



Starting Points

Further background information for facilitators

The growing role of the military in everyday life in the UK

In the UK, military personnel have little visible influence in government, and apart from during the two World Wars, we have only had conscription between 1945-1960. However, many people will have noticed the military's growing presence and influence in many areas of society in the last few years.

This was written into government policy five years ago with the 2008 report 'National Recognition of Our Armed Forces', written for then-Prime Minister Gordon Brown, which stated (based on surveys of the public) that the Armed Forces had 'become increasingly separated from civilian life and consciousness.', which could inhibit their 'motivation and effectiveness', potentially endangering 'the society they are defending'. It also asserted that 'Public understanding of the military and recognition of their role will always determine the climate within which the Forces can recruit, and the willingness of the taxpayer to finance them', and made forty recommendations for 'increasing visibility', 'improving contact', 'building understanding', and 'encouraging support', including, respectively:

encouraging members of the Armed Forces to wear their uniforms in public, making local authorities responsible for homecoming parades, and supporting the call for an Armed Forces Day; holding open days at military facilities; greatly expanding the Cadet Forces in state schools, and introducing an Armed Forces element to the Citizenship curriculum; introducing special discounts for Armed Forces personnel.

Almost all of these recommendations have been implemented, some under the Armed Forces Covenant, the legal formalisation in May 2011 of the supposed (but unwritten) contract between civilians and members of the Armed Forces, which 'recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the armed

forces and their families and...establishes how they should expect to be treated.' The Armed Forces Covenant encompasses the Community Covenant, which encourages local support for and interaction with Armed Forces personnel. Half of the UK's local authorities had officially signed the Community Covenant as of the end of 2012; since then several more have signed. A recent example of a Community Covenant initiative is the call by Labour Party shadow ministers for more streets to be named after Armed Forces personnel killed in combat, which the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has already started doing. In addition, we are all asked to support the armed forces through charities such as Help for Heroes – many of which have been set up in the last ten years.

The military's engagement with young people in particular:

The 2005 Strategy for Delivery of MoD Youth Initiatives stated that 'The principles underpinning the youth policy are: a. to integrate Armed Forces Youth Policies with wider Government youth policies, particularly those aimed at capability building, social inclusion and citizenship; b. to provide appropriately resourced university, combined and single service cadet units so that all youths have a reasonable opportunity to participate in cadet activities; c. to provide an environment which maximises awareness of the Armed Forces among both young people and their gatekeepers in order to create the conditions in which recruiting flourishes.'

The 2012 summary of the 2011 Youth Engagement Review reiterated that the most significant benefits of running activities for young people are to defence rather than to the young people themselves - 'the two most important benefits to the MoD are awareness and recruitment.'

The military's physical presence and its values are growing in schools: in addition to armed forces visits, lesson plans, and sixth form scholarships for potential officers, the Department for Education is rolling out a 'Military Ethos and Skills' programme, which includes the creation of 100 new cadet units in state schools (recommended in the 2008 report – historically school-based cadet units have mostly been in private schools), and alternative provision for vulnerable, disengaged pupils, such as Challenger Troop: a full-time military-uniformed activity programme for 10-16 year olds. All this is due to be greatly expanded.