

A report out today shows that the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force have put numeracy and literacy skills at the heart of their development programme for new recruits.

Recruits who join the Armed Forces needing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills are signed up for intensive training programmes which, the report shows, improve their long term career prospects.

The report also shows that recruits were engaged and motivated by the job-related training and high expectations of success demanded by the Services expected, including those who had poor experiences of learning at school.

Key findings from the Armed Forces Longitudinal Study included:

- The Services delivered a high record of numeracy and literacy qualifications among new entrants through intensive training
- It highlights the success of using minimum literacy and numeracy standards as a requirement for promotion to specific ranks
- There is wide variation in the scale of literacy and numeracy needs between the Services which has influenced their separate policies and scale of investment
- The Armed Forces demonstrate how a large employer can play a vital socio-economic role by making their personnel more employable within Service and in subsequent civilian life
- Sound speaking and listening skills were regarded as most important and essential for an individual's operational effectiveness at all ranks
- All three Services are strongly committed to helping those personnel with literacy and numeracy needs.

Skills Minister John Hayes said: "Higher standards of basic English and maths skills give individuals a stronger sense of purpose and pride and lead to a more efficient workforce.

"The Armed Forces are playing a vital social and economic role in ensuring that their personnel have the skills to perform their operational roles more effectively and are more employable when they leave the forces.

Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Minister Andrew Robathan said: "This report

highlights the great learning opportunities available to those in the Armed Forces, including the chance to improve literacy and numeracy skills. The Forces also give personnel the chance to continue their education throughout their career, which often results in new qualifications, skills and interests.

"Not only are our recruits trained for operations but the skills they can learn in the three Services will mean they are well-equipped for life outside the Forces too."

The study - which was commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Ministry of Defence – was carried out over three years between 2008 and 2011 by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and the National Research and Development Centre over three years between 2008 and 2011. It focused on recruits assessed with low levels of literacy and numeracy skills levels at the start of their first two and a half years of training and service. The full study with executive summary can be found at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/research-and-statistics>

The aims of the study were: to assess the impact of literacy and numeracy skills on the personal and professional development of Service personnel and on their operational effectiveness, and to make recommendations for the most effective way for the Armed Forces to support their staff in their first two years of service.

The Government undertook a review of adult literacy and numeracy provision in 2011 focused on making this provision more effective. The outcomes were published in New Challenges, New Chances <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/f/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan.pdf>