



# Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence  
Main Building  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2HB  
United Kingdom  
Telephone : +44 (0)20 721 89000

Our Reference: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
18 November 2014

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email dated 27 October in which you requested the following information:

Please can you send me a copy of the final report of, and any evidence submitted to, the working group which was set up following the 1995 Bett Review to look at the enlistment of under-18-year-olds specifically. The working group was established and active sometime between 1995 and 1999. I do not know the formal name of this working group, but it is referred to in the following two documents:

**The Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 14 September 1999. CRC/C/83/Add.3. Para 10.65.2 - 3:**

*"10.65.2 The Armed Forces policies on recruitment, deployment and terms of service for those under the age of 18 were addressed by the Armed Forces Bill Select Committee in 1991. It recommended, among other things, that the Ministry of Defence should examine the terms of enlistment of those under 18. The Ministry considered those findings, and decided not to make any changes. In 1996 the Armed Forces Bill Select Committee concluded that, on balance, it believed that it would be impractical, and unpopular with all concerned to place further restrictions on the ability of those under 18 to serve on active duty. It again recommended that careful consideration be given to requiring minors to commit themselves to a period of service no longer than that of adults.*

*10.65.3 As a result, a working group was set up to examine how this anomaly might be removed, and to see whether common terms of service might be introduced across the three services - the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force. Work is now under way to draft revised terms of service for personnel under 18."*

(available at  
[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=GBR&Lang=EN](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=GBR&Lang=EN))

- **Special Report from the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1995 - 1996, para.40:**

*"...However, we were told that following the Bett Review of the career structure in the Services a working party is to look at enlistment, training and employment of under-18-year-olds."*

This working group and its terms of reference are discussed by MoD representatives in detail in Q650 – 667 on pages 87 – 88 of the oral evidence from 12 March 1996, included in the appendix of the same Select Committee's report.

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000.

I have to advise you that we are unable to provide the documents you have requested without exceeding the appropriate cost limit for FOI requests, as we are unable to identify specific documents related to the "working group".

Section 12 of the FOI Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

In the case of your request, we have been unable to identify specific papers related to the "working group" you mention. We would therefore need to conduct a search of all remaining paper and electronic files related to the recruitment of Under 18's from that time period, which may or may not contain references to the "working group". Because of the number of documents and records that this is likely to involve, we estimate that it would cost well in excess of the £600 FOI limit to action your request.

To meet Section 16 of the FOI Act (Advice and Assistance) I can advise that if you rephrase your request, for example: to focus on a specific time period, then it may be possible for the appropriate area of the MOD to respond accordingly within costs. The request would be considered as a new FOI request and may still be considered exempt under a Section of the FOI Act.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.