



# Exploring Attrition in the British Army: A Longitudinal Study

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# The Problem



- High attrition in Army training.
  - Most attrition occurs in Phase 1 training, particularly within the Infantry.
- Discharge As Of Right (DAOR) window.



# The Mission



- Reduce attrition which is *dysfunctional* (losing people who are performing well) and *avoidable* (the organisation could have done something to prevent them leaving) through *evidence-based* improvements to recruiting, selecting and training.
- Move away from Queens Regulation categories to look at reasons why recruits leave – i.e., move away from looking at DAOR.



# Context



- Changing environment (recession) – no money, fewer training places BUT more people to fill them.
- Change of mindset from recruiting Quantity to recruiting Quality.
- People who leave now REALLY want to leave.
- So, despite fewer resources, support to conduct the study.



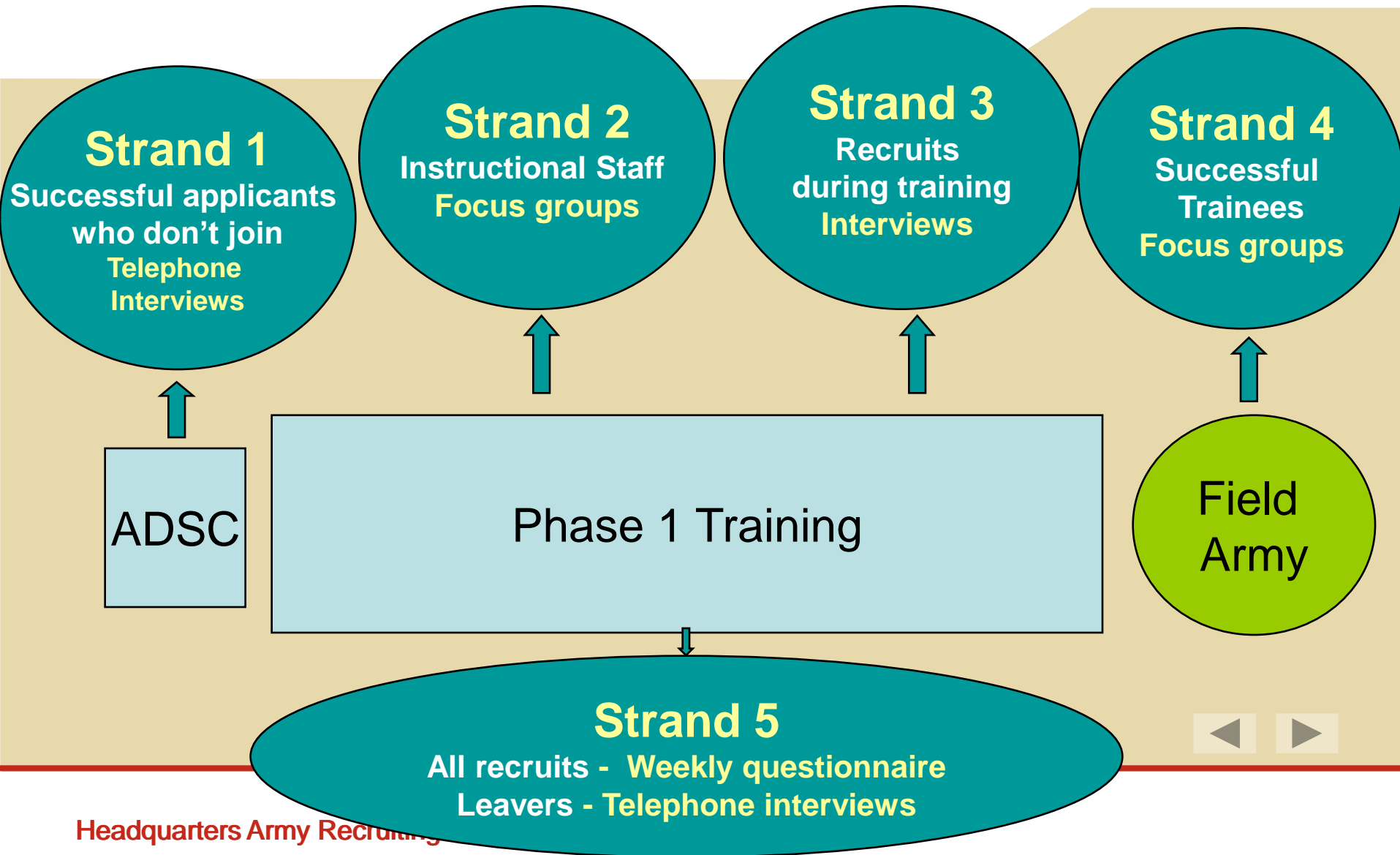
# Background



- Reviewed all available evidence:
- Literature:
  - Organisational commitment / support
  - P-O fit
  - Unmet expectations
- Research studies
- In-house research



# The Research



# Initial Findings



- DAOR window
- Issues with recall
- Retrospective data collection



# Methodology



- Diary study approach:
  - Avoids retrospective responding.
  - Appropriate for pace of training environment.
- Three versions of the questionnaire.
- Trainees briefed on the study at the end of week 1 training.
- Obtained demographic, selection test data and the training programme.
- Follow-up telephone interviews with Leavers.





# Sample



- Large sample (N=900).
- Good initial response rate (85-90%).
- Data collected at all Phase 1 training establishments:
  - Non-infantry training = 14 weeks
  - Infantry training = 26 weeks

} **Standard Entry**

  - Long course = 42 weeks
  - Short course = 23 weeks

} **Junior Entry**



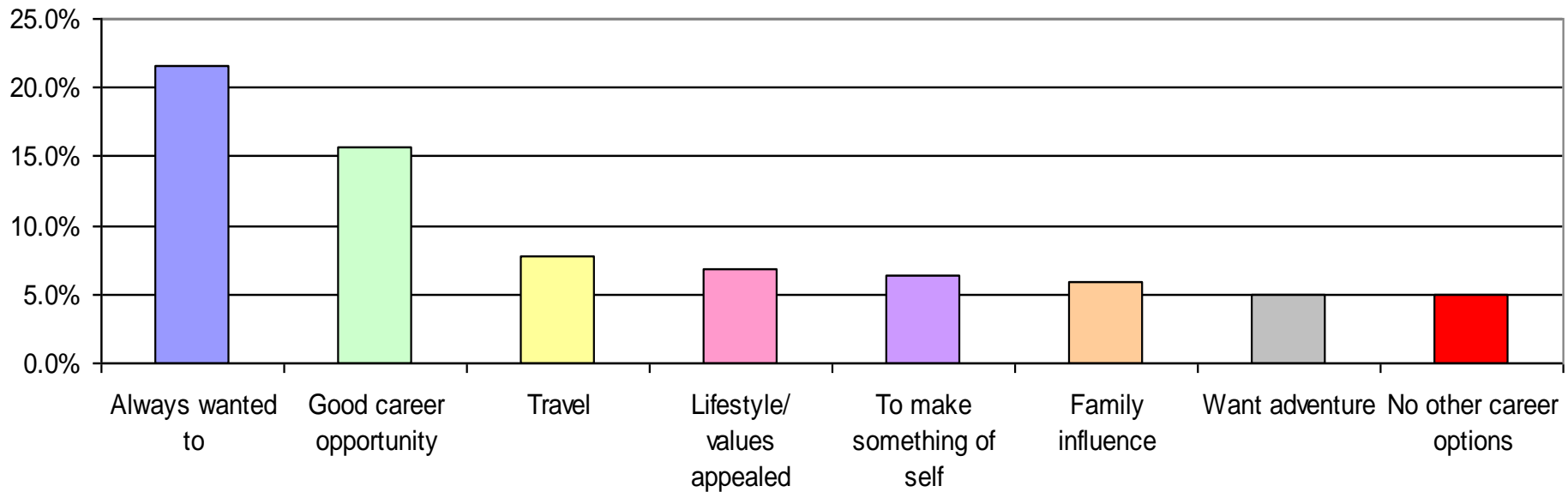
# Questionnaire Items



- Joining decision drivers
- Expectations
- Support
- Core values
- Treatment
- Best/worst things about training
- Intentions to leave



# Infantry Data: Joining Decision Drivers



\*Based on 204 comments



# Infantry Only Findings (1)



- Leavers scored lower in terms of effort and commitment at selection compared with Stayers.
- Leavers feel frequently more homesick than Stayers in the first half of training.
- Around week 7 appears to be a challenging time for Leavers (physically and mentally challenging, less likely to feel like a soldier, less likely to feel they belong).
- Stayers were more likely to agree that they liked having little time to themselves compared with Leavers.



# Homesickness



Significant differences weeks: 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9



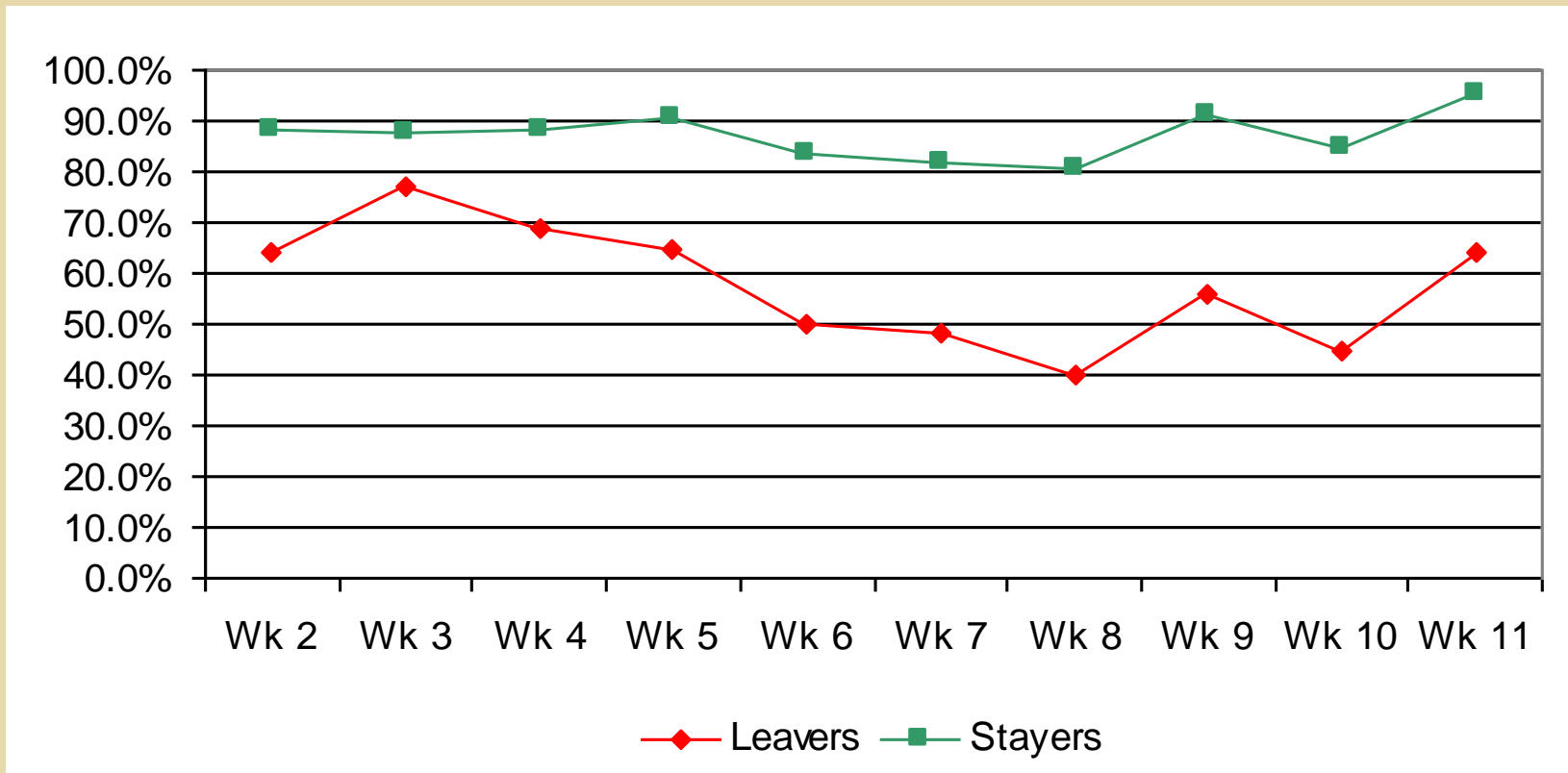
# Infantry Only Findings (2)



- No significant differences were found between Stayers and Leavers in terms of expectations.
- Stayers were consistently less likely to seriously consider leaving.
- Having to repeat training has a negative impact on completing the course.



# NOT Considered Leaving



# So what..?



- Homesickness. Is it possible to lessen the impact of homesickness?
- Having little time to themselves. This needs further exploration.
- What can be done to make repeating training a more positive experience?





# Conclusions and Way Ahead



- Attrition is multifaceted
- No 'one size fits all' solution.
- Benefits of a diary study.
- Evidence relating to moving the DAOR window.
- Further data analysis!
- Drill down into specific areas
- Application of findings - actionable intelligence



# Lessons Learnt



- Distribution
- Survey fatigue
- Buy-in





Any Questions?

