

Be The Best? – Myths And Truths about the military

The British military is facing a recruitment crisis, according to a recent report by the National Audit Office. This means, the military will try harder to recruit you – and they might present a very rosy picture to you, which does not match reality.

Myth: The military is an equal opportunity employer. *“We aim to treat everyone fairly and will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, including harassment and bullying.”*

Truth: On 1 April 2006, only 5.5% of all UK military personnel were from ethnic minorities. However, among officers, this percentage was just 2.4%, while other ranks personnel consist of 6.2% from ethnic minorities. **In the Army, the situation is worse: while 8.8% of ethnic minority soldiers make up the lower ranks of the Army, there are only 2.8% among officers¹.**

The armed forces' own data shows that around three-quarters of all military personnel believe bullying and harassment take place. Around one in 10 say they have suffered it - around 20,000 people across all three services².

Women are also under-represented in the UK Armed Forces – they make up about 10% of the strength of the UK military.

Ninety-nine per cent of servicewomen say they have been sexually harassed, a survey of gender relations in the Armed Forces has found.

More than two thirds of female troops have also personally experienced "sexualised behaviour", including being sent pornographic pictures, unwanted touching and sexual assaults, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) said³.

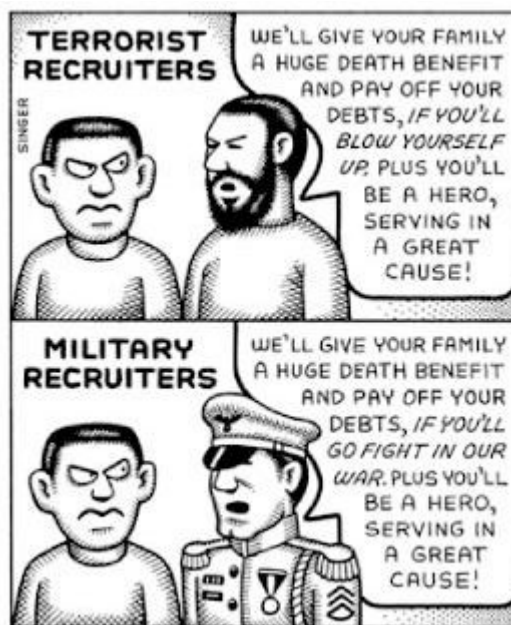
Myth: However long you spend in the Army, you'll learn skills for life. Training and learning with the Army sets you up for life.

Truth: The training you receive in the military is for military jobs, and often not transferable to civilian professions. 27 per cent of service personnel said that their career had been “worse than expected”⁴.

The MOD reports that 60% of personnel leaving the Forces had been assisted into employment and that, three months after leaving, only 20% were still looking for work. It is suspected that, if they looked at the numbers 12 months later, the figures will have reversed themselves⁵.

According to the Royal British Legion, **unemployment among 25-49 year olds in the ex-Service community is higher than the rate nationally⁶** – almost double compared to the general population.

A disproportionate number of homeless people have spent time in the armed forces⁷. ONE in four homeless are former members of the Armed Forces⁸. One in five homeless ex-Servicemen claims



they had no transferable skills on discharge⁹.

Myth: The military is just another job.

Truth: The military is not just a normal job – for two reasons: Military personnel are trained and must be prepared to kill other human beings. When you sign up for the military, you will have no guarantee not to be sent into war zones – be this Iraq, Afghanistan, or future wars the British government might want to fight. You also cannot quit the job when you feel like it. When you sign up, you commit to at least four years of service – counting from your 18th birthday. If you choose to leave then, you need to give a year's notice.

If you consider signing up, you might want to talk to:

- At Ease, www.atease.org.uk
- Military Families Against War, www.mfaw.org.uk

Please note that none of these are responsible for this information sheet.

1 http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/05-06/05061633-I.pdf
 2 http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,1443174,00.html
 3 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=news/2006/05/26/narmy26.xml>

4 http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/05-06/05061633-I.pdf
 5 <http://www.publicservice.co.uk/pdf/dmj/issue28/DMJ28%201504%20K%20Killick%20ATL.pdf>
 6 <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/uploads/documents/Final%20comparisons%2001.06.pdf>
 7 <http://www.bl.uk/welfarereform/issue76/homeless.html>
 8 http://www.nesa.org.uk/latest_issue/nov-dec-13.htm

9 <http://www.publicservice.co.uk/pdf/dmj/issue28/DMJ28%201504%20K%20Killick%20ATL.pdf>