

## **Chapter 2G – MILITARY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES: UNITED KINGDOM**

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### **2G.1 THE UK DEFENCE VISION<sup>1</sup>**

The overall vision of the UK Armed Forces is to be a force for good in the world. The key principles which provide the basis of work of the UK Armed Forces are:

- Defending the United Kingdom and its interests.
- Strengthening international peace and stability.

The aim is to achieve this by working together on the core task to produce battle-winning people and equipment that are:

- Fit for the challenge of today.
- Ready for the tasks of tomorrow.

#### **2G.1.1 Capable of Building for the Future**

The MoDs capabilities depend on attracting, motivating and retaining sufficient quality people with the right skills.

### **2G.2 STRUCTURE OF THE UK ARMED FORCES**

The UK Armed Forces is made up of three services; the Army, the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Royal Navy (RN). The total Tri-Service strength of the UK Armed Forces is 196,220 (on 1 Jan 06). This is broken down as follows: All three Services include regular full-time manpower and additional reserve forces.

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<sup>1</sup> Source [www.armedforces.co.uk](http://www.armedforces.co.uk).

**Table 2G-1: Total British Armed Forces Overview (as at 1 January 2006)<sup>2</sup>**

<b>REGULAR FORCES</b>	
Royal Navy	39,430 (includes some 7,200 Royal Marines)
Army	107,400
Royal Air Force	49,390
<b>Total Regular Forces</b>	195,960 (excludes approximately 3,350 Gurkhas; approximately 1,500 Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel; approximately 3,000 Royal Irish Regiment (Home Service); and 2,000 mobilised reserves)
<b>REGULAR RESERVES</b>	
Volunteer Reserves	44,000
Cadet Forces	153,100
<b>Total Regular Reserves</b>	191,500

Each of the three Services is made up of both Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks, known as soldiers (Army), airmen (RAF), or ratings (Navy). There are different types of commission within each Service for example: The six main types of commission in the Army are:

### **2G.2.1 The Short Service Commission (SSC)**

The SSC is the normal first commission for those who become an officer in the Army. It is a commission for those who do not wish to commit to a long career, but would like to benefit from the high quality training and exceptional experience available to young officers. The SSC is also a first step to a mid-length or full career in the Army. SSCs are awarded for a minimum of three years (six years for the Army Air Corps on account of the length of pilot training), but can be extended to eight. Candidates for commissions should be over 17 years and nine months and under 29 years old when they begin officer training.

### **2G.2.2 The Intermediate Regular Commission (IRC)**

The IRC offers a mid length career for a maximum of 18 years and can be applied for after 2 years SSC, subject to being recommended. On completion of 18 years after the age of 40 the officer will be entitled to a lump sum and regular monthly payments, which will convert at 65 to a further lump sum and pension.

### **2G.2.3 The Regular Commission (Reg C)**

The Reg C offers a full career of 35 years or to age 60 whichever is first. It can be applied for after 2 years IRC, subject to recommendation. Those completing a full career will receive an immediate lump sum and pension from age 55.

### **2G.2.4 Gap Year Commission (GYC)**

The GYC is a commission that is aimed at those who have a gap year prior to entering University. The selection procedure at RCB has to be completed after which a four-week course at Sandhurst is attended. Officers then join their chosen Regiment or Corps as probationary 2nd Lieutenants for a minimum of four

<sup>2</sup> Figures include all trained and untrained personnel: taken from the DASA website.

months and a maximum of 18 months with a front-line unit, but not on active service. The purpose of the GYC is to create a pool of young men and women who will take a favourable impression of the Army into their careers.

### **2G.2.5 Undergraduate Army Placement (UGAP)**

UGAP is a Commission for highly motivated undergraduates studying at UK universities requiring a placement as part of their degree. Up to 10 places are available each year. In all other respects the commission is identical to the GYC.

### **2G.2.6 Late Entry Commissions**

A number of vacancies exist for senior Non-Commissioned Officers and Warrant Officers to be granted commissions known as Late Entry Commissions. They attend the Late Officer Entry Course (LEOC) at Sandhurst before commencing their officer careers. Because of their age they generally do not rise above the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Each of the Services is responsible for their own recruitment and selection of both their Officers and Other Ranks. Each Service develops its own recruitment and retention strategies. However, there is some commonality between the Services and the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) encourages more harmonisation of the UK Armed Forces.

There is a tendency amongst the Services to treat recruitment, selection and retention as separate entities. There are different processes, different policies and sometimes different agencies responsible for each element. For example Army policy states that “Recruiting can best be described as the steps taken to attract sufficient men and women of the right quality to meet the Army’s personnel requirements. Selection is the process that is carried out to ensure that those who are accepted into the Army have the potential to be good soldiers and are capable of being trained to carry out their chosen trade”.

This paper aims to give an overview of these general processes and strategies. In some areas the procedures used by the Army will be given as an illustrative example.

## **2G.3 RECRUITMENT**

Within the UK individuals tend to be attracted to individual Services rather than the military per se. Each Service has their own identity, ethos, core values and standards. People tend to join the Army, Navy or Air Force. This is reflected in the way that each Service conducts separate recruitment and marketing campaigns. Each has its own strapline (e.g., the Army’s is “Be the best” and the RAF is “Rise above the rest”).

One area in which is common across all three Services is the provision of Armed Forces Careers Offices (AFCOs). These are joint information centres where individuals can go for information regarding careers in any of the three Services. There are over 120 centres located throughout the UK. In addition recruiting activities will also be conducted by Schools Advisers/Careers Officers, Service Youth Teams and (for the Army) Regimental Recruiting Teams. Potential recruits are attracted into the Services in a number of ways including advertisements on the television, on the internet and in the press.

The MoD calculates the numbers that need to be enlisted to maintain the each of the Services manning levels. The MoD takes account of changing unit establishments, wastage caused by servicemen and women leaving the service at the end of their engagements, and those who might choose to leave before their engagements come to an end (PVR or Premature Voluntary Release). The number required in each trade in the each Service is assessed and figures are published at six monthly intervals so that adjustments may be made during the year.

Traditionally the Armed Forces have not met these recruiting targets. This shortfall in recruiting tends to be worse for the Army and for particular trades within the other two Services. For example, the Royal Navy has been experiencing problems in recruiting engineer officers.

A Comprehensive approach is being adopted by the MoD to its manning strategy to improve recruitment and retention. This includes upgrading service families' accommodation (SFA) and single living accommodation (Project SLAM), reducing disruption to family home life, creating family friendly policies, and improving terms and conditions of employment for civilian personnel.

In addition the single Services can adopt their own recruiting strategies. For example the Army use the adage "it takes a soldier to recruit a soldier". Working on the theory that word of mouth is the most effective advertising the Army send young, recently trained soldiers back to their home towns and schools to talk to their friends about life in the Army. In addition, the Army has introduced the Recruiting Bounty Scheme (RBS) in an attempt to improve the number of enlistments to the Royal Artillery and the Infantry. The RBS rewarded serving personnel with a financial bounty for every individual they successfully introduced as a soldier. This has proved successful and (within the Army at least) this year has shown a marked improvement in recruitment. This has also been as a result of significant extra investment in national and regional marketing.

Market Research is conducted on behalf of the Services and has found a number of barriers to joining the Armed Forces exist: RAF research found that recent barriers to joining the services included misconceptions about the qualifications needed, a lack of awareness of career options available, uncertainty about the type of training provided, concerns about military discipline, disruption to family life and the belief that you are cut off from civilian life. The main reasons found for young people not wanting to join the Army were; being away from home, being injured or killed, and having to follow orders. This research indicates that the focus for recruitment must be on providing potential recruits with accurate information about jobs in the Armed Forces.

The fresh recruitment strategy approach attempts to raise awareness of the Armed Forces across the full spectrum of society. People need to know what they do, how it is done and what the values and rewards are. As the amount joining is not enough to fulfil the manning requirements. There needs to be more awareness of the opportunities that are offered. The Armed Forces need to be set apart from other private sector employers. This awareness cannot just be directed at the whole population, a target audience needs to be determined. An initiative being undertaken by the Royal Navy is the opportunity for school children to work for a day on a ship on an engineering problem and for older students there are familiarisation visits. This gives them first hand experience as to what military life is like. Awareness of the Armed Forces needs to be established, the lifestyle needs to be communicated, training and qualifications emphasised and the career image enriched.

## **2G.4 SELECTION**

Again selection is conducted separately for each of the Services, but the selection processes are similar in nature. All three Services have different selection procedures for Officers and other ranks. However,

all include interviews, aptitude and ability testing and some personality measures. There is a filtering system that will select people at initial application stage, others will be invited to attend an assessment centre which can last up to three days. As well as technical ability individuals will be assessed on their general qualities to be a member of the Armed Forces. In addition, preliminary medical examinations will also be carried out that checks on weight, eyesight and hearing and individuals will need to pass a physical fitness assessment.

## **2G.5 RETENTION**

It has to be remembered that in order to have a fully manned service, the Armed Forces have to be able to hold onto the people that they have got. They need to be retained.

The RAF Officers Leavers Survey (2004) carried out by the Directorate of Personnel and Training Policy (DP&T pol) has highlighted a number of reasons why officers have chosen to leave the service. They include future job satisfaction, family stability, separation from family, employment opportunities outside the RAF and expected types of postings.

Demand for aircrew is increasing in the commercial world, which means that retention in the Armed Forces is crucial. Salaries and civilian lifestyle are more attractive in the airline industry. There is more stability and you get to fly more as you don't have to do any ground tours. The transferability of skills also creates major retention problems for pilots. The Strategic Defence Review (SDR) promises a full educational programme based on NVQs, but these qualifications are civilian not military. In a way they are preparing servicemen for a life out of uniform.

### **2G.5.1 Work-Life Balance**

Recently, a top priority for employers has been the work-life balance of employees. People want time for learning, time for family and time for themselves. Increasingly young people have highlighted the fact that family and social life is sacred. If they can attain this work-life balance then they are more likely to be retained in their jobs. Both the 'Policy for People' and the 'Defence Mission' recognise the importance of families to the success of the Armed Forces.

### **2G.5.2 Professional Development**

Creating the opportunities for advanced training, education and upward mobility is a suggestion by the Royal Navy to increase retention of its engineer officers. Knowing you are going to be invested in by your employer is a motivator to stay. However, in order for these to work awareness of the technical development available must exist.

### **2G.5.3 Better Pay and Conditions**

If pay and conditions are tackled then it is possible that retention may become less of a problem. The Royal Navy wants to improve the working and living environment for individuals. However, it has to be remembered that there are a huge number of reasons why people may leave the Armed Forces and just improving the pay and conditions does not mean that these people will be retained.

The Bett report, published in June 1999 by the Independent Review of higher education, pay and conditions, was a wide ranging and independent report considering the framework for determining pay and conditions of service within the higher education sector. Recommendations were made in several areas including pay

structures, minimum pay levels, training, non-standard contracts and equal opportunities. As well as helping retention, this may feed into recruitment tools as well.

Pay 2000 was introduced in the RAF for regular forces at the ranks of Commodore, Brigadier, Air Commodore and below on 1 April 2000. This means that individual skills and experience will be recognised and there will be the incentive of incremental pay, subject to satisfactory performance.

#### **2G.5.4 LINKUP and the Financial Retention Initiative (FRI)**

LINKUP was a pilot retention scheme used by the RAF. It was introduced in May 1999. It refunded pilots with the costs associated with obtaining an Airline Transport Pilots Licence (ATPL) or equivalent, in exchange for an undertaking to serve to at least the 38/16 point. This is either at age thirty-eight or after sixteen years of service. This can mean that pilots are refunded up to £10,000 net of the costs associated with obtaining this licence.

Whether this scheme has had an effect is unsure as there are far more wide reaching issues. In a study it was found that quality of life, flying opportunities, pay and remuneration, job satisfaction and stability were more important influential factors. Also, being posted to a preferred location and promotion were influential retention measures.

The Financial Retention Incentive (FRI) was also a scheme that was used to increase retention. It was awarded to all pilots at or beyond their immediate pension point, which is either after sixteen years of service or at thirty-eight years of age, whichever comes later. This was intended to be a short term retention measure while retention in pilots was poor.

#### **2G.6 CONCLUSIONS**

The UK Armed Forces are currently experiencing manning problems in some areas causing parts of the services to be overstretched. However, since some of the recruitment targets have been lowered, the amount being reached is increasing.

Society needs to be made aware of the career opportunities available within the Armed Forces in order to increase the amount of applicants. Carrying out a brand-audit allows the target population to be highlighted so that recruitment efforts can be directed towards them. A lot of recruitment is focused on attracting youth from either school or university. Familiarisation visits and meeting actual servicemen are great ways for people to learn about the Services and gain motivation to join.

A lot of people have misconceptions about what working for the Armed Services would be like. By creating a brand essence the Services can create a constant theme to be communicated. Information should convey the wider aspects of working for the Armed Forces, especially that which will appeal to the youth population. Word of mouth information has been found to be more influential than that portrayed through the media as well.

In regards to retention, there are no proper retention strategies in place within the Armed Forces. However, retention is recognised as being important in helping to maintain manning and there are some measures that have been taken to try to increase the retention of personnel.

These include maintaining a work-life balance for employees, having better pay and conditions, chances for professional development and specific schemes like LINKUP and the Financial Retention Incentive (FRI).