarism*. Available at:



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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>64</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not only is peace education not promoted but learning resources in support of the military are emphasised above others by the Department for Education. Schools and colleges form a significant part of the armed forces awareness-raising and recruitment process, providing direct access to students without the oversight of parents or guardians. Schools in disadvantaged parts of the UK are more likely to be visited by the armed forces and are actively targeted by the military ethos programme.

A significant development since the 2008 Concluding Observations of the CRC, is the Department for Education's 'military ethos' programmes, which structurally integrates a military presence within parts of the education system, making it difficult for certain students to avoid significant exposure to the influence of the military on their education.

We therefore conclude that none of the CRC recommendations from 2008 referenced in the Background section of this report have been implemented by the UK Government.

With regard to the concerns expressed above, ForcesWatch strongly recommends that:

1. The UK Government should take immediate steps to implement the recommendations given by CRC in their Concluding Observations of 2008 and 2002 regarding peace education, human rights education and the recruitment of children into the armed forces.
2. The UK Government should consult civil society on the peace education initiatives they have developed for schools so as to incorporate peace education into all curriculum at a primary and secondary level and at teacher training institutes.
3. The UK Government should provide free peace education and human rights education resources to schools which have been developed in collaboration with civil society. This would balance the distribution of free resources about the armed forces which have been offered to schools.
4. The UK Government and armed forces should refrain from recruitment-related activities within education.
5. The UK Government should refrain from promoting military-related materials within schools that present a one-sided view of military activity. If such materials are promoted, schools should be provided with balancing materials and guidelines for how to approach the topic.
6. The UK Government should ensure that parents are consulted about military-related activities that are part of their children's education.
7. The UK Government should ensure that the education system is not used to target children from low-income areas for military recruitment.
8. The UK Government should instigate a thorough inquiry to scrutinise its policies of promoting military ethos in schools.

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[http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/files/3613/8019/7095/WISERD\\_WPS\\_009.pdf](http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/files/3613/8019/7095/WISERD_WPS_009.pdf)

63 See, for example, the British Army Recruitment Advert 2014 [online video], available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOhvjBwux4>, accessed 4th March 2015.

64 Gee, D. (2007). *Informed Choice? Armed forces recruitment practice in the United Kingdom*, available at: <http://informedchoice.org.uk>