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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***National children's charity Woodcraft Folk pledges to get military out of schools.***

***350 youth groups to resist military activities leading to recruitment.***

*Members of 88 year old British youth charity Woodcraft Folk voted at their AGM this weekend to campaign against military activities leading to recruitment of under 18s from within UK schools.*

The decision means Woodcraft Folk, who run hundreds of youth groups around the UK, will provide resources and support to their 10,000 members to campaign at their schools and colleges.

The British armed forces recruit from a younger age than most other countries in the EU. The UK is the only EU country to recruit 16 year olds, while still denying them the right the vote. Young people in Woodcraft Folk have often taken a stand against unnecessary military action, including in 2003 when hundreds of young Woodcraft Folk members marched against the war in Iraq.

17 year old Woodcraft Folk member Hufi Neibig, who helped organise the campaign, spoke about the military's presence in her secondary school: "Careers fairs are very small, and consist mostly of stalls representing different armed forces. Army cadets get to skip lessons to march around in army uniforms, carrying toy guns. With nearly 11,000 visits to schools every year, it's easy to see how young people can think that the forces are the only opportunity for a good career for them."

A spokesperson for Woodcraft Folk explained: "What worries us most as a children's charity is the effect on the most disadvantaged young people. They are offered outdoor activities and learn to shoot from the age of 12, but do they get to learn about the risks of joining up? It is unacceptable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for Britain to be recruiting the most vulnerable under 18s into the military."

## INFORMATION

### WOODCRAFT FOLK

Woodcraft Folk is Britain's co-operative children and young people's organisation. It runs hundreds of local youth groups in towns and cities around the UK where children make friends, build self confidence and learn about big ideas from climate change to international conflict.

### THE SOCIAL COST OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT

4% of homeless people in London are ex-servicemen.

The divorce rate is twice as high for forces personnel as for civilians.

Alcohol misuse is at 13% amongst military personnel, a lot higher than for the general population.

## FORCESWATCH

Woodcraft Folk's decision to campaign against the military's involvement in education comes after last week's complaint by Child Soldiers International and ForcesWatch that recruitment of 16 year olds was costly, ineffective and not in the best interests of young people, compared to recruiting adults, whose training is much shorter and cheaper. Up to £94 million is spent training recruits aged 16 to 17 while youth centres are forced to shut their doors.

ENDS

Photos are available at <http://s.coop/woodcraftphotos>.

For information or comment, contact:

Sam Sender, Press Officer  
07756 317 300  
[press@woodcraft.org.uk](mailto:press@woodcraft.org.uk)

Jon Nott, General Secretary  
020 7703 4173  
[jon.nott@woodcraft.org.uk](mailto:jon.nott@woodcraft.org.uk)

### Citations:

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