

not only to pay the costs of any adjustments needed when they get their destination; we have added on the costs of a preparatory trip that might be necessary for staff to assure themselves that those adjustments have been made before the young person arrives.

Funding is not ring-fenced, therefore providers across all nations of the UK can competitively bid—with no cap on the amount of funding that institutions in each nation can potentially receive. The UK Government intend to deliver a scheme that will see all parts of the UK flourish, by tailoring it to UK needs and targeting promotion on areas which did not previously have many students benefiting from Erasmus+. If I have left any of the definitions in relation to disadvantage unanswered in replying to the noble Baroness, Lady Sherlock, I will write to her afterwards.

The scheme is demand-led and education providers have the flexibility to form partnerships that will offer the best benefits to their students. Successful applications will also receive funding towards the cost of administering the scheme on behalf of those students. I add for the noble Baroness, Lady Bennett, that we are the second-most popular HE destination, after the United States, so we are confident of our attractiveness.

UK education providers may use the Turing scheme funding to support mobilities for any student, regardless of their study subject. This is great news for students, including those studying languages—the noble Baroness, Lady Coussins, referred to them; she is known for her interest in modern foreign languages—so that they can do exchanges and visit those countries. Obviously, languages provide an insight into other countries, as the noble Lord, Lord Parekh, mentioned, and can open the door to travel and employment opportunities. Exchange can enrich the languages curriculum and provide exciting opportunities for students.

We are grateful for the continued role of the British Council, a provider known to and trusted by many noble Lords. It helps us to administer schemes such as UK-German Connection, Connecting Classrooms and the Singapore head teachers exchange programme, all of which help to develop a generation of globally mobile, culturally agile people and professionals across the systems.

The noble Lords, Lord Alderdice and Lord Griffiths, mentioned the youth side of things. Although it is not part of Turing, DCMS is leading a youth review; it was specifically commissioned by the Treasury to do so in last year's spending review. Within that will be consideration of the opportunities for youth groups outside educational settings, such as the Scouts, as the noble Lord, Lord Alderdice, outlined.

I thank noble Lords for their contributions on this matter. I am aware that I have left many questions unanswered due to the time allowed, but I will seek to answer them. I look forward to working with noble Lords to help to ensure that all disadvantaged people in the UK have access to life-changing international experiences.

I just want to add that I first got on a plane as a result of a school trip. I had never experienced an aircraft before. I did not know what I was doing; I did not know that I could leave my seat on such a vehicle. That was through a school trip. I think we all have testimonies as to how valuable these can be.

**The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill) (Lab):** The Grand Committee stands adjourned until 3.35 pm. I remind Members to sanitise their desks and chairs before leaving the Room.

3.26 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

## Arrangement of Business *Announcement*

3.35 pm

**The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill) (Lab):** My Lords, the hybrid Grand Committee will now resume. Some Members are here in person, others are participating remotely, but all Members will be treated equally. I ask Members in the Room to respect social distancing, which remains in place in Grand Committee. If the capacity of the Committee Room is exceeded or other safety requirements are breached, I will immediately adjourn the Committee. If there is a Division in the House, the Committee will adjourn for five minutes.

## Cadet Forces: Funding *Question for Short Debate*

3.35 pm

*Asked by Lord Lingfield*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the social impact of their funding of cadet forces.

**Lord Lingfield (Con):** My Lords, I am so grateful to noble Lords, who have given up their time on the last day of term to discuss the importance of the cadet services. I remind your Lordships of my registered interest as chairman of CVQO, the Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation, which I shall address shortly.

It is now two years since I last addressed your Lordships on cadets. There have been several significant developments since then, which are worth discussion. However, first, I will praise the extraordinary way in which the cadet services have risen to the challenges of the pandemic. The Sea Cadet Corps, the RAF cadets, the Army Cadet Force, the Combined Cadet Force and the Volunteer Cadet Corps have all offered contact, support and activity for thousands of young people remotely.

Among the many projects of which I am aware, I was particularly impressed by the bands and corps of drums and bugles of the Army Cadet Force, of which I am honorary colonel. Their officers, under the leadership of Colonel Mike Neville, sent out musical scores to hundreds of cadet players, who performed their parts individually in their bedrooms, gardens and kitchens throughout the country. Via the technological wizardry of their adult leaders, these performances were mixed into a number of concerts, of which that from Scotland, with its screen full of young bagpipers, was particularly inspiring. It was especially good to see so many girls taking part. We tend, too often, to think of cadet

[LORD LINGFIELD]

activities as boy pastimes, yet 34% of cadets are girls and they form an even greater proportion of our bands.

In March this year, I asked a Question of the Minister concerning when cadets will be able to start face-to-face activities again, given that schools were about to resume. However innovative and useful the virtual training programmes such as those I have mentioned are, I hope she reassures me that we will see cadets able to parade once again soon and to attend some regional camps.

Central to our previous debate on cadets was the cadet expansion programme for schools, to which I turn next. It is a joint departmental programme, run by the DfE and the MoD. When it started, I had doubts that co-operation would be easily achieved. I need not have worried, and I pay sincere tribute to officials from both departments for progressing the programme extremely well. The target was to establish enough new Combined Cadet Force units in schools to create a total of 500, and that has been achieved. Around 300 of these are from state schools. The next aim is to grow the number of participating students from around 45,000 to 60,000, it is hoped by 2024, although the pandemic may set this back.

What would the barriers to such an expansion be and what challenges will have to be overcome? Because the majority of current CCF units have been established lately, their roots are rather shallow and their continued existence is finely balanced. Some could find it difficult to survive now that Libor-funded grants have ceased.

Cadet leaders report that four enabling elements can lead to an individual school's success in building its cadet corps. The first necessity is to identify and incentivise teaching staff to become adult volunteers. Secondly—this is vital—there is a need for a paid, hopefully full-time school staff instructor, or SSI, to support the teachers and other adults involved. The third element is the availability of dedicated regular training from armed services sources to ensure that programmes for young people are up to date, exciting, varied and, of course, safe. I pay tribute to the work of the noble Baroness, Lady Garden of Frogmal, in this area. However, we need the Minister and her colleagues to consider further interim funding, especially for SSIs, if all the new CCF units are to succeed.

There is a fourth element. It cannot be overstated just how much cadets love sea, air or field training, and how much that is exciting and memorable they gain from it. This is especially important for army cadets, who form the majority of school-based units. It can involve live firing on ranges and the use of training areas and camps. The sad fact, however, is that the condition of some of those training sites is very poor. Indeed, one that I visit regularly has changed very little since I first saw it when I was 15. The MoD has, quite properly, had to reduce its expensive holdings of land and buildings, but I hope that the field training needs of cadets and their officers are taken into full account when decisions have to be made about which parts of the defence estate have to be sold off.

Another significant event since our last debate has been the publication, just two months ago, of the results of a four-year research project on the cadet

forces from all services, commissioned by the Ministry of Defence. A reading of this, which considers *What is the social impact and return on investment resulting from expenditure on the Cadet Forces in the UK?*, spurred me to apply for this debate.

The main conclusions of the excellent Professor Simon Denny and his colleagues at the University of Northampton, who conducted the review, are that participation in the cadet experience has very significant and positive impacts on young people—especially, as we have always suspected, on those who suffer “economic and other disadvantages”—and that expenditure on cadet forces is

“a very good use of taxpayers’ money”,

and supports social mobility and social cohesion.

Among the findings of the report are that the joining of a cadet unit often led to improved school attendance, especially for boys and those for whom English is a second language, better behaviour, with consequential better educational outcomes, and improved career prospects. The research also revealed that participation in cadet forces leads to a better ability to communicate and to lead others, to be resilient when a situation is difficult, to work as a team member, to use social skills to achieve positive outcomes, and to accept diversity freely.

For many cadets from disadvantaged backgrounds, there is a real sense of belonging—of being part of a group that is not a street gang. All this is immensely encouraging, and provides an excellent example of the Ministry of Defence’s corporate social responsibility.

The Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation—the CVQO—directed by Mr Guy Horridge and funded mostly by the Department for Education, has a very special value for cadet training. It enables young people, via their local units, to take qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3, which add greatly to their employability. Some 12,000 undertook courses—online, inevitably—during the past year.

Teenagers are not the only people to benefit from CVQO’s work. The five cadet forces together have some 29,000 adult volunteers, to whom we owe an enormous debt. Of these, last year some 1,300 took CVQO qualifications, of which 126 were at graduate or master’s level. I hope very much to be able to confer their awards at Sandhurst in the autumn.

The first cadet units were founded in about 1860, and had their roots in the rifle volunteer battalions for defence. Their aim was to grow good soldiers. Today, 160 years later, the aim is to grow good citizens, and they all do it extraordinarily well. I hope your Lordships will agree that public money expended on cadets is extremely well spent.

3.45 pm

**Lord Jones (Lab) [V]:** My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, for this debate and I acknowledge his most loyal, persistent and influential work for the cadet movement. I declare an interest as president of our superb local sea cadets and the training ship “Tuscan” in Flintshire and a 40-year close connection with 2247 (Hawarden) Squadron ATC. I was also president of the Army Cadet Force Association in Wales for some five recent years. In these matters, one noted the continuing relevance of the reserve.

Our cadet movement is at the very grass roots of our towns and villages, and this is certainly so in my homeland, the lovely land of Wales. In five years, Lady Jones and I attended 15 cadet camps, three per year, across the length and breadth of England and Wales, covering thousands of miles. One saw hundreds of cadets close up. It was instructive, inspiring and informative. One also saw the annual British national cadet rugby sevens championship at Christ College Brecon. Of course, the Wales seven always won. In a packed theatre, the England and Wales annual cadet band concert celebrated the anniversary of Rorke's Drift with 90 young women and men displaying superb musicianship. It was an event of powerful emotion with the cadets proud of their achievement. The annual national sports meeting showed the advancing numbers and achievements of the many female cadets.

The noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, emphasised the true worth of cadet life. It is truly worth its weight in gold and just a scintilla of MoD gold can prolong the most useful life. For example, prosperity is unevenly shared across Wales. Some former steel and coal communities are still readjusting to fundamental economic and social change, and some communities are just getting by. Here, cadets and their dedicated professional leaders are making a magnificent contribution through, for example, funds for charities, help for pensioners, linking with the high sheriff for remembrance parades and civic service. It helps, it counts and it is acknowledged locally. Cadet life is gift for British youth. When she or he presents for a job with a cadet record of achievement, that CV will always gain a positive response from the prospective employer. Cadet life encourages fitness, teamwork, co-operation, smartness, discipline and confidence. There are certificates, too, and always humour.

Finally, from our steep-sided Welsh valleys, the open central heartland—*cefn gwlad*—the slatey slopes of the Snowdonian massif and the urban townships of the eastern border, cadet life does great good. Like the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, I hope very much that we might keep it.

3.48 pm

**Baroness Garden of Frognal (LD):** My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, for once again drawing the attention of the House to the cadet forces. He is a great champion of cadets and his enthusiastic support is greatly appreciated. I declare an interest as I chair the cadet health check team and my late husband started his brilliant RAF career with the cadets. He had a gliding licence and a pilot's licence while still at school and always took a keen interest in the cadet force as he progressed up the ranks.

I followed that interest. For some years I have been a member of the council of the Air League which supports air cadets and other young people fascinated by aviation. The Air League offers scholarships and bursaries for flying, gliding, engineering and drones. It aims to change lives through aviation, particularly for disadvantaged and disabled young people, wounded and injured service men and women and now veteran offenders. The Air League's recent Soaring to Success initiative, in partnership with Barnsley Council in South Yorkshire, saw a pilot project. Some 600 young students aged 14 to 16 attended an event organised by

the Air League and a number of aviation and aerospace companies, including British Airways, DHL Aviation and Rolls-Royce. Some then obtained a fully paid short training bursary to participate in an air experience day at gliding clubs in South Yorkshire and the Peak District, nearly 170 were awarded a flying lesson and the most eligible were selected to fly a powered aircraft.

The purpose was not to train young people to be pilots as such, but to cause students to believe that such an achievement was possible and inspire others to do so too. More than 1,000 young people have been involved in the programme so far and we are aiming towards over 3,000 each year in the future. The video of these youngsters was inspirational: the sense of achievement and palpable pleasure from young people unused to achievement or praise made us realise that the social impact of these activities is immense, especially since the driving force is to encourage aspiration and achievement. Of course, the Royal Navy and the Army have similar exciting programmes too.

Our role on the health check team is normally to visit as many cadet meetings and camps as we can. This year, of course, that has not proved possible. As the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, indicated, we have been heartened to be invited to virtual meetings to witness the wonderful enthusiasm and engagement of cadets and the inspiring adults who give so much time and energy to ensuring that young people get cadet opportunities. The ingenuity of the activities was mind-boggling, and the cadets responded by turning up smartly in uniform on Zoom and throwing themselves into whatever exercise or activity was proposed.

Of course, many of the most senior military personnel started their careers with the cadets, both men and women, so we always hope that funding is secure, but perhaps the Minister can say something about cadet accommodation, some of which is very substandard and dilapidated.

Our health check team was very grateful to the University of Northampton, which again the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, mentioned, for the independent report on the social impact of the cadet forces, which concluded that expenditure on the cadet forces was

“a very good use of taxpayers' money that supports social mobility and community cohesion”,

and that particularly for cadets who suffer economic and other disadvantages

“it is very possible that being a cadet is ... a key factor that enables them to achieve positive life outcomes.”

Among the benefits the report named were “reduced vulnerability”, for example to bullying and to criminal or extremist organisations, “increased social mobility” and “enhanced employability”. Surely these are all very good things for our young people. Of course, there are benefits for the hard-working adult volunteers who support the cadets. Adults and cadets can now access qualifications. These, too, can be life changing.

I am proud and delighted to be involved with the cadets. I trust, with the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, that they will increase and flourish along with all the benefits they bring to society.

**The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill) (Lab):** The noble Lord, Lord Ramsbotham, has withdrawn, so I call the next speaker, the noble Lord, Lord Morrow.

3.52 pm

**Lord Morrow (DUP) [V]:** My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, on securing this debate, following on from Questions on 1 March. I am very encouraged when I see people of the calibre of the noble Lords, Lord Lingfield and Lord West, and other Peers in your Lordships' House take such an interest in voluntary youth organisations such as the cadet force, which are based on the fine traditions of the British Armed Forces but, of course, are not part of them.

I pay tribute to all those who give up their talents and time in promoting our cadet force. I do not overstate it when I say that it is a wonderful organisation that the whole of the United Kingdom can be rightly proud of. The Government say that it offers challenging and enjoyable activities. This statement could not be bettered.

My remarks will centre on the Army Cadet Force, or ACF, because as a teenager I was a member of the ACF located in a small rural town in the west of Northern Ireland—a town then, in the 1950s and 1960s, with a population of fewer than 1,000 inhabitants. It was there, through the dedication and commitment of volunteers, that I learned many important lessons that would stay with me for the rest of my life. The late Captain McAfee, our dedicated senior officer, instilled in all those under his command the importance of living lives that will enhance the lives of others. He sought to make good citizens of us all and in most cases that is exactly what resulted.

The briefing notes provided by the Library state that an independent analysis suggests that the cadet forces

“provide benefits both for participants and wider society”—something I know to be undoubtedly accurate. The notes continue:

“An ongoing government scheme aims to increase the number of cadet units in state schools.”

I hope this can be extended beyond our schools and into wider society. The unit I was privileged to belong to was not attached to any school but was part of the whole community of that small rural town in Country Tyrone in Northern Ireland.

I encourage the Government to take a closer look at the funding for our cadet forces with a view to investing in more resources and funding. New incentives should be adopted to encourage more of our youth to join the cadets and ensure the future of our voluntary youth organisations. A study by the University of Northampton, in a report commissioned by the Ministry of Defence, concluded that

“expenditure on the Cadet Forces is a very good use of taxpayers' money that supports social mobility and community cohesion.”

Others have already quoted this. In addition, cadets are able to access the Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation—known as the CVQO—which can equate to GCSEs; the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, mentioned this.

I conclude simply by saying that cadets provide an excellent and positive return on the expenditure of taxpayers' money. The benefits of being a cadet cannot be overstated. I look forward to our cadets being fully operative again, subject to the conditions of the pandemic permitting.

3.56 pm

**Lord Colgrain (Con):** My Lords, I speak as one who has been a member of a school CCF and a university TA regiment. I also spent a short time as a police special constable, so there are no guesses as to where my loyalties lie in this short debate, so well brought by the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield.

My more recent experience came about through a visit to some sea cadets when I was High Sheriff. I was approached by a man and a woman after a cathedral service, asking if I could inspect their charges on the water in a parade thereafter. On the water, I saw two boats being rowed by the cadets. One was a lightweight fibreglass vessel, the other a heavy, wooden, corked lifeboat. Neither was fit for purpose—both were barely usable—but the commitment given to the rowing effort and the enjoyment derived from it was palpable. There were too many sea cadets for places in the boats.

They were then called off the water. After a short while, they all reappeared in immaculate pressed and clean uniforms, and a well-drilled parade took place. My evening finished with a request for help find £2,000 to buy another boat—the most modest financial request to provide a fantastic opportunity for those cadets, and future ones, to feel like valued members of a team and to enjoy a feeling of self-worth.

I mention this visit to illustrate a wider point. The two adults who originally approached me were volunteers who ran this branch of sea cadets with 70 young people, boys and girls, in their charge. “In loco parentis” is no exaggeration. Nearly all the young people were latchkey kids whose parents—they were lucky if they had two—would be working when they came back from school. Without the camaraderie, sense of belonging and palpable pride in being part of such a disciplined and purposeful organisation, they would have been exposed to all the temptations of the drug and gang culture by which they were surrounded.

The most recent figures from the House of Lords Library show that the direct cost to the MoD of the ACF, the ATC and the CCF is a mere £175 million, with indicative benefit figures to society of £479 million—a return that speaks for itself. Furthermore, as the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, and the noble Baroness, Lady Garden of Frognal, mentioned, a report from the University of Northampton on the social impact of the cadet forces showed significant educational benefits deriving from the CVQO that were, in many cases, potentially life-changing. Enormous value can thereby accrue to those not necessarily talented in the schoolroom, so it is good to note that more than 500 schools have involvement of some sort with cadet forces.

The sadness is that membership figures have fallen—from 130,000 in April 2020 to 120,000 in April 2021—as has the number of adult volunteers, which has fallen from almost 29,000 to 27,500 in the same period. This cannot be put down to Covid-19, nor to government, since all parties have supported the increase in cadet numbers. Anyone who has been closely involved with cadet forces of whatever association can see for themselves the hugely beneficial social impact that they bring about, as I saw with those sea cadets. We must all do whatever we can to encourage making this opportunity available to everyone, as it was to me.

3.59 pm

**Lord Boyce (CB):** My Lords, I declare an interest as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports; I have two cadets annually as my Lord Warden cadets. I am most grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, for securing and initiating this important debate.

There can be no doubt that the sea, Army and RAF cadets are a force for good for our country. I intend to focus mainly on the sea cadets, but much of what I have to say applies equally to their Army and Air Force counterparts. My general point is that they are all invariably a credit to the uniforms they wear and that, over time, thousands of young people who might otherwise have gone astray or not realised their potential have had productive and fulfilling lives as a result of having been cadets.

When looking at youth interventions, there is a perennial problem of whether the difference made is a sustained change to someone's life into adulthood, and therefore whether it is good value for money. However, earlier this year we saw the publication of *My LegaSea: Launching into Life*, a report launched by former Prime Minister Theresa May. It involved independent research with 3,000 20 to 90 year-old former sea cadets and found clear evidence of sustained positive change for former sea cadets, long after they left their cadet forces.

The current reopening of society from Covid is leading to an increase in demand without the resources to respond. Children and young people have spent months locked up, so unsurprisingly there is a massive interest in engaging with youth work. Waiting lists are now growing and overall sea cadet numbers are already up by 3% from 1 April. Maybe it is the same for the Army and Air Force cadets. Right now there are increasing funds to kick-start the economy, but nothing is being applied to help kick-start the cadet youth sector in the same sort of way.

As an independent charity, Sea Cadets has been able to innovate to develop new models to reach out to hard-to-reach groups. For example, its On The Water outreach programme will support 1,200 hard-to-reach young people in Liverpool, Birmingham and London in July and August. The programme is pretty well externally funded by trusts, foundations and corporates, such as the Stelios Philanthropic Foundation, the Gosling Foundation and Capita, but if there were some government funding for these sorts of programmes, they could be scaled up substantially.

Across the cadet forces, a massive amount of value is added through volunteers, but the processes are not in place to unlock more volunteering. They are not what is increasingly becoming the norm in youth work: a brief intervention over a few weeks. Instead, adult volunteers work with young people over years to give them the skills they need to face the world. The biggest barrier to expansion is often insufficient adults coming forward. These volunteers provide a remarkable resource. For sea cadets alone, volunteers contribute the equivalent of over £54 million of work per year. The scale of the work of cadet forces would simply not be possible without them.

When thinking about funding cadet forces, it is vital to think about how we can unlock interest in volunteering. Examples of this could include providing tax incentives

to employers to make it easier for their staff to volunteer, providing income tax breaks for the volunteer or introducing volunteering leave as a standard practice. Any discussion about the funding of cadets must take into account supporting the whole cadet ecosystem, not just the bottom line.

4.03 pm

**Lord Mountevans (CB) [V]:** My Lords, I also congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, on securing this important debate. I declare my interest as president of City of London Sea Cadets and a vice-president of the Marine Society & Sea Cadets, the charity that runs sea cadets in the UK. Sea cadets are the Royal Navy's main MoD-sponsored cadet force, receiving a grant in aid equivalent to 49p in the pound of the total cost of the delivery of sea cadets, with the balance funded by the charity.

We have heard a cascade—a litany—of tremendous tributes to the value and positive impact of cadets. Following the noble and gallant Lord, my case study is also substantively the sea cadets, but I hope I may add some points to our debate.

Three essential elements make the work of the sea cadets so critically valuable at this time. First, it delivers structured youth activity that lets young people try something challenging, but in small chunks and a supportive environment. Secondly, they become a part of the sea cadets community at unit, regional and national levels, cemented by trusted adults—the volunteers. This is particularly important for some of the hardest-to-reach young people, who often lack strong mentors elsewhere. Thirdly, it is all bound up with the customs and traditions of the Royal Navy, with a rank structure helping to encourage ongoing engagement and development, and with the uniform making everyone feel part of something special.

After the last year and a half, structured, well-supported youth work is really important to all young people. The sea cadets, for example, are seeing a substantial upswing in demand as the nation reopens, as we heard from the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Boyce. It would be wonderful if some resources could be made available across the cadet movement to help finances.

I will particularly focus on the work of cadet forces in relation to disadvantaged backgrounds, which I have witnessed at close quarters in my City of London unit. The sea cadets have created a system that is truly open to all, irrespective of background. This has paid off, with really strong representation from young carers, looked-after young people, autistic cadets and white working-class students—all groups that can be incredibly hard for youth workers to reach.

The three core themes I mentioned earlier provide a fantastic equalising factor, helping cadets to mix with people from different backgrounds, creating a real sense of unity among young people and reducing so many of the divisions that can lead to longer-term entrenched inequality elsewhere. This is all delivered alongside effective outreach. Noble Lords heard from the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Boyce, about the On The Water programme, which will be very valuable and offers potential, if we can encourage others to join such activities.

[LORD MOUNTEVANS]

Most importantly, as the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, mentioned, we know that membership of cadet organisations has substantial impact. As the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Boyce, explained, the findings of the sea cadets' recent *My LegaSea: Launching into Life* research report reveal that this is not just a brief, flash-in-the-pan difference for young people; it gets sustained throughout their life, long after they have left, with some of the most sizeable differences for cadets from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As we have heard from some speakers, cadet forces all over the UK are able to provide this intense, high-quality work at such scale only due to their amazing volunteers, whose commitment and talent is truly impressive. However, the backgrounds that they come from are also important, offering role models from the same communities as the young people. Without these volunteers, it would be impossible to deliver this work at scale, and noble Lords have heard what their contribution in hours monetised represents: £54 million a year. It is just as important to think about how we could encourage more volunteering.

This type of long-term intervention with some of the hardest-to-reach young people is critical to help to build back better and avoid the disproportionate impact of lockdown on our most left-behind young people, creating a chasm of inequality and reducing life chances. Providing support to help to scale up this sort of work should be an essential part of responding to this present need.

4.08 pm

**Baroness Smith of Newnham (LD):** My Lords, unlike every speaker so far, I have no interests to declare in this debate: I was not a cadet and have not had the opportunity to engage with cadets. I am a member of COMEC, the Council of Military Education Committees, through my role in Cambridge, so I have had the opportunity to discuss, to an extent, the role of cadets and OTCs.

Of course, it is very clear that, despite the fact that the MoD partly funds the cadet forces, it is not intended to be a route to membership of the Armed Forces, although for my late friend and my noble friend Lady Garden's late husband, Lord Garden, there was an opportunity to learn to fly as a cadet. Then, of course, he became a distinguished air marshal, so occasionally there can be a route from being a cadet to the Armed Forces. However, what we have heard so powerfully is that the cadet movement is hugely important in giving opportunities to young people, particularly those who are perhaps less advantaged, to take on challenges in "small chunks", as the noble Lord, Lord Mountevans, put it. These are opportunities to do activities that they would otherwise perhaps not have—particularly the opportunity to be trained in things that will be exhilarating.

I think the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, mentioned the importance of shooting ranges. As a member of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme, I, along with other parliamentarians, have had the opportunity to go out on a shooting range and be taught how to shoot by members of the Army. It is very rewarding when you suddenly realise you have got it and managed to hit a target. If I can feel like that in my 50s, what

must a young person feel like when they are able to say, "I'm able to do that. That's a skill I've acquired"? There are huge opportunities.

Several noble Lords have assisted the Minister to look at the financial benefits of the cadet forces, but the question asks what assessment the Government have made of the social impact. Have the Government looked at the social impact and to what extent, particularly in the context of 18 months of Covid? What are the Government thinking about ensuring that cadet forces go back to their normal activity? It is great to hear, as my noble friend Lady Garden said, that air cadets are attending Zoom meetings in their uniform and looking smart, but when will they be able to meet again in person? What are the Government doing to ensure that?

Have the Government given any thought to making sure that the new cadet forces formed in schools in the last decade are consolidated? If I read the briefing correctly, about half of school-based cadet forces are recent and are likely to be the most vulnerable. What support is being given to keep them going and, in particular, to support the adult volunteers who are crucial to ensuring that they are really successful?

I pay all tribute to the cadets and to the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, for bringing this debate. I look forward to the Minister's answers.

4.12 pm

**Lord Tunnicliffe (Lab) [V]:** My Lords, I too thank the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, for tabling this debate. I was not privileged to be a member of a cadet force at school, but when I went to university I joined the university air squadron and it shaped my life. The experience, at a young age, of excitement and the military environment shapes one in a special way, and my whole life has related to that.

On the last day before recess, it is a pleasure to take part in a debate on such a positive subject matter. We on the Labour Benches strongly support the opportunities that the cadet force offers our young people to socialise and learn skills, including leadership, resilience and teamwork. For reasons that are only too clear, it has been a particularly difficult, disruptive and isolating past 18 months for our young people. Have government departments provided any support to the cadets to ensure that activities can go ahead in a Covid-safe way for the cadets and volunteers involved, and that organisers are supported in responding to changes in guidance and restrictions?

Covid-19 has clearly been difficult for cadets in limiting their access to face-to-face activities. Can the Minister give the Committee an overall assessment of the impact of Covid-19 and what plans the MoD has to ensure a rapid recovery?

I once again put on record our thanks to the volunteers who give up their precious time to make cadets possible. I am sure the Minister agrees that it is rare to read a report that says that government money is being so wisely spent. The report from the University of Northampton on the social impact of investment in cadet forces is extremely welcome. Our key concern should be ensuring that as many young people as possible access these opportunities. As other noble Lords mentioned, the report cites that

“The impact is particularly strong for those cadets that suffer economic and other disadvantages.”

I ask the Minister about the funding announced in April for the expansion of cadet programmes in state schools: what specific strategic planning will go into ensuring new places are made available to children from disadvantaged backgrounds?

The report also focuses on the life-changing potential of the vocational qualifications that can be accessed through the Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation. The University of Northampton suggests that for the 2018-19 cohort, these qualifications added value in the region of £27 million for girls and £82 million for boys. This is welcome, but one cannot help but notice the discrepancy in impact due to the smaller number of girls who accessed these opportunities. What is being done to increase the participation of girls in the cadets? I look forward to the Minister’s reply on these points and those raised by other noble Lords.

4.15 pm

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Baroness Goldie) (Con):** My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lord Lingfield for securing this debate and pay tribute to him in his role as chairman of the CVQO—the Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation. I pay tribute to the fine work that organisation does to ensure that the skills individuals gain through cadet forces are recognised and rewarded. I also thank other noble Lords, not just for their valuable contributions but for the excellent support that many of your Lordships provide to the cadets. I and the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, felt humbled listening to this. I am afraid that I too cannot claim a direct involvement—although part of my role as a deputy lieutenant is generic support for the cadet movement.

We all know, instinctively, that being a cadet provides outstanding opportunities and that the cadet forces offer young people the chance to develop key life skills. That is right across the United Kingdom, as the noble Lord, Lord Morrow, so properly and rightly observed. Cadets are not just a fine component but a superb representation of the United Kingdom.

In the MoD and within CVQO, we wanted to go beyond the anecdotal and not only look holistically at the benefits the cadet experience provides for young people but assess the impact that the cadet forces have on society as a whole. So in 2016, the Ministry of Defence and CVQO commissioned the University of Northampton to carry out a four-year longitudinal study, the final report from which has just been published. A number of noble Lords referred to that report.

Thanks to this excellent research—again, I pay tribute to all those who worked on it—we now have clear evidence that being a cadet is not only fun and engaging, as many of your Lordships graphically and interestingly described, but transforms lives by improving social mobility, success in education, well-being and career prospects. The noble Baroness, Lady Garden, gave a marvellous illustration of the varied activity possible. She also asked about cadet accommodation. Having looked through my briefing, I have no specific information but I undertake to investigate and to see what I can find out.

I was delighted to learn of the positive conclusions from this fascinating report. It emphasises the importance of the cadet programme for young people and the adult volunteers, and shows that participation in cadets leads to greatly improved communication and leadership skills, self-discipline, personal resilience and self-confidence. It can be clearly seen that many of the values which we recognise in our Armed Forces can benefit so many of our young people, with skills that they can rely on well into adult life. The noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Newnham, spoke of that. This, for me, is one of the biggest benefits of the cadet movement. It is why we continue to invest in sustaining the cadet forces in the community, while seeking to increase the opportunities available to pupils in schools in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country.

One of the key findings from the report concerns the concept of self-efficacy—or, as I like to call it, believing in and empowering yourself. That is what it means: it refers to an individual’s confidence, motivation and self-esteem, and their belief in their ability to exert control over their environment. Generally, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds score lower than their peers on measures of self-efficacy, but the research revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in self-efficacy between cadets from disadvantaged backgrounds and more fortunate cadets from more affluent backgrounds. That is significant. It suggests to me that cadets who suffer economic and other disadvantages have improved self-efficacy because of the activities they undertake in the cadet forces and the people they meet as a result of that.

A number of your Lordships rightly identified the specific effects of being a cadet, as noted in the report. The report clearly demonstrates how our cadet forces benefit young people by broadening their horizons and unlocking their potential. As a result of participation in the cadets, young people experience positive outcomes including improved mental and physical well-being. It shows further that participation in the cadet forces develops many important attributes, such as the ability to lead a group of people to achieve an objective—many of us in political parties might envy that attribute—the resilience to keep going when things go wrong and the ability to work as a member of a team, sharing views and helping others. The noble Lord, Lord Mountevans, highlighted these benefits.

An important element of being a member of the cadet forces is an understanding that people are not all the same, and that leads to an acceptance of diversity. The report disclosed that participation in the cadet forces can also reduce a young person’s vulnerability and increase their resilience to bullying and extremism. Cadets form an important part of the communities they represent, with membership helping to forge inclusive community links across ethnic, religious and socio-economic dimensions. The noble Lord, Lord Jones, eloquently exemplified that with the support that he and his wife have been giving to that activity in Wales.

Society as a whole is also a beneficiary of cadet activity. My noble friend Lord Colgrain alluded to this. The research shows that participation in the cadet forces is associated with increases in school attendance and improved behaviour, particularly for those who are economically disadvantaged. It is also linked to a

[BARONESS GOLDIE]

reduction in school exclusions. This can lead to enhanced employability and increased social mobility, promoting levelling up in disadvantaged groups. It is worth noting that school-based cadet units deliver personal development outcomes that are directly relevant to the Ofsted inspection framework.

I have to tell noble Lords that government departments and the private sector can also reap benefits from the MoD's investment in the cadet forces. For government departments, there may be decreasing reliance on certain of their public service provisions. An important message to get across to employers is that cadets and adult volunteers have skills and behavioural attributes that are very valuable in the workplace. I certainly urge employers to look favourably at young people with cadet experience who are applying for jobs and to appreciate the value of adult volunteers who are either already working in their companies or seeking employment.

The report notes that although the calculation of the value of social impact is not an exact science, it is clear that the return on the Ministry of Defence's investment in the cadet forces, some £180 million per year, is a very good use of taxpayers' money. Estimates from the research include, for example, that activities associated with improvements in the health and physical and mental well-being of cadets and adult volunteers produce an indicative annual return on investment of more than £560 million. We also have to note the consequential benefits of cadet vocational qualifications, which deliver an extremely positive return on investment for the lifetime of a cadet.

A number of your Lordships raised the matter of funding. The noble and gallant Lord, Lord Boyce, asked about that. He is aware of the level of current investment, and the level of funding for the cadet forces has to be seen in the context of competing priorities within the defence budget; I know he is sympathetic to that. We see our continuing strong support for the cadet forces as an excellent demonstration of the MoD's corporate social responsibility, but as the noble and gallant Lord will be aware, our support is more than just funding. We are there to offer advice, encouragement, support and help—and that is what we have been trying to do during the difficult period of the Covid challenge.

The noble Lord, Lord Mountevans, raised the vital issue of the adult volunteers, and of course, none of the benefits that I have just been describing would be possible were it not for the 27,000-plus adult volunteers who are the lifeblood of the cadets. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to them for their tireless efforts in running the individual cadet units and allowing our cadets to have such wonderful opportunities and experiences.

This is all hugely positive and very encouraging, but most of your Lordships have identified the major challenge of the last year: the Covid pandemic. The noble Lord, Lord Tunnicliffe, specifically asked about how we have tried to support the cadet movement through that difficult time. We have always been available with advice, and many people, in times of uncertainty, sought that advice.

As for restarting activities, we are beginning to see the relaxation of lockdown restrictions, and we are identifying road maps to return us, albeit cautiously,

to a more normal delivery of the cadet experience. We are certainly looking at the opportunities available. Your Lordships will all understand that the responsibility for youth and education is devolved to the various Governments, which have different approaches, whether that is in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Throughout, the cadet forces in the UK have followed the appropriate rules and guidance. They are all doing their best to go forward positively.

The adult volunteers have been vital during this difficult time in maintaining activity and keeping morale going. They have been innovative and imaginative in finding ways to continue activity when physical social proximity was denied to us.

There is good news: a small pilot scheme run by the army cadets in Surrey resulted in 58 volunteer and 186 cadet applications, from over 600 expressions of interest recorded in one month. There are good things happening.

In conclusion, the cadet forces are indeed the embodiment of resilience. The effort now under way to recover the ground lost over the past year means that it is particularly important that we capitalise on the University of Northampton's report, and exploit this good news story. I thank my noble friend Lord Lingfield for tabling the debate, and enabling your Lordships to do just that, and to conclude our debates on defence matters on, as the noble Lord, Lord Tunnicliffe, observed, a positive, upbeat and optimistic note.

**The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Baroness Watkins of Tavistock) (CB):** The Grand Committee stands adjourned until 4.40 pm. I remind Members to sanitise their desks and chairs before leaving the Room.

4.28 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

## Arrangement of Business

### *Announcement*

4.44 pm

**The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Baroness Watkins of Tavistock) (CB):** My Lords, the hybrid Grand Committee will now resume. Some Members are here in person, others are participating remotely, but all Members will be treated equally. I ask Members in the Room to respect social distancing while remaining in place in Grand Committee. If the capacity of the Committee Room is exceeded or other safety requirements are breached, I will immediately adjourn the Committee. If there is a Division in the House, the Committee will adjourn for five minutes. The time limit for the following debate is one hour.

## Human Rights Situation in India

### *Question for Short Debate*

4.45 pm

*Asked by Lord Harries of Pentregarth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human rights situation in India; and in particular, of the impact it is having