

British army: Education for recruits aged under 18

Read time: 8 min.

Introduction

In the year 2020–21, the army enlisted 2,410 under-18s.¹ This briefing compares the education they receive with that of the civilian education system, where the large majority of their peers remain.

Context: Education at age 16 and 17 in England

The proportion of 16-year-olds in England who now continue in full-time education for a sustained period has risen markedly from **40 percent**² in 1985 to **87 percent** in 2020.³ The proportion who are not in education, employment or training has fallen to just **4 percent**.⁴

This trend includes young people from socio-economically deprived backgrounds, from which the army tends to draw its youngest recruits. **81 percent** of disadvantaged 16-year-olds now continue in full-time education for a sustained period.⁵

Further education providers offer a wide range of courses at Level 3 (A Level/BTEC etc.). Significantly, they are also required to support students who have fallen short of standard GCSE passes to re-sit them.⁶ As a consequence, **47 percent** of disadvantaged young people now achieve standard GCSE passes in both English

¹ In 2020–21, the army enlisted 2,410 16- and 17-year-olds, 25.8% of the total enlisted intake. On average, in the last five years to 2020–21, more new enlistees have been 16 than any other age. Ministry of Defence, 'UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics: 2021', <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-index>.

² A 'sustained period' is defined by the Department for Education (DfE) as continuous study for at least two terms after the statutory school leaving age has been reached. DfE, 'National table NA10: Pupil destinations after completing key stage 4, state-funded mainstream schools', 2019, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840011/Destinations_of_KS4_and_16_to_18_students_2018_-_key_stage_4_national_tables.ods.

³ DfE, 'Academic year 2019–20: Key stage 4 destination measures', 2022, <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-destination-measures>.

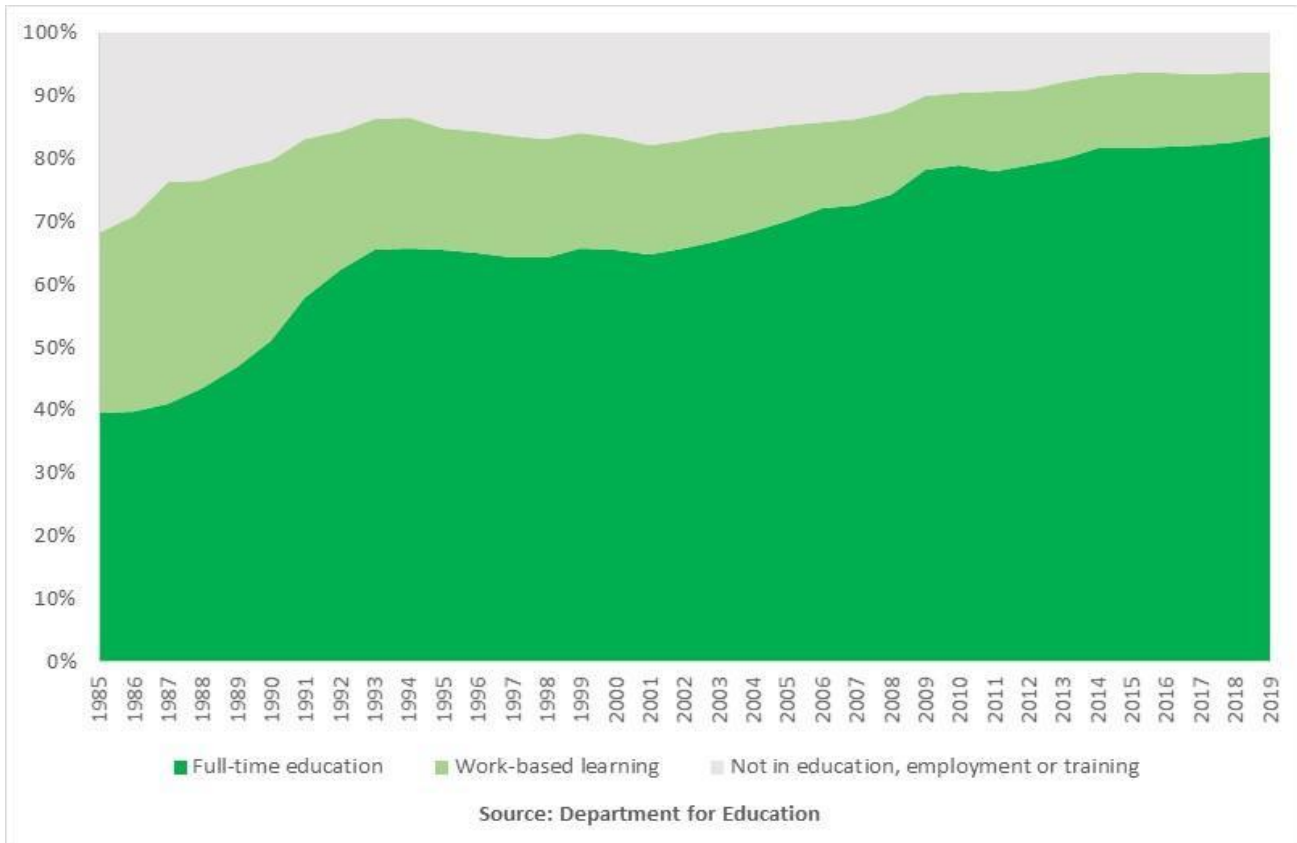
⁴ 3.8% of 16-year-olds were recorded as not in education employment or training (NEET) in the last quarter of 2020. DfE, 'Percentage of population aged 16 NEET in England in Q4, 2020', 2022, <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/1ed76b4e-8406-483c-8c2f-c578b2e28461>.

⁵ 'Disadvantaged' is defined by the DfE as school students eligible for free school meals or in care. DfE, 'National table NA21b: Pupil destinations after completing key stage 4 by disadvantage status and gender, state-funded schools (mainstream and special)', https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840011/Destinations_of_KS4_and_16_to_18_students_2018_-_key_stage_4_national_tables.ods.

⁶ It is a condition of funding of civilian colleges that students who arrive holding grade GCSE grade D (old system) or 3 (new system) in English or maths, or both, must be supported to resit their GCSEs as appropriate with a view to enhancing their grade to at least 4 (equivalent to C under the old system). Students who arrive with grades lower than D or 3 must either be supported to resit their GCSEs or be enrolled on Functional Skills qualifications at Level 2. See Department for Education, '16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding', 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-maths-and-english-condition-of-funding#qualifications-approved-for-teaching-to-16-to-19-year-olds-who-meet-the-condition-of-funding>.

and maths by age 19.⁷

16- and 17-year-olds continuing in full-time education, work-based learning, and out of education and work (England, 1985-2019)⁸



Army recruitment at age 16 and 17

In 2016, the assistant director of recruitment, Col Simon Stockley, remarked that recruits are ‘often young people who, for whatever reason, have not succeeded in traditional education, and [by joining up] they have transformed their lives’.⁹ This common characterisation of the army as a socio-economic safety net for the country’s most-deprived young people is unsupported by the available evidence:

- **Most disadvantaged young people now stay in full-time education.** As noted above, **four-fifths** of this group now continue in school or college post-16, where they are supported to gain standard GCSE passes in core subjects if they do not yet hold them.
- **Contrary to common assumption, most of the army’s youngest recruits were making progress in the civilian education system before they were enlisted.** Six out of every seven recruits aged under 18 already held at least a Level 1 qualification in maths and the same proportion held a Level 1 qualification

⁷ A standard GCSE pass includes grades 9–4, equivalent to A–C in the predecessor system. DfE, ‘C. State sector data, 16-19. Time period based on the academic year the young person turned (or will turn) 19’ for Percentage, Attainment gap, FSM eligible, FSM not eligible, 16 and 19 in England between 2018/19 and 2019/20’, 2022, <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/56393d70-2e27-49ce-af7f-46d9f98fa8f0>.

⁸ Department for Education, ‘Additional tables - rates: participation and NEET 2019’ (Table A7: Participation in education and training of 16 & 17 year olds, England, 1985 onwards), 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-in-education-training-and-employment-2019>.

⁹ Louise Tickle, ‘Who goes there? Campaigners fight to keep military away from UK schools’, *Guardian*, 30 August 2016.

in English; normally GCSE grade D–G/1–3 or equivalent.¹⁰ While recruits under 18 tend to come from deprived backgrounds,¹¹ the army’s research indicates that young people with the most deprived backgrounds, and those who have left the education system entirely, are relatively unlikely to enlist.¹²

On this evidence, the army tends not to be rescuing young people from unemployment, but instead drawing them out of the education system where, in general, they had been achieving before their enlistment.

Accredited education for army recruits

The army argues that the education offered to its youngest recruits continues to improve their social mobility.¹³ In 2015, the then Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, characterised the army’s youngest recruits as ‘people in education’ and not ‘child soldiers’,¹⁴ for example. In fact, the formal education provided is rudimentary, as the following explains.

Army Foundation College

Recruits aged between 16 and 17½ undergo initial military training at the Army Foundation College (AFC) in Harrogate. Despite its name, AFC is not constituted as a college of further education. AFC does not, nor is it required to, meet the Ofsted standards that apply to civilian colleges or offer progression to GCSEs in English and maths to recruits who do not hold these qualifications.¹⁵ The army stated in 2019 that it would be unable to fund or staff AFC if it were run on the same basis as a civilian college.¹⁶

The education offer

Whereas a civilian college offers a wide range of courses, AFC’s offer is limited. The minority of recruits who arrive to train at AFC with suitable standard GCSE passes are enrolled onto a Level 3 BTEC Certificate course in Public Services.¹⁷ All others are enrolled onto basic Functional Skills (FS) courses in just three subjects at Level 1 – English, maths and ICT – with the option of progressing to Level 2 in each.¹⁸

¹⁰ Data based on the army’s 2018-19 intake at age 16–17½. Ministry of Defence, information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, ref. FOI2020/00269/10/06, 5 February 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886753/20200203-FOI00269-Cooper-AFC-Harrogate-Learning_Hrs-Final_Response-REDACTED.pdf.

¹¹ Child Rights International Network, *Conscription by poverty? Deprivation and army recruitment in the UK*, 2019, https://home.crin.org/s/UK_recruitment_report_final.pdf.

¹² According to the army’s research, the social group most sceptical about enlisting are the UK’s most-deprived young people, labelled by the researchers as ‘feckless, poor and pessimistic’, who make up just 8 per cent of the army’s youngest recruits. The same research found that 34 per cent of young people aged 14–17 would consider joining up, but only 24 per cent among those who are out of education. BMG Research, *JE review market research – Final report*, 2018, Figures 35 and 37, pp. 55–56, and Figure 95, p. 100, http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0161/JE_Review_Market_Research_Final_Report.docx.

¹³ British army, *Junior Entry Review (JER) – Final report*, p. 3, http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0931/Armys_Junior_Entry_Review.pdf.

¹⁴ Gen Sir Nick Carter, oral evidence to the House of Commons Armed Forces Bill Committee, 18 November 2015, <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/armed-forces-bill-committee/armed-forces-bill-201516/oral/24608.html>.

¹⁵ Ministry of Defence, information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, ref. FOI2020/00269/10/06, 5 February 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886753/20200203-FOI00269-Cooper-AFC-Harrogate-Learning_Hrs-Final_Response-REDACTED.pdf; DfE, *Army Foundation College – Written question – 209858*, 17 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2RmLu43> [shortened link].

¹⁶ British army, *Junior Entry Review (JER) – Final report*, 2019, pp. 5–6, http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0931/Armys_Junior_Entry_Review.pdf.

¹⁷ In 2019–20, 330 AFC recruits were enrolled onto the BTEC course. Ministry of Defence, *Army: Vocational Education: Written question – 104139*, 15 October 2020.

¹⁸ Ministry of Defence, information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, ref. FOI2020/00269/10/06, 5 February 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886753/20200203-FOI00269-Cooper-AFC-Harrogate-Learning_Hrs-Final_Response-REDACTED.pdf.

The army incorrectly describes FS as equivalent to GCSEs.¹⁹ The scope of FS is narrower and the courses are just over one-third of the length.²⁰ The Department for Education regards FS as a ‘stepping stone’ towards the GCSE standard and not a stand-alone qualification.²¹ The Wolf Review into vocational qualifications clearly distinguished GCSEs from FS, which are ‘certainly not in themselves an adequate “maths and English” diet for the 16–19 cohort’.²²

Teaching time

AFC devotes minimal time to formal education. For example, a recruit who arrives without any qualifications and enrolls on all of AFC’s courses receives approximately **six hours** per week of teaching time over the duration of their training (just short of a year).²³ Despite opting in to all the courses available, the recruit will still fall short of completing **280 guided learning hours** per year,²⁴ as is now required by law of young people under 18 who are in full-time work; armed forces recruits, however, are exempt from this standard.²⁵

Attrition

Army training suffers a very high rate of attrition. In contrast to an average dropout rate in civilian education of **11 percent**,²⁶ **30 percent** of army recruits aged under 18, about 700 per year, leave the army before they complete their training.²⁷ Since they are not tracked by the army after they have been discharged, the proportion that manage to re-enter the education system or find a job is unknown.²⁸

¹⁹ British army, *Junior Entry Review (JER) – Final report*, 2019, p. 3, http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0931/Armys_Junior_Entry_Review.pdf.

²⁰ A functional skills course at Level 1 or 2 is graded at 45 guided learning hours, versus 120 hours for a GCSE. See University and Colleges Administration Service, ‘Functional Skills’, 2019, <https://qips.ucas.com/qip/functional-skills> and ‘General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) graded 9 – 1. Ofqual accredited’, 2018, <https://qips.ucas.com/qip/general-certificate-of-secondary-education-gcse-graded-9-1-ofqual-accredited>.

²¹ Department for Education, ‘16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding’, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-maths-and-english-condition-of-funding#qualifications-approved-for-teaching-to-16-to-19-year-olds-who-meet-the-condition-of-funding>.

²² A Wolf, *Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report*, 2011, p. 84, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report>.

²³ Recruits who arrive without Level 2 qualifications in English, maths or ICT are enrolled on FS courses in all three subjects at Level 1, with the option of progressing to Level 2, which combined entail 80 hours’ teaching time per subject (240 hours across all three subjects). Over the 49 week ‘long course’ at AFC, and allowing for the eight weeks of holiday, 240 hours is equivalent to 5.9 hours per week. See Ministry of Defence, information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, ref. FOI2020/00269/10/06, 5 February 2020.

²⁴ All six FS courses, if taken, amount to 270 guided learning hours (for sources and detail refer to endnote 19). The BTEC course is rated at 180 guided learning hours. Pearson Education, *BTEC Level 3: Public Services (Specification)*, Issue 4, 2016.

²⁵ Since 2015 the Education and Skills Act (2008) has required all young people aged 16 and 17 to continue to participate in education. Those in full-time employment must complete 280 guided learning hours of education annually towards accredited qualifications. It is this part of the Act from which the armed forces are exempt. The exemption is specified in The Duty to Participate in Education or Training (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2013, no. 1205. A Functional Skill course at Level 1 or 2 is rated at 45 guided learning hours. A student who takes courses at both levels in all three subjects in one year will therefore undergo 270 guided learning hours in total. See University and Colleges Administration Service, ‘Functional Skills’, 2019, <https://qips.ucas.com/qip/functional-skills>.

²⁶ In 2018–19, the retention rate in full-time education in England for the post-16 age group was 89.3%, varying little by qualification level, between a low of 88.9% among learners at Level 3 and a high of 89.8% at Level 1. DfE, ‘2018 to 2019 education and training NARTs overall headline’ [see table ‘Headline’, cell H7], 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874715/Education_and_Training_Overall_Headline_Achievement_Rates_Tables_201819.xlsx.

²⁷ In the three-year period 2015–16 to 2017–18, the army enlisted 5,280 recruits aged under 18, of whom 1,580 (30.0%) dropped out before completing their Phase 2 training. MoD, UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics, 1 April 2020 edition, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-2020>; Ministerial answer to Parliamentary Question no. 103588, 14 October 2020, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-14/103588>. (Note: figures from 2018–19 have been excluded since some recruits who enlisted during that year had not completed their training at the time the drop-out statistics were generated.)

²⁸ Ministry of Defence, *Army: Recruitment: Written question – 19893*, 24 February 2020, <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-24/19893>.

Ofsted

A civilian college that offered only FS courses in just three subjects and one BTEC option, did not offer GCSEs, and suffered AFC’s high rate of attrition, would be forced to close.²⁹ Nonetheless, Ofsted has graded AFC as ‘outstanding’, giving potential recruits and their parents the impression that an army education rivals that of the best civilian colleges. This top grading is made possible by a bespoke contract between Ofsted and the Ministry of Defence which focuses on welfare provision and excludes from its scope the quality, range, and suitability of the education provided.³⁰ The Department for Education acknowledges that ‘Ofsted does not grade the Army Foundation College in Harrogate on the same basis as civilian colleges for the age group’.³¹ Indeed, AFC’s Ofsted report is just three pages long.³²

Standards and practice at the Army Foundation College in comparison with civilian colleges

Standard/practice	Army training for 16-year-olds	Civilian college
Statutory ‘duty to participate’ in 280 or more guided learning hours per year.	☐	✓
‘Duty to participate’ standard met in practice.	☐	✓
Wide choice of subjects	☐	✓
Support with sub-GCSE literacy and numeracy at Levels 1 and 2.	✓	✓
Support to achieve government minimum standard at Level 2: GCSE A*-C grades in English and maths by age 19.	☐	✓
Learners with Level 2 supported to progress to a BTEC Certificate in Public Services.	✓	✓
Learners with Level 2 supported to progress to a wide range of Level 3 courses.	☐	✓
Unrestricted freedom to leave or change college at any point.	☐	✓
High sustained participation rate (c. 89 percent) ³³	☐	✓
Ofsted inspects child welfare arrangements.	✓	✓
Ofsted inspects quality and suitability of education.	☐	✓

²⁹ For example, it is a condition of funding in civilian colleges to provide GCSE courses in English and maths to learners who arrive with D grades, and to assess whether students who arrive with E grades or below should also be provided with GCSE courses or sub-GCSE courses, such as Functional Skills, as a stepping stone to GCSEs. DfE, communication with Child Soldiers International, 25 April 2016.

³⁰ See Annex B in Ofsted, ‘Welfare and duty of care in armed forces initial training’, 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welfare-and-duty-of-care-in-armed-forces-initial-training>.

³¹ DfE, *Army Foundation College – Written question – 209858*, 17 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/2RmLu43> [shortened link].

³² See Ofsted, ‘Welfare and duty of care in Armed Forces initial training 2020 to 2021’, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welfare-and-duty-of-care-in-armed-forces-initial-training/welfare-and-duty-of-care-in-armed-forces-initial-training-2020-to-2021>.

³³ DfE, ‘2018 to 2019 education and training NARTs overall headline’ [see table ‘Headline’, cell H7], 2020, op cit.

Enhancing the offer

In response to concerns about its education provision, in 2016 the army announced that trainees who had achieved a D in GCSE English or maths would be supported to retake their exams,³⁴ but this has not been done.

In 2019, the army dismissed the possibility of introducing more STEM courses (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) for its youngest recruits, citing its market research as stating that its main target audience for recruitment from age 16 ‘could be discouraged’ by this.³⁵ In fact, the cited research found that **three-quarters** of AFC’s current trainees and **one-third** of the 14–17 age group in its main target group would find army jobs more appealing if more STEM were on offer.³⁶ The researchers had concluded, ‘It is our view that the introduction of more STEM may attract more of the key segments [of potential recruits].’³⁷

Recruiting at 16: Backfilling the infantry

The army’s stated rationale for recruiting from age 16 is to backfill shortfalls in adult recruitment, ‘particularly for the infantry’,³⁸ its close-combat arm. As of 2018, one-third of trainees at AFC had been given jobs in the infantry, for example.³⁹ The army contrasts these trainees with ‘STEM-capable recruits’ who require a ‘different approach’ and AFC ‘should not be considered’ a viable means to attract them.⁴⁰ The purpose of AFC is explicitly not, therefore, to upskill infantry recruits with STEM education.

Infantry recruits are enrolled onto an apprenticeship in ‘Public Services’ based on aspects of their basic training, such as keeping fit, working safely, and maintaining weapons.⁴¹ While some of these skills, combined with basic FS qualifications, may have some transferrable value to the civilian jobs market later, recruits suffer a clear disadvantage relative to the vast majority of their peers, who stay on in full-time education at age 16 to re-sit GCSEs or progress to Level 3 qualifications. A 2013 report that tracked infantry veterans’ post-service destinations found that **30 percent** of those who had left the army within four years were unemployed 18 months afterwards.⁴²

Conclusion

This briefing has shown that:

- Participation and achievement in civilian education among the 16–17 age group has been rising, including among those from the most socio-economically deprived backgrounds;
- The education provided to army recruits in the same age group falls below the standards required of their civilian peers;

³⁴ Letter from Earl Howe, Minister of State in the House of Lords, to Lord Selkirk, 31 July 2016.

³⁵ British army, *Junior entry review (JER) – Final report*, 2019, p. 3.

³⁶ BMG Research, *JE review market research – Final report*, 2018, Figure 21, p. 40, http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0161/JE_Review_Market_Research_Final_Report.docx.

³⁷ BMG Research, *JE review market research – Final report*, 2018, p. 58, http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0161/JE_Review_Market_Research_Final_Report.docx.

³⁸ According to the MoD, Junior Entry recruitment (aged 16-17.5 years) ‘presents an opportunity to mitigate Standard Entry (SE) shortfalls, particularly for the Infantry’. ‘SE’ refers to recruits aged 17.5 years and above. MoD, *Policy on recruiting Under-18s (U18)*, 2013, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, Ref. FOI2015/00618, 12 February 2015, p. 2, <https://bit.ly/2FdwLWQ> [shortened link].

³⁹ BMG Research, *JE review market research – Final report*, 2018, Figure 8, p. 12, http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0161/JE_Review_Market_Research_Final_Report.docx.

⁴⁰ British army, *Junior Entry Review (JER) – Final report*, pp. 1, 3, http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0931/Armys_Junior_Entry_Review.pdf.

⁴¹ The full list of learning outcomes from the army’s Public Services Apprenticeship is available at Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education, ‘HM Forces Serviceperson (Public Services)’, 2016, <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/hm-forces-serviceperson-public-services>.

⁴² M. Fossey & J Hacker-Hughes, ‘Future Horizons Programme: Final report’, 2013, pp. 8–9, <http://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/20131107-FHP-Final-Report-Nov-2013.pdf>.

- Approximately one-third of recruits aged under 18 leave the army, or are dismissed, before they complete their training, which puts them out of work and education (NEET).
- The Army Foundation College is not subject to the same Ofsted inspection regime as civilian colleges and, if it were, would not meet the standards required.
- The army, having distinguished recruits at AFC from ‘STEM-capable recruits’, has rejected the possibility of enhancing the education it provides to them.

Option 1: Raise the army’s standards

The following measures would ensure that armed forces trainees were supported to meet the government’s own minimum standards of participation and attainment after the age of 16:

1. Repeal the exemption of recruits from the ‘duty to participate’ provisions of the Education and Skills Act (2008) and ensure that all trainees under the age of 18 complete an absolute minimum of 280 guided learning hours per year towards accredited qualifications.
2. Support all recruits without standard pass grades in English and maths to achieve them.⁴³
3. Support all recruits with standard GCSE passes in English and maths to progress to Level 3.

Option 2: Raise the recruitment age to 18.

The other option is to raise the minimum age of enlistment to 18, in common with almost all comparable countries around the world. There are already a host of ethical, practical, and financial reasons to do so, discussed elsewhere.⁴⁴ By enlisting adults only, the armed forces would allow young people every possibility to enhance their qualifications as civilians, subject to all the relevant standards, before they decide whether to join up. The armed forces would also benefit from recruits who have up to two additional years of maturity and education behind them, whose training is much shorter and less financially costly.⁴⁵

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⁴³ See footnote 28 for the minimum standard of provision that applies in civilian colleges.

⁴⁴ For a summary of the case for raising the enlistment age to 18, see Child Rights International Network’s parliamentary briefing: <https://home.crin.org/s/CRIN-2021-briefing-armed-forces-recruitment-age.pdf>, 2021.

⁴⁵ It costs £53,000 to train an adult for the infantry, but £103,500 to train a minor for the same role to the same standard, for an army career that is only one-third longer on average. MoD, Army: Training – Written question – 128438, 19 February 2018, <https://bit.ly/2FgT51K> [shortened link]. The average army career lengths for soldiers aged a) under 18 and b) over 18 at enlistment in non-technical combat roles are as follows: infantry <18 = 11 years, 0 months; 18+ = 9 years, 4 months (difference = 1 year, 8 months); armoured corps <18 = 11 years, 4 months; 18+ = 9 years, 4 months (difference = 2 years, 0 months); artillery <18 = 13 years, 0 months; 18+ = 9 years, 6 months (difference 3 years, 6 months). Across the three role groups, the career length of soldiers enlisted under the age of 18 ranges from 18 per cent longer than adult recruits in the infantry (the most common role) to 37 per cent longer in the artillery. Hansard: HC Deb, 25 June 2014, c223W.

Appendix: Guide to education levels

Level	Description/example	Army/civilian standard
Entry Level 1	Literacy/numeracy expected at age 5-7.	Army may enlist at this level. ⁴⁶
Entry Level 2	Literacy/numeracy expected at age 7-8.	Army's usual minimum standard for entry. ⁴⁷
Entry Level 3	Literacy/numeracy expected at age 9-11.	- Army's minimum attainment standard at end of initial training. ⁴⁸ - Approx. one-quarter of the youngest army recruits arrive at this level or below. ⁴⁹
Level 1	- GCSE D-G / 3-1 (120 GLH)*	- Not currently provided to army recruits.
	- Functional Skills Level 1 (45 GLH)	- Provided to youngest army recruits – mandatory. - All soldiers expected to reach Level 1 after 3 years.
Level 2	- GCSE A*-C / 9-4 (120 GLH)*	- Government minimum standard by age 19 - Not provided to army recruits.
	- Functional Skills Level 2 (45 GLH)	- Provided to youngest army recruits – optional.
Level 3	'A' Level	- Wide range of subjects provided in civilian colleges to those who hold Level 2 qualifications. - Not provided to army recruits.
	BTEC	- Wide range of subjects provided in civilian colleges to those who hold Level 2 qualifications. - BTEC Certificate course in Public Services provided to army recruits.

* GLH: Guided learning hours. 120 GLH applies to whole qualification across grades A*-G.

References

⁴⁶ 7 per cent of recruits enrolled onto the main training course at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate in March 2015 were assessed to have literacy skills at Entry Level 1, but no recruits were enlisted at this level in 2017-18 to 2019-20 inclusive. Information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, ref. FOI2015/03426, 21 April 2015 and ref. FOI2020/08076, 11 August 2020.

⁴⁷ Information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, 8 June 2015, ref. FOI2015/04544, p. 96.

⁴⁸ Information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, 16 December 2015, ref. FOI10541/2015.

⁴⁹ Information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, 11 August 2020, ref. FOI2020/08076, <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/676760/response/1616588/attach/2/20200714%20FOI08076%20Final%20Response..pdf>.