

Recruiting and Retention.

Defence UK is concerned about the state of armed forces recruitment and encourages the government to investigate, and take action, as a matter of urgency.

Personnel numbers in all three services are below the targets set in the 2010 Defence Review, which were themselves too low to sustain the required level of defence.

Some suggested reasons for this include:

- The competence of the private firm running the recruitment process.
- Some elements of pay and conditions are below par.
- The military's own outdated rules and regulations for civilians joining the armed forces, which leads to the protracted time it takes for someone to join
- Lack of defence related matters in the public arena so that young people do not generally have an affinity to serve Queen and Country.
- Too much emphasis is placed on the dangers of service.
- It is even suggested that some senior officers are leaving early due to the pension restrictions affecting higher earners.

We know that the military has seen historic cuts in numbers, job satisfaction has fallen and benefits have been slashed.

We also know that recruitment within the services was 24% less than target in 2016-17. In addition, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has spent £664 million on recruitment in the past five years.

We applaud the commissioning of a report, led by former Defence Minister Mark Francois MP, to look at improving retention of personnel in the Armed Forces. It comes after more than 5% (7,500) quit the military in 2017 - an increase from just under 4% in 2010.

A couple of recent developments give some encouragement:

- The modern approach to advertising seems to be attracting more applications.

- The recent pay rise may attract more new recruits.

At the moment there are too many theories surrounding the issue. The retention report should shed more light when it eventually arrives, but it should be extended in scope to include recruitment in general.