

PE1603/U

Ministry of Defence Letter of 4 January 2017

Further to my letter to you of 1 November (*MC2016/09350*) and the meeting of the Petitions Committee on 24 November, I understand that you would welcome additional evidence from the Ministry of Defence on two specific issues.

To address your first concern regarding whether the Armed Forces target their recruiting efforts in particular schools and towards particular groups of young people in disadvantaged areas. I would like to reiterate that our Armed Forces never visit schools for recruitment purposes and only ever visit a school after being invited by a Head Teacher to support school activities. The Armed Forces do visit some schools more frequently than others but this is once a good working relationship has been established and they are invited back subsequently. However, there are also schools which are never visited because the Head Teacher does not feel it appropriate to invite the Armed Forces to support school activities. We respect both views and react to invites when appropriate; we do not target schools based on factors such as gender, social background or level of disadvantage in the surrounding area.

I understand that your second area of concern was whether risks and potentially negative aspects of a career in the Armed Forces are presented as well as the benefits and opportunities. I can confirm that during their presentations and engagements in schools the Armed Forces do include information highlighting the fact that those entering the Armed Forces may be involved in conflict with the attendant risks that go with that.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain some of the material used by the Army, as an example. In presentations made by the Army in Scotland for Educational Stages 1-3 they state that the role of the Army is to be operationally ready in order to carry out peacekeeping, training and conflict. In the Citizenship material used by the Army, students are given the seven roles of the Army, one of which states:

"Provide expeditionary capability - operate anywhere in the world. As part of the UN, NATO or other groups of friendly countries, the British Army is often called upon to provide expertise, equipment and manpower anywhere in the world. This can include military training exercises or being sent to war if Parliament agrees."

Material also explains the variety of roles within the Army including combat and the range of equipment which is used such as vehicles used in combat roles. We believe that such material is in line with other employers explaining their potential role in providing a balanced view between the roles available in the Armed Forces and the associated risks.

If it would be helpful for the Petitions Committee I would be happy to ask officials to arrange a specific briefing for you.