

Maritime Charities Group

The needs and aspirations of the dependants and families of seafarers under retirement age (amended July 2017)

Report

June 2016

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1 Introduction

Following an earlier study in 2006 into the needs and aspirations of dependants of seafarers and their families, and a recent demographic analysis of current and future numbers, the Maritime Charities Group (MCG) wishes to gain an up-to-date understanding of current needs and aspirations, using some of the methodological elements of the previous study, while widening the coverage in terms of numbers and content.

The demographic study indicated that the largest group of dependants and children are those of Royal Navy seafarers, followed by the Merchant Navy, and lastly the fishing fleet. The numbers of dependants across all seafaring groups are expected to continue to decline from the present to 2050 (although numbers of dependent children are projected to increase in the late 2040s). Recent work by the Royal British Legion has provided a body of data on the needs of the ex-service community and their families, including ex-Royal Navy seafarers¹, which is relevant to the proposed study; less is known about the families and dependants of Merchant Navy and fishing fleet seafarers.

Since 2006, it is likely that the needs of dependants and families of seafarers will have been affected by the economic downturn, public sector austerity measures, welfare reform, and other policy changes in the health, housing, special education and social care sectors. The study provided a useful opportunity to investigate how needs have changed over the last ten years, and how they are expected to change in the future.

The MCG wished to update a number of aspects of the 2006 research to provide a picture of how needs have changed over time. Specifically, the research aimed to:

- Build on the current and future demographic profiles of the dependants and families of seafarers under retirement age as developed in the Demographic Profile carried out by the Institute of Public Care in 2015.
- Identify and present patterns of needs and aspirations of dependants and families of seafarers under retirement age across the three seafaring groups.
- Compare and contrast the profile and patterns with those of the wider population in the UK.

¹ Royal British Legion (2014) A UK Household survey of the ex-service community, RBL.

- Identify any patterns or dimensions specific to the lives of the dependants and families of seafarers under retirement age, compared to their peers in the general population.
- Consider the implications of these findings for current and future provision of services to the dependants and families of seafarers under retirement age.

This report could not have been produced without the cooperation of staff from the maritime charities and families, and we are grateful to them for their time and views.

2 Our approach

The work comprised five elements:

- Brief review of relevant public policy context
- Face to-face and telephone interviews with key stakeholders
- An electronic survey of dependants of seafarers under retirement age
- Data collection and analysis
- Preparation of the data set and final report to MCG.

3 Demographic trends and policy context

An overview of demographic trends relating to dependants and families, and the wider policy context is described below. A full set of demographic tables is provided in Appendix 2.

3.1 Current and future numbers of seafarers dependants and families

In terms of future numbers of seafarer dependants and their families, the demographic study conducted for the MCG in 2015 provides estimates of the current and future number of adult dependants and dependent children across the three seafaring groups. In 2015, there were an estimated 173,00 adult dependants of seafarers under retirement age, and over 190,000 dependent children across the three sectors.

The number of dependants across all seafaring groups is expected to continue to decline from the present to 2050 (although the number of dependent children is projected to increase in the late 2040s). The number of adult dependants corresponds in relative size to the size of the different seafarer groups.

3.1.1 Royal Navy

The data indicate that the overall number of dependent adults under 65 years old is expected to decline steadily from the current estimate for 2015 of over 102,000 to around than 63,000 by 2050; and the number of dependent children is also projected to decline steadily from an estimate of just over 118,000 in 2015 to under 77,000 by 2050. It is possible that the changes to terms of service may increase staff turnover in the Royal Navy which may lead to a greater number of ex-Royal Navy families and dependants in the future.

3.1.2 Merchant Navy

The total number of dependent adults under 65 years old is expected to decline steadily from the current estimate for 2015 of 45,000 to below 31,000 by 2050; and the number of dependent children is also projected to decline steadily from an estimate of over 46,000 in 2015 to around 29,000 in 2035, before increasing gradually to nearly 32,000 by 2050.

3.1.3 Fishing fleet

Based on national household and pension data, the overall number of fishing fleet dependent adults under 65 years old is expected to decline steadily from the current estimate of over 25,000 in 2015 to a little over 16,000 in 2050, while numbers of dependent children are projected to decline from an estimate of nearly 26,000 in 2015 to around 16,500 in 2035 before rising by little more than a couple of hundred in 2050.

3.2 Wider demographic trends

The UK population is projected to increase by 4.4 million over the next decade, rising from 64.6 million in 2014 to 69.0 million at mid-2024, and to 74.3 million by mid-2039. Looking at the dependency ratio (which is the ratio of people of retirement age and over to working age people) the number of working age people available to support each retirement age person will change over time. In 2014 there were on average 310 people of retirement age for every 1,000 people of working age, but by 2039 this is projected to increase to 370 people of retirement age for every 1,000 people of working age.

The average completed family size for women born in 1968, and reaching age 45 in 2013, was 1.92 children per woman. This compares with their mothers' generation, represented by women born in 1941, who had on average 2.34 children. While family size has fallen and women are having children later than previously, changing numbers of births and young people will change the requirements for midwives, childcare and schooling in the UK. In 2039, the number of UK births is projected to be about 6% higher than in 2014, at nearly 823,000 births.

The fact that women are having children later, means that childcare and the care and support needs of older relatives are more likely to coincide. Children are also likely to stay at home longer into adulthood than in the past. The number of young adults aged 20-34 living with their parents increased by 25% between 1996 and 2013, despite the number of people in the population aged 20-34 being largely the same.

Aside from these impacts, there are more unpredictable ones. It is impossible to predict the exact impact of the population growth and change on social care, housing or healthcare, but it seems likely that an older and larger population will have an impact on many aspects of life.

3.3 The policy context

A range of specific policy areas are relevant to the dependants and families of seafarers in 2016 and in the future, including: Care Act, 2014; Children and Families Act, 2014; and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, 2015; Scottish Government's 2020 Vision; Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, 2014;

welfare reforms; the introduction of the National Living Wage; and changes in social housing rents and rights.

3.3.1 Social care

Social care policies are diverging across the different administrations with the UK. In England, the Care Act 2014 introduced a number of changes and new duties on councils including:

- Providing information and advice about care and support services to help people make the best choices.
- Introducing personal budgets for all those who are eligible for support.
- Implementing new rights for carers, putting them on the same footing as the people they care for.
- Improving early intervention and prevention.

The Care Act 2014, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, 2015 create a new comprehensive legislative framework for young people with disabilities in transition from children's to adult services. The framework is focussed on personalised, outcome-based approaches with a new focus on carers that recognises the role of families in the transition process. Some young people will be entitled to support through both pieces of legislation. The legislation aims to ensure continuity in provision until adult services have a plan in place, and to promote the extension of best practice in transition arrangements, highlighting the value of keyworkers in raising the quality of care co-ordination.

The Scottish Government's 2020 Vision is that by 2020 everyone is able to live longer healthier lives at home, or in a homely setting and, that we will have a healthcare system where:

- *'We have integrated health and social care*
- *There is a focus on prevention, anticipation and supported self-management*
- *Hospital treatment is required, and cannot be provided in a community setting, day case treatment will be the norm*
- *Whatever the setting, care will be provided to the highest standards of quality and safety, with the person at the centre of all decisions*
- *There will be a focus on ensuring that people get back into their home or community environment as soon as appropriate, with minimal risk of re-admission.'*

Integration of health and social care is one of Scotland's major programmes of reform.

In Wales, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act aims to: put the individual at the centre by giving them a stronger voice and control over services they receive; support people to achieve their own well-being; support more preventative services; and strengthen partnership working. Similar to the Care Act, there is greater emphasis on information and advice, and on supporting carers.

3.3.2 Poverty and welfare

The effects of austerity measures to limit or even reduce public spending are resulting in measures which will adversely affect some dependants and families. Austerity policies including planned cuts to welfare benefits and tax credits between 2016 and 2020 will mean no growth in the incomes of poorer households on average, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies. This is likely to affect a significant number of seafarers' families, given that more than 60% of children living in poverty are in a family where someone works². However, the introduction of the National Living Wage in April 2016, the increase of the Personal Allowance, and other changes such as the extension of free child care for working families with three and four year olds to 30 hours aim to improve the finances of working families.

In terms of welfare benefits, a number of changes in recent years have affected welfare benefits, and further changes are in the pipeline, including:

- Universal Credit is to become the main means-tested social security benefit for people of working age, replacing Housing Benefit, Income Support, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. Universal Credit is due to be phased in by 2017.
- Families with two or more children will not be eligible for any additional support for additional children born after April 2017.
- From April 2017, parents will be expected to prepare for work when their youngest child turns two, and to look for work when their youngest child turns three (including single parents).
- Working age benefit rates will be frozen between 2016 and 2020 (including tax credits and Local Housing Allowance).
- For those reaching pension age, from April 2016 a new State Pension has been introduced to replace the basic State Pension and State Second Pension.

Other measures to reduce the deficit are also affecting services for children and families, such as the closure of some Sure Start Children's Centres, funding cuts in youth work, and growing pressure on child and adolescent mental health services. These changes are likely to increase the need for maritime charities to support dependants and families of seafarers.

3.3.3 Health

Pressure on health service budgets is likely to continue for the foreseeable future due to the ageing population and the growing number of people with long-term conditions, along with developments in medical treatments and technologies. This is leading to concerns about the future sustainability of the NHS as a taxpayer funded, free at the point of use service, and the possibility of charging, reductions in 'non-essential' services and a safety net service.

The NHS Five Year Forward View argues for more attention to be given to prevention and public health; greater control for patients of their own care; and more integration. The Forward View outlines a number of care models that may be adapted in different areas to put in place services fit for the needs of local populations.

² IFS Press release (July 2105) <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/7880>

For Royal Navy families there are some barriers to accessing care and support; for instance having to relocate when nearing the top of NHS waiting lists, continually re-registering with GPs and the lack of a nationwide system for identifying dependants who qualify for certain priority support all cause real hardship. In 2010, the Local Government Information Unit advised local authorities that: *'both simple chores such as registering for GPs, dentists and more demanding interactions such as receiving IVF treatment and mental healthcare can present Service families with added childcare difficulties'*.

3.3.4 Housing

The availability of affordable housing has been affected by changes to housing benefit, the continuing erosion of social housing through the Right to Buy, and low rates of housebuilding over several decades. The government announced a new programme of garden town and cities across the country, with the potential to deliver over 100,000 homes in 2016, and other policy initiatives have aimed to alleviate the pressure on the housing stock, but any change is likely to take many years to redress the current situation, and younger people are less likely to be able to afford to buy their own home than their parents.

In terms of housing for people with disabilities, the government has plans for 8,000 specialist homes for older people and people with disabilities, as well as funding of £500 million by 2019-20 for the Disabled Facilities Grant, which will fund around 85,000 home adaptations that year. Many local authorities have made significant reductions to their housing related support budget in recent years which may affect some particularly vulnerable groups, for example, people with mental health problems, those at risk of domestic violence, people with physical and sensory disabilities.

Regular armed forces personnel can benefit from a £200 million scheme to help them get on the property ladder. The Forces Help to Buy scheme enables service men and women to borrow up to 50% of their salary, interest free, to buy their first home or move to another property on assignment or as their families' needs change. The pilot scheme, which will run for 3 years, aims to address the low rate of home ownership in the armed forces.

3.3.5 Disability

The Children and Families Act, 2014 and the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, 2015 extended support for children and young people from birth to twenty-five years of age, including:

- Children, young people and their families must be involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and local provision.
- The right to make requests and decisions under the Act will apply directly to disabled young people and those with SEN over compulsory school age, rather than to their parents.
- New Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC) for 0-25 years, replace the current system of Statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments, which reflect the child or young person's aspirations for the future, as well as their current needs.
- Young people have the right to request an (education) personal budget as part of the EHC planning process.

- The EHC planning process requires preparation for adulthood to begin at 14 years (school year 9) with a clear focus on life outcomes.
- A Local Offer of support including information and advice available to children and young people with SEN or disabilities to help them to prepare for adulthood.

The replacement of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support due to illness or disability with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) has been controversial. The government plans to cut ESA entitlement from April 2017 for new sick and disabled claimants found 'unfit for work' and assigned to the work-related activity group (Wrag) or its equivalent under the new Universal Credit so that they will receive almost £30 less a week, than previously. Evidence from disability charities and disabled people themselves expressed serious concerns that such a cut would negatively impact on people's health, not least their mental health, from the increased stress and anxiety that goes with struggling to pay the bills³.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is being replaced by Personal Independence Payments. It is estimated that by the time it has been fully rolled out, 600,000 fewer people will receive the benefit than would have received DLA.

3.3.6 Carers

The Care Act creates new rights for carers to have an assessment, however, levels of Carers Allowance remain unchanged. Carers UK estimated in 2015 that over the next five years, around 10 million people will become carers and around 10 million people will have ceased caring. The trend in full-time care is increasing, with an estimated 1.6 million people currently providing care for 50 hours or more per week – up 33% since 2001. Leaving work to care puts pressure on carers' day-to-day finances and can also affect their long-term financial independence and security.

3.3.7 The Armed Forces Covenant

Through the Armed Forces Covenant, which recognises the nation's obligations to service personnel, veterans, and their families, the government provides support to the families and dependants of RN and RM and other armed forces families through:

- The creation of an NHS Specialist Rehabilitation Unit with £2 million grant funding.
- A Service Pupil Premium so that 60,000 Service pupils in state schools get extra support.
- Enabling spouses returning from overseas to immediately claim Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Establishing a credit union offering for military personnel, delivered by Plane Saver Credit Union, Police Credit Union and London Mutual Credit Union.
- Helping more than 5,200 Service personnel onto the property ladder through the Forces Help To Buy scheme.

³ Halving the Gap? A review by Lord Low of Dalston CBE, Baroness Meacher and Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE - A Review into the Government's proposed reduction to Employment and Support Allowance and its impact on halving the disability employment gap, December 2015.

4 Methods

The study brings together the results of face to face and telephone interviews with staff from 15 maritime charities and welfare organisations (Appendix 1) and an electronic survey of the families and dependants of seafarers, including beneficiaries.

The stakeholder interviews explored:

- The main methods that seafarers' dependants and their families use to contact them
- The number of seafarers' dependants and their families they help per annum
- The main needs of seafarers' dependants and their families, how these have changed in recent years, and how they are expected to change
- Gaps in services to support or help seafarers' dependants and their families
- Differences and similarities in needs of seafarers' dependants and their families with those of the general population.

The electronic survey was developed in consultation with members of the steering group. After piloting with a number of beneficiaries of maritime charities, the survey was distributed to the families and dependants of seafarers by members of the Maritime Charities Group, a range of other maritime charities, and the Royal Naval and Royal Marine's Welfare Team via email, text, Facebook, Twitter and post. This approach was developed in recognition of the difficulty of locating many seafaring families and dependants, and the desire to reach beyond those already receiving help or support from maritime charities.

The survey covered:

- The profile of dependants and beneficiaries
- Their knowledge and experience of applying to maritime charities for help
- What kinds of help and support would be more helpful
- What kinds of help and support should be provided in the future.

The survey obtained responses from 538 individual respondents which compares favourably with the previous survey by Barnes et al (2007) which elicited 150 responses. Although an electronic survey cannot be statistically representative, the level of response provides a sound basis for conclusions about the needs, experiences and views of the dependants and families of seafarers.

More than seven out of ten (73%) of responses came from people with connections to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines (RN&RM), with 16% with connections to the Merchant Navy and 5% with connections to the Fishing Fleet (and 6% other). This indicates over-representation of respondents with RN&RM connections, possibly due to the greater number of RN&RM charities. Efforts were undertaken to boost responses from those connected with the Fishing Fleet, however this had limited success – highlighting the difficulty of reaching this particular group.

5 Findings

5.1 Profile of survey respondents

5.1.1 Seafaring sector

As mentioned above, the majority of respondents (73%) had family connections with the RN&RM, followed by the Merchant Navy (16%) and the Fishing Fleet (5%).

Table 1: Which seafaring industry do you have family connections with?

N=538	Ever applied for help or support from maritime charity Count	All Count	All Percent
Royal Navy / Royal Marines	105	392	73%
Merchant Navy	20	86	16%
Fishing fleet	14	28	5%
Other maritime industry	6	16	3%
None of the above	2	16	3%

Table 1 indicates that across the three seafaring groups, half of respondents with Fishing Fleet connections had applied for help (50%), whereas around a quarter of respondents with connections to the other seafaring groups had ever applied for help or support from a maritime charity.

5.1.2 Key characteristics

Four-fifths (80%) of respondents were women, considerably higher than the 53% in the previous survey. The majority of respondents were aged between 25 and 44 (64%) with just under one-third (31%) aged 45-64 (Table 2). In terms of the profile of respondents who had ever applied to a maritime charity for help or support, the profile is fairly similar – 62% of these respondents were aged between 25 and 44, and 37% were aged 45-64.

Table 2: Age of respondent

N=424	Ever applied for help or support from maritime charity Count	All Count	All Percent
Under 24	2	11	2.6%
25-34	36	131	30.9%
35-44	40	140	33.0%
45-54	31	86	20.3%
55-64	14	45	10.6%
65 or over	0	11	2.6%

The great majority (98%) described their ethnic group as white, with a handful of respondents from other ethnic groups or a mixture of groups. There were three respondents who had applied for help or support from maritime charities who did not describe their ethnic group as white.

More than seven in ten (72%) of those responding were married, followed by 12% who were single, 7% who were divorced and or in a legally dissolved partnership, 5% who were separated, 4% who were widowed or surviving a civil partnership, and less than 1% in a civil partnership.

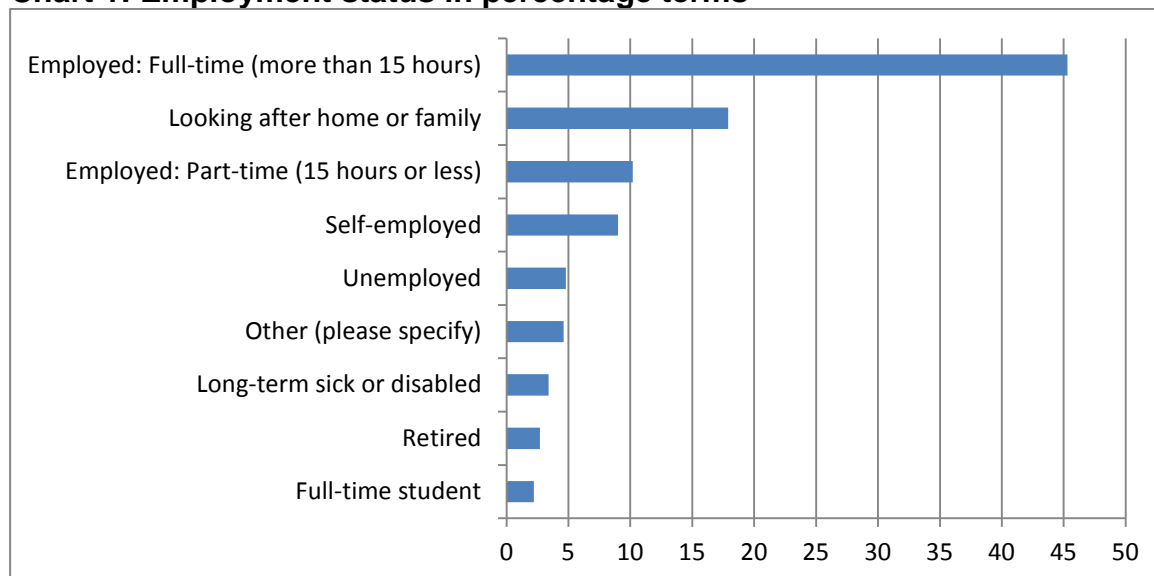
Table 3: Household status

N=414	Ever applied for help or support from maritime charity Count	All Count	All Percent
Married	59	299	72.2%
Single (never married or never registered a civil partnership)	19	50	12.1%
Divorced or formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	23	28	6.8%
Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership)	14	19	4.6%
Widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership	7	15	3.6%
In a registered same-sex civil partnership	0	3	0.7%

In comparison, the previous survey obtained responses from a much lower proportion of people who were married or living together (31%). This could reflect the focus on people who had applied for help or support in the previous survey while responses to this project were elicited from a high proportion of people who had *not* applied for help or support from a maritime charity (71%). Of the respondents to the current survey who had ever applied for help or support from a maritime charity, less than half (48%) were married; while thirty percent were either divorced or separated. This appears to indicate that beneficiaries of maritime charities are more likely to be divorced or separated than other seafaring dependants, reflecting the lower incomes and greater needs of lone parents.

5.1.3 Employment status

Nearly half of respondents (45%) were working more than 15 hours a week, and 10% were working 15 hours or less. Nearly one in ten were self-employed (9%) and less than 5% were unemployed (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Employment status in percentage terms

However, in terms of respondents who had ever applied for help or support from a maritime charity, only 27% were in full-time work, while rates of unemployment (8%), long-term sickness and disability (10%), and looking after home (23%) were higher than the overall rates.

Analysed by sector, respondents with fishing fleet connections were much more likely to be self-employed (30%) and less likely to be employed full-time (30%) than those with RN&RM (7% and 46% respectively) and Merchant Navy (9% and 47% respectively) connections.

5.1.4 Welfare and disability benefits

The proportion of respondents receiving benefits was fairly limited: 5.0% of all respondents were receiving Working Tax Credit; 4.8% of all respondents were receiving Carers Allowance; 4.4% were receiving the care element of Disability Living Allowance; and 3.9% were receiving Income Support. Other benefits were claimed by even smaller proportions of all respondents.

However, among those who had ever applied to a maritime charity for help or support (either by themselves or by another), the proportions were significantly higher: 12.9% were receiving Working Tax Credit; 14.3% were receiving Carers Allowance; 11.6% were receiving the care element of Disability Living Allowance (DLA); and 12.2% were receiving Income Support.

More than one in five (21%) of respondents with fishing fleet connections reported that they received Working Tax Credit, compared with 4% of those with RN&RM and 1% of those with Merchant Navy connections. Contrastingly, 10% of Merchant Navy connected respondents reported receiving Carers Allowance, compared with 4% of RN&RM, and no fishing fleet respondents. RN&RM connected respondents were also more likely to report receiving DLA and Income Support than other groups.

5.1.5 Children and caring responsibilities

Most respondents had a child or children aged under 18 (71%) compared with just over half (53%) in the previous survey. Nearly one in five (18%) of respondents had a dependent child aged 18 and over. Respondents with family connections to the RN&RM and the fishing fleet were more likely to have children under 18 (76%) than those linked to the Merchant Navy (46%), possibly reflecting the older age profile of Merchant Navy respondents.

Nearly three in ten respondents (29%) had a child or children under 5; just over a quarter (26%) had a child or children aged 5 to 10; 15% had a child or children aged 11 to 15; 8% had a child or children aged 16 to 17; and 12% had a child or children aged 18 to 24 years old. The largest group are those with pre-school children followed by those of primary school age.

One quarter (25%) of all respondents had either themselves or a child with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity that had troubled them over a period of at least 12 months. Among those who had ever applied to a maritime charity for support or help, this proportion rises to 46%. This figure is about four times higher than the proportion of people receiving the care element of DLA indicating that there may be scope to increase the claiming of disability benefits by beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.

Just over 50% of those respondents who had either themselves or a child with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity that had troubled them over a period of at least 12 months had not applied to maritime charity for support or help.

About 10% of all respondents stated that they had caring responsibilities for infirm or elderly adults. The Health Survey for England found that 17% of adults provided unpaid help or support to other people and about half of them were caring for an adult. This indicates that rates of caring among seafarers' dependants are similar to the national average.

5.2 Contact with maritime charities

5.2.1 Which maritime charity or charities do you know about?

Respondents were asked which maritime charities they knew about (Table 4). General levels of awareness of maritime charities appear to be highest among those with RN&RM connections. Knowledge of the Fishermen's Mission is very high among those with connections to the Fishing Fleet, while awareness among those with Merchant Navy connections of relevant maritime charities appears to be lower and more varied than among other seafaring groups. Across all three groups, awareness of the Royal British Legion is highest (80%), followed by SSAFA (63%).

Table 4: Proportion of respondents with family connections to different maritime sectors

Know about this charity	RN/RM connections N=383	MN connections N=78	FF connections N=25
Royal British Legion	86%	68%	40%

Know about this charity	RN/RM connections N=383	MN connections N=78	FF connections N=25
Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)	73%	44%	12%
The Naval Families Federation	62%	14%	4%
Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund	52%	12%	0%
Royal Navy Benevolent Trust	53%	18%	0%
Royal Naval Association	46%	26%	4%
Women's Royal Naval Service Benevolent Trust	17%	6%	0%
Sailors' Children's Society	19%	49%	52%
Nautilus UK Welfare Fund	2%	40%	4%
Hull Trinity House	5%	29%	0%
Greenwich Hospital	17%	24%	16%
Royal Merchant Navy Education Foundation (RMNEF)	3%	17%	16%
Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution (RLSOI)	2%	14%	4%
Fishermen's Mission	13%	42%	84%
Shipwrecked Mariners Society	5%	32%	36%
Aggies	31%	4%	0%
Other (please give details)	9%	12%	4%

It appears that there are some charities which only a small proportion of respondents knew about, such as the RLSOI and RMNEF. In most instances, less than half of respondents knew of each maritime charity relevant to their family connection.

5.2.2 How seafarers' dependants and their families contact maritime charities

Maritime charities were asked how seafarers' dependants and their families contacted them. Seafarers' dependants and their families contact maritime charities through a broad range of methods. These included phone, email, Twitter and Facebook. The use of social media as a means of communication between maritime charities and their potential beneficiaries emerged as a significant development since the previous study was carried out.

As well as self-referral, charities also reported referrals via case workers (particularly through the RN&RM Welfare Team and SSAFA), as well as other charities and advice organisations. A limited number of charities use active outreach to promote their work through attendance at events and activities where there are likely to be dependants of seafarers present. A number of survey respondents mentioned the role of the RN&RM

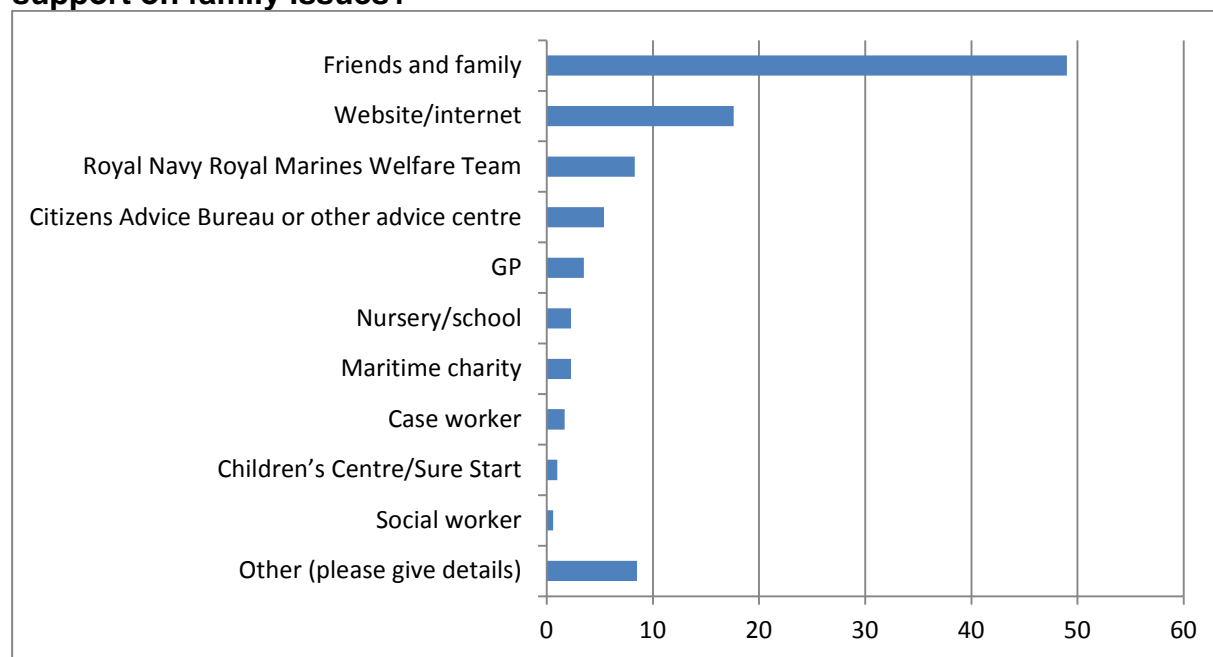
Welfare Team and SSAFA in response to questions about awareness of charities and sources of help (see Table 4 above and Chart 2 below) indicating the effectiveness of the case work approach and active outreach.

5.3 Where people go to when they need advice or support on family issues

All respondents were asked: 'Where is the most useful place you go to when you need advice or support on family issues?' (Chart 2). The most common response was friends and family (49%), followed by website/internet (18%) and a CAB or other advice centre (5%). Eight per cent mentioned the RN&RM Welfare Team, reflecting the high proportion of respondents with connections with the RN&RM.

In the previous survey, family and friends, Citizens Advice Bureaux and GPs were cited as the main sources of advice or support. At that time, the internet had not become a source of advice and information. This is a significant change since the previous survey.

Chart 2: Where is the most useful place you go to when you need advice or support on family issues?



When analysed in terms of different groups, friends and family remain the main category mentioned by respondents, however nearly a quarter of fishing fleet dependants (23%) said they would go to an advice centre, compared with 14% of Merchant Navy, and only 2% of RN&RM (Table 5). RN&RM and Merchant Navy were much more likely to use the internet for advice or support on family issues than dependants of fishers, possibly indicating relatively limited use or access to the internet in this group. GPs and social workers were mentioned by only a small percentage of all groups.

Table 5: Where is the most useful place you go to when you need advice or support on family issues?

Place for advice or support on family issues	RN&RM %	MN %	FF %
Friends and family	51	45	41
Citizens Advice Bureau or other advice centre	2	14	23
GP	3	4	0
Case worker	2	0	0
Social worker	1	1	0
Website/internet	18	20	5
Maritime charity	1	4	9
Royal Navy Royal Marines Welfare Team	11	0	0
Children's Centre/Sure Start	1	1	5
Nursery/school	2	3	5
Other (please give details)	8	7	14

Other places mentioned included: a Facebook site for Forces wives and girlfriends, the Military Wives Choir, Samaritans, the Church, SSAFA, Seawives, a private Facebook MN group, and health visitor.

5.4 Experience of applying to a maritime charity for help or support

Respondents were asked if they had ever applied to a maritime charity for help or support or had someone else applied on their behalf. Twenty-eight percent (148) said that they had applied, or someone else had applied on their behalf. This rose to 54% of respondents with a Fishing Fleet connection, which may reflect higher levels of need among this group or the means by which the survey was disseminated among the families and dependants of fishers, or other factors.

Most of those who had applied for help had applied in the last 12 months (Table 6).

Table 6: When was help from a maritime charity applied for?

N=142	RN/RM connections N=108	MN connections N=21	FF connections N=13	All Percent
In the last 12 months	54%	45%	69%	54%
In the last 5 years	33%	40%	23%	32%
More than 5 years ago	15%	20%	8%	15%

Note: Numbers subject to rounding

Help had mainly been for both the dependant and their family (62%), although just under one-third (31%) had applied for help only for their child or children (Table 7). The

rates vary by seafaring connection, but the actual numbers are small making the overall figure a more reliable statistic.

Table 7: Who was the help for?

N=128	RN/RM connections N=106	MN connections N=19	FF connections N=13	All Percent
Me	5%	26%	0%	7%
My child or children	31%	26%	31%	31%
Both me and my child or children	64%	47%	69%	62%

Note: Numbers subject to rounding

Results from the previous survey indicated a higher proportion of beneficiaries who had applied for help for themselves only (27%) and a markedly lower percentage who had applied for help for themselves and their children (31%).

5.5 How people found out about the charity providing help

Those who had applied for help or support to a maritime charity were asked how they had found out about the charity (Table 8). Some marked differences emerge between the different groups, although the role of friends and family appears similar for all groups. The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Welfare team appear to be particularly important for RN&RM, while maritime charities are important for MN and FF. SSAFA was also a significant channel by which people found out about help available.

Table 8: How did you find out about this charity?

N=139	RN&RM %	MN %	FF %	All %
Friends and family	20	22	18	20
Citizens Advice Bureau or other advice centre	3	0	9	4
Local Council	1	6	0	1
Maritime charity	1	17	36	6
Royal Navy Royal Marines Welfare Team	32	0	0	23
SSAFA	14	0	0	10
Facebook	4	6	0	4
Website	1	11	0	3
Social media	1	6	0	1
Local organisation	5	6	18	6
Employer	2	6	0	2
Publicity / adverts	5	0	0	5

N=139	RN&RM %	MN %	FF %	All %
Other (please give details)	12	22	18	15

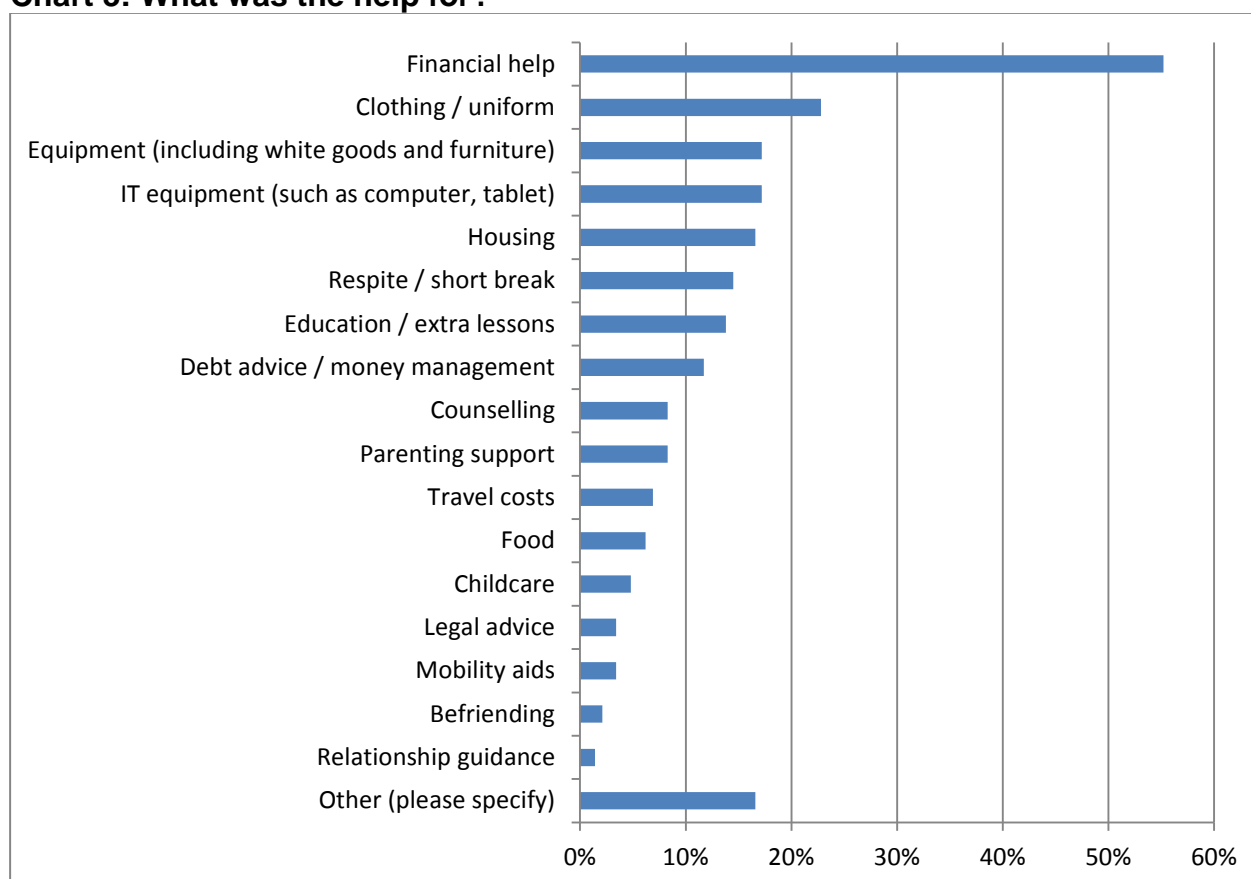
5.6 How many seafarers' dependants and their families are helped

From the charities end, it is difficult to get a clear picture of the total number of seafarers' dependants and their families helped by the maritime charities. Some charities are circumscribed by their rules so that help is limited to a relatively small potential pool of beneficiaries, while others are much freer to extend their help and support to a wider group. While one charity had provided help to fewer than 70 beneficiaries in the previous year, several others had helped more than 3,000 dependants and families in the last year.

5.7 What help was the charity asked for

Respondents who had applied for help to a maritime charity were asked what the help had been for (Chart 3). More than half (55%) had applied for financial help. Other types of help that were widely applied for included: clothing/uniform (23%); equipment including white goods/furniture (17%); IT equipment (17%); housing (17%) and respite/short breaks (15%). To some extent, these responses are likely to reflect the kind of help that charities are known to provide, and may not bring other needs to the surface. Other help applied for included: funeral costs, assessment by an occupational therapist, help with moving house, holidays and 'a listening ear'.

Chart 3: What was the help for?



There were some marked differences between the different seafaring groups in terms of the kind of help applied for. However, as noted above, this may be determined partly by the kind of help provided by the different maritime charities. It is also worth noting that the numbers are quite small for some categories. Across all three groups, financial help was the most common help that people had applied for, but particularly among those with fishing fleet connections (Table 9). The importance of financial help also reflect the level of need which may lead someone to apply for help from a charity and the operation of means tests by charities to identify beneficiaries.

Among RM&RN dependants, after financial help the main types of help sought were clothing/uniform, housing, and different kinds of equipment including white goods and IT. Among Merchant Navy dependants, after financial help the main types of help sought were: different kinds of equipment including white goods and IT, clothing/uniform and debt advice. Among the dependants and families of fishers, after financial help the main types of help sought were debt advice, education/extra lessons, respite/short breaks and food. RN&RM families appeared to have applied for a wider range of help than the other two groups.

Table 9: What was the help for by seafaring group

Type of help N=136	RN/RM %	MN %	FF %
Financial help	51	58	69
Clothing/uniform	24	26	8
Housing	21	0	0
Equipment (eg white goods, furniture)	20	21	0
IT equipment (eg computer, tablet)	16	32	8
Respite/short break	16	11	15
Education/extra lessons	14	11	23
Parenting support	12	0	0
Debt advice/money management	11	16	23
Counselling	10	5	8
Travel costs	9	0	8
Child care	7	0	0
Food	6	0	15
Mobility aids	5	0	0
Legal advice	3	11	0
Befriending	3	0	0
Relationship guidance	1	0	0
Other	16	16	8

More than half (54%) had applied for one-off help or support. However, 62% said that they received ongoing help, support or advice. In the previous survey, 29% of beneficiaries had applied for one-off grants and 41% regular grants.

5.8 What has been good about the help you received

Respondents were asked about what had been good about the help they had received. There were a wide variety of responses to the question which were overwhelmingly positive. A sample from each group is provided below to illustrate the kinds of things that beneficiaries valued.

5.8.1 Royal Navy and Royal Marines

Many respondents mentioned how much they appreciated the financial support they had received and illustrated how it had helped them:

We got the financial help at the moment we needed the most.

Great advice for my financial problems.

I would have not been able to cope financially at this point in my life without this help.

They have given some financial help for my boys for which I am so grateful.

I can afford to take my children on regular outings now, and I don't need to worry about uniforms now. Which has been a huge relief for the family.

Support was particularly valued in times of crisis, often related to ill-health:

They got my husband flown home from deployment to take care of the kids for 2 weeks as I had to have an operation

As a family has helped us as we lost everything when I became ill.

It's been wonderful knowing there is a safety net and support when something goes horribly wrong.

We had lost everything we owned and we were given some financial support to help replace bedding and toys for our children, we were also given money to help pay for emergency housing.

Help during or after divorce and relationship breakdown was also highlighted:

They have been very supportive when I first split from my husband, and helped me feel positive about moving on.

They are very nice and helpful to me and my girls as dad doesn't see or pay maintenance for the girls. They are there for both me and the children to talk to and help with money and goods for our home

They have been and still very supporting to me and my son had to separate from a former partner and are there when needed.

The help was amazing on splitting from navy based husband and relocating, to a council house, which was in a poor state, helped me get carpets, and other household items.

Respondents with children with disabilities appreciated the support available to meet the additional needs of a disabled child:

They have been amazing by supplying Equipment, Services and Respite for our disabled son and also our Family. They are friendly, helpful and honest.

[They have] funded private speech and language therapy and private physio for my son, since having this therapy he has come on leaps and bounds

It allowed us to undertake an occupational therapy assessment in order to ensure our sons living accommodation needs were met by the Navy. We subsequently received funding for recommended equipment.

Equipment for disabled children is 1,000s of pounds dearer than for average children, we got an all-terrain pushchair that enables our daughter to join in with family outings, she's usually in wheelchair.

Help with the costs of education and related expenditure was seen by some as providing unique opportunities they could not otherwise have afforded:

It has allowed our children to have an excellent education that we would have been unable to afford.

It has given my daughter opportunities I won't have been able to give on my own.

Greenwich Hospital has provided a bursary for both my boys to attend the Royal Hospital School without which I would have no chance of sending them to this quality of education. It has been fantastic and something for which I will be eternally grateful.

Holidays and respite were also identified as good aspects of the help received by beneficiaries:

Financially and being able to go on a holiday

A respite break for the family after husband being away for 8 months

Enabled us to have a family holiday before and after deployments. Without this help our children would definitely miss out on quality family time.

Respondents also commented on the supportive and sympathetic approach provided by many of the maritime charities' staff, as well as the value of people who understood the nature of naval life:

They understood the special requirements affecting service life.

I don't feel like I am begging, and I have access to advice and help as and when I need it. It's always friendly.

They dealt with our request for help with respect and we felt supported and valued.

Without the help we've been and advice we've been given since my husband passed away I honestly don't know what we would have done, they are such a wonderful society and so Friendly, helpful and caring, just Great.

Support I got from my caseworker and the other organisations he contacted on my behalf made my difficult time a lot less stressful.

When I have been at my lowest there was always someone to talk to.

A few respondents had been refused help or were less positive about their experience, however the overwhelming response was very positive.

5.8.2 Merchant Navy

A smaller number of beneficiaries with merchant navy connections highlighted the value of financial help, and holidays in particular.

Financial help and the holiday stay in a caravan.

I have been able to take a break with my children. I would not otherwise have been able to afford a break without financial assistance.

The financial aid I receive every month enables me to pay all the family bills and not have to rely on foodbanks. Usually every month I have a shortfall and struggle to pay all the bills and buy food.

We have a caravan holiday every year. I can't say how much this means to us.

Other types of help that were valued included help to buy computers and financial advice. One respondent commented that emotional support would have been welcome in addition to the financial support that had been provided.

5.8.3 Fishing Fleet

Among fishing fleet beneficiaries, financial support was particularly valued, as well as holidays and help with the costs of uniforms:

The financial assistance has been a lifeline. My son's father is a fisherman but doesn't contribute to his son and the charity has helped us greatly.

I receive monthly grant which helps a lot and holiday to caravan.

Very understanding, very generous, ongoing financial and family support, helped the whole family get sorted out with specific needs quickly, no fuss.

The financial support received has enabled my children to achieve well educationally, I believe that easing the financial pressure and being able to provide them and myself with the technology needed to connect with necessary links that education and other bodies provide for help and support has been invaluable.

We get ongoing help with our son's uniforms, and money every month to help with any other costs.

Help me with clothes and support with my grand-daughter.

5.9 What kinds of help is needed

5.9.1 What do you think the families of seafarers most need from charities

Respondents were asked about what they think the families of seafarers most need from charities. Their answers are reflected in the wordcloud below which highlights the most frequently occurring words in their responses. This underlines the importance of financial and emotional support and advice to families (both legal and welfare). Respondents also mentioned the need for support to help partners into work and at times of crisis, for example, when they have to go into hospital.

The previous survey similarly identified financial help (33%), support and understanding (19%) information, advice and guidance (9%) as the key areas where families need help from charities. Help with education costs (4%) and household bills (3%), marriage guidance (3%), counselling for children (2%), peer support (1%) and holidays (1%) were also mentioned in the previous survey as matters where help was needed. The results indicate little change in the kind of help that seafarers' families need in the last ten years.

Money Never Needed Practical Support Deal with Separation
Access Nice Guidance Charity Emotional
Support Education Financial Help is
Available Advice Difficult Families
Community Support Children Emergency
Understanding Ear Child Care Extra Support
Events Income

5.9.1.1. RN&RM

Analysis of responses by group reveal some differences of emphasis. Among RN&RM respondents, many thought that families needed financial, emotional and practical support and advice. Support was needed at crisis times and while partners were on deployment, when practical and emotional support for children was particularly useful:

Support when loved ones away for long periods of time, and regular contact throughout the year.

Support as many families do not have family close by, and as partners it can be very lonely while husbands are on deployment.

Advice and support when seafarers are away e.g. With legal issues, mortgages, house repairs, energy providers, cars, insurance. When you have small children and are trying to keep the household ticking over, it's nearly impossible to find the time to sort out the above, find reliable builders, search for the best deals on energy providers and insurance, etc.

Most important for me would be more practical help with helping with understanding and support caused by serving person coming back from deployment. Even a short trip can take a long while for families to adjust back to 'normal' when the serving person returns home, and quite often, you just find normal again just as they are due to deploy again.

For those moving with their partner, families needed support to integrate into new areas, particularly in relation to schools:

Support integrating into new areas. Housing requirements. School transition, especially when having to move mid-term or between countries.

Support every time we move to help settle quickly & feel part of the community, especially for the spouse & children. It is a very difficult, unsettled life & stress levels rise at each move.

Help and support with issues such as applying for schools and supporting children when they move, housing issues, support when the serving member is away in the form of, for example, phone calls, coffee mornings etc. Childcare help and training for the spouse of a serving member to enable them to work more easily.

The most recent AFCAS survey (2015) found that 28% of Royal Navy respondents were dissatisfied with the effects of service life on their child's education.

People also thought help with childcare to enable partners to return to work was needed:

Personally I think childcare is a big issue, as whilst my husband is away on a deployment, there is only me to look after my son, and living away from friends and family can make it a struggle to get back into work.

Help for the wives to work because most of us can't work because the navy always comes first and jobs don't like that we are the only source of childcare.

The AFCAS survey (2015) also found that 39% of Royal Navy respondents were dissatisfied with the effect of service life on their spouse or partner's career.

One respondent provided a wide variety of the kinds of help with childcare that might be needed which could help:

The biggest challenge for service families are is those serving away from their familial home who have no support of nearby family or friends or support groups to lean on. Also, subsidised nursery costs would be amazing - especially for nurseries that are in establishments. Perhaps respite centres where you could drop your children for a day or morning or afternoon session, especially on a weekend, so you can catch up with either chores or adult loved ones! School holiday support - so many service families I know have to take staggered leave (holiday) to cover childcare when their children are off school. Also, cover for inset days and sick days would be great!

Activities and events for families were thought to be something that families needed, as well as support for children suffering from separation:

Contact to ensure they do not feel isolated. Events that bring together and connect people in similar situations.

More community based groups for service families to encourage friends/support networks.

Support when emergencies arise, emotional support for children suffering from separation anxiety.

Support for when their partner is away - activities, days out, Sunday lunch get-togethers, creche so mums can have a night out. Advice as to what to do if something happens.

Help for those with children with special needs was mentioned where families need help from charities:

Support and acknowledgment, not just for families with disabled children of officers in, but all families.

Extra support for those with children with special needs.

Financial support and advice was an area that many mentioned as one where families need help from maritime charities:

Advice on money//welfare matters.

Welfare support and advice during times of deployment and repatriation.

Bereavement and illness were also times when respondents thought families need help from charities:

Emergency help when losing dad/mum.

Transition to land-based life was also seen as a time when families need help:

More financial advice and support, particularly when the serving person is coming to the end of their career. More transitional care for the family and children of serving personnel when they leave.

When the parent leaves the service there is very little practical or financial help on offer, so that a new career can be started.

A number of respondents thought that maritime charities need to raise awareness of the help that is available and encourage people to seek help:

Encouragement to go to a charity when help is needed. I think there is the connotation that you only go to a charity if you are destitute!

Approachability and more transparency as to what help is actually available to people.

Clear channels of communication to get advice and support when needed.

More point of contact, making a proactive approach to making contact with families so they are aware of what is offered.

Some thought that more work could be done by charities to raise awareness in schools and elsewhere of the needs of RN&RM children as set out in the Armed Forces Covenant. Support for dependants without children was also mentioned as an area that was neglected by maritime charities.

5.9.1.2. Merchant Navy

Answers to the question of what people thought the families of seafarers most needed from charities from respondents linked to the Merchant Navy were also focused around financial, practical and emotional support:

Support through difficult times.

Support and advice and in some cases financial help.

Financial and emotional assistance.

Emotional and financial support as the family was split up but was able to keep together with the support provided.

Help with the costs of education and school items was mentioned as ways that maritime charities could help. Support in crisis situations following bereavement, accidents and lay-offs was also identified as an area for help.

Respondents also mentioned help to make *shorebased agencies understand the needs of seafarers' families*. Charities could also provide help by: *Understanding that we don't do things the same as people living in the one town all their lives*. Understanding of the particular situation of Merchant Navy families and the state of the industry indicated the perceived hard times for Merchant Navy personnel.

5.9.1.3. Fishing Fleet

Fishing fleet families' responses related to what help is needed from maritime charities are similar being mainly about financial and emotional support but also highlight the unpredictability of families' finances:

Understanding re how hard it is to be away from home for long periods/having someone be away from home for long periods, and the transition when they come back. Understanding, especially for fishing families, of how unpredictable finances can be and how help can be needed for some parts of the year more than others.

Support when money is tight due to weather conditions.

The income from fishing is not static like a 9 to 5 job. Income fluctuates and there are times that Tax Credits would kick in during some seasons or periods. Help with benefit support to ease the troughs to be able to cope with bad times until the season or fishing picks up. Also some support for families to cope with the isolation of long periods at sea.

The previous MCFG study found less needs related to social isolation among the families and dependants of fishers, reflecting the strength of fishing communities and shorter absences at sea than among the other two sectors.

5.9.2 Maritime charities' views on the main needs of seafarers' dependants and their families

The perspective of maritime charities about the main needs of dependants and their families is likely to be affected by the kind of help for which they are asked (and this may reflect what kind of help dependants and families think is available from a particular charity).

Financial difficulties were a widespread and common need identified by the maritime charities. This could be due to a range of factors such as: relationship breakdown and divorce, unexpected major expenses such as funeral costs and deposits for rented property, or low and irregular income. While financial difficulties were often the primary need, further inquiry often indicated other needs which had led to the financial problems or were caused by them.

Other major needs mentioned by the maritime charities included: loneliness and the impact of separation for families while the seafarer was away; housing conditions; and issues related to children with special needs, including the difficulties of moving across education authorities and/or systems.

Concerns around moving across education authorities and schools was also highlighted in a survey by OFSTED Inspectors which found shortcomings in provision for Armed Forces children generally in the schools and local authority areas visited in England,

especially where small numbers of Service children were being catered for. , the authors commented that: *'Service children were generally susceptible to social and emotional disturbance while a parent or other family member was on active deployment. This was further heightened for some children with special educational needs or where parents were deployed in areas of military conflict'*. Continual moves had a considerable impact on Service children and young people's social and emotional development and their friendships⁴.

A RNRMC workshop highlighted needs around crisis points such as relationship breakdown, illness and bereavement leading to needs for emotional and financial support. Special educational needs and help with the transition to civvy street were also noted.

Charities also mentioned needs in relation to: mental health; bereavement; grants for household goods, food, rent and other bills, medical and dental equipment, furniture and furnishings, and house adaptations; debt relief; childcare and parenting support.

5.10 How needs have changed and how charities have changed

Stakeholders from the maritime charities were asked how needs have changed and how they have responded to changes in needs since the previous study.

A few charities reported that the number of applicants for help had fallen, reflecting the decline in the number of current seafarers (particularly RN and MN); and some noted a shift in the balance from current seafarers to more former seafarers' families and dependants. However, others commented that needs had become more complex and that charities were having to work harder to get joined up services from the state. One charity worker commented that while beneficiaries previously came for one-off help, there was an increased tendency for people to need ongoing support, indicating higher levels of financial need.

Some of those interviewed commented on an increased need for help with mental health issues (and among the RN and RM, the impact of PTSD on families). This could reflect both increased awareness and reduced stigma. Greater openness about domestic violence was also noted by one interviewee. One charity reported an increase in dependants asking for help with the costs of education and training in order to get employment. The rise of funeral costs was also mentioned by a couple of charities, one of which had responded by introducing a funeral grant.

The rise of social media and the internet was seen as a useful tool for the maritime charities, however there were concerns that some families are being disadvantaged as applications for some benefits have to be made online.

A number of charities have extended their pool of potential beneficiaries in recent years, for example, to cover university students, or to cover families and dependants of those working in fishing or on superyachts.

Several of those interviewed thought that there was greater collaboration between charities and working with other organisations since the previous study. The

⁴ OFSTED (2011) Children in service families, Manchester: OFSTED.

introduction of a shared assessment form (the Casework Management System or CMS) which the RN charities can use was felt to have helped to reduce duplication and to improve coordination.

One Merchant Navy charity had moved away from a grants-based approach to the development of case working and income maximisation. This was felt to have been very successful and generated significant increases in claiming of benefits, with beneficiaries receiving more money than they would have done if only relying on charitable payments. The employment of professional caseworkers has allowed them to do this.

5.11 Gaps and future needs

5.11.1 What you think would be more helpful

Respondents were asked whether the charity that had helped them could be more helpful to people like them: more than two-thirds (67%) said that the charity could not be more helpful than it already was, indicating that maritime charities are effective in meeting real needs.

Across all three groups, individuals suggested that more emotional support would be helpful:

Didn't ask for money - just support. Only "help" I got was to call the Samaritans if I felt like committing suicide.

I believe that there is a need for understanding of individual emotional support, it is one thing to give people the tools to help themselves but more difficult to get them to move forward at a time when they may be struggling emotionally. Although costly and time consuming to have constant support and counselling from an outside source, at these times [it] can be the only light at the end of the tunnel.

More emotional support.

A few also mentioned the need for help around separation and divorce, childcare to enable the dependant to look for work, housing, and more help with school fees.

Help for seafarers themselves in updating or improving their qualifications so that they could return to sea was mentioned by a Merchant Navy and a fishing fleet respondent:

I am really needing to get back to the fishing and now need my certificate's i.e sea survival, fire-fighting, first aid and health and safety, but can't afford to get them done. I have been offered work but until I do the courses I am stuck. Don't think it's your job, but don't know what or who to get funding. It would be so much a better life for me and my son the sooner I get to sea and earn wages.

A couple of RN&RM dependants thought that more could be done to raise awareness of what kind of help is available:

Many people are unaware of the help.

Understanding the needs of families who are struggling financially and who don't know what is available to them.

People do not know what is out there especially those who live off patch.

It was also suggested that charities could follow up beneficiaries to see how they coped and if they needed further help or support.

5.11.2 Gaps in services to support or help seafarers' dependants and their families

Maritime charities were also asked if there were any particular gaps in current services to help seafarers' dependants and their families. A number of interviewees commented on the difficulty of reaching seafarers' families – across *all* groups.

Those interviewed mentioned a range of areas where there were gaps including: mental health, families of reservists not mobilised, availability of affordable accommodation, families of those with a right to remain in the UK but no right to UK benefits, loneliness and isolation, childcare, and support to partners with training and getting into work.

A couple of stakeholders also mentioned the need for better coordination to improve the coverage of maritime charities across the UK.

5.11.3 Future needs

Survey respondents were asked what kind of help and support maritime charities should provide in the future. The wordcloud below highlights the ongoing importance of needs related to children, childcare and education, as well as help around housing and emotional support. Deployment for RN&RMN families was frequently mentioned, along with day trips and breaks and other practical help, and the opportunity to meet face to face, not just on line or by phone.

Set Practical Help Emotional Support Form
Assistance Travel Housing Forums
Seafarers Nursery School Loved Child
Care Circumstances Children Resettlement
Needs Day Trips Deployed Coffee Living
Breaks Education Low Think Meet Face to Face Ask Similar

The previous survey found the top five suggestions for future help were holidays (19%) education costs and retraining (9%), financial help (8%), bereavement (7%) and support networks (4%). What is striking is how much continuity there is between 2006 and 2016 in terms of current and future needs.

5.11.3.1. RN&RM

When analysed by sector, those with family connections to the RN&RM mentioned childcare most frequently as a future need. This was mainly to enable spouses and partners to find work:

Childcare - affordable accessible childcare.

Childcare available 24/7!!!

Help with cost of childcare/provision of affordable childcare.

Help provide childcare- shortage in this area so employment for spouses is difficult.

Assistance with childcare for those who need it to be able to continue working when serving partner away for extended periods.

Emergency help with childcare.

The need for help with childcare was also linked to a need for help to enable spouses and partners to find employment and maintain their careers:

Support for spouses with careers centres - my own career has fallen by the wayside because we move every 2 years - it's difficult to find what I want when we move...I just get settled & we move again...I never progress up the career ladder & consequently my pension will be pittance.

The transient life of many RN&RM families was reflected in respondents identifying help with moving as a future need:

More support when moving to new areas.

Support with integrating into a new community, the prospect of moving hundreds of miles away from anyone you know, to a strange place with no familiar faces is scary, not only for the children, but also adults.

Practical help when moving to a new area was mentioned as a need in relation to schools admissions and health care in particular:

Support for families relocating - schools admissions, medical needs (fertility etc).

Have a specialist Children's school admission/issue team that could be available nationwide to liaise specifically with Schools, Governors etc.

Schools with a special link person for children of maritime families - help the child feel settled, catch up with work, the chance to talk to someone who understands what they are going through.

Communication with NHS to either fast track a waiting list patient who is armed forces dependant or put them in same place on waiting list in new location so they're not disadvantaged by moving and having to start the process over again.

The need for an accessible source of help and advice was seen as a future need:

A dedicated helpline for families to access any info- housing, education etc An app offering the same.

Some sort of online chat, 24/7, with experts to answer specific questions and other families to give advice.

Easy access to support and advice.

As well as advice, counselling and emotional support to counter the isolation of some families was also seen as a future need by a number of respondents:

To help with counselling services or just someone to talk to for the families in isolation.

Someone to talk to 24hrs a day. 7 days a week.

Access to counselling/someone to talk to outside of family unit.

A phone line open for families to discuss issues personal.

Online chat function with professionals who can help with emotional, financial, mental issues.

Those living away from bases were seen as particularly isolated.

Linked to the need for counselling and emotional support was the need identified by respondents for help to cope with separation for both partners and children while personnel are deployed:

More counselling/groups for children of deployed units.

More support for mobile families when moving, not just wife/husband of!!

More information when hubby deployed - communication poor as I don't live on a married patch.

Support groups and events.

Local networks with quarterly meetings. Helpline Networks specifically to help partners and a separate one for children.

Organise group get-togethers for wives/partners and immediate family of the deployed section.

A website focused on families which is not connected with the military and provides proper support and advice from professionals about managing forces separation

Future help provided by maritime charities could also involve working more closely with schools to support naval children, particularly during deployment:

Getting schools more involved to help children with separation.

Educate schools in non-military areas of what life is actually like with a serving parent and what support they could offer to help ease anxiety.

Other kinds of help which people thought that maritime charities could provide in the future included activities and day trips, both to cover school holidays and during deployments:

Organised day trips during holidays etc for the children to keep them entertained and happy, but also to give the mothers a break.

Better support for families during school holidays and non-term time. (Clubs - Events etc).

More organised activities for the children, support/youth clubs, trips away.

Breaks for young families where a father or mother is deployed.

Better on-board communication was seen as a means to help families cope with deployment in the future:

Funding to uplift the satcom facilities on deploying ships to allow RN personnel to Skype from sea from time to time. Face-to-face communications like this would make such a huge difference to children.

Connectivity, utilising Internet and other means to create virtual communities where seafarers can share experiences, network and 'belong'.

Better liaison with vessels.

Wifi on all warships!

In addition, help with travel especially for partners who do not drive was mentioned as something maritime charities could provide in the future:

Helping families travel to be together.

Funding for visiting partners on deployment during r&r.

Flight vouchers to see serving parents.

Financial help and help with obtaining housing were mentioned, as well as help with white goods and removals, and education costs. Some of the suggestions indicated a lack of awareness about what kind of help was already available to dependants and families.

Support for partners without children was mentioned as a need which was felt not to be recognised:

More support for partners without children. A lot is geared towards families but a lot of people do not have children.

Charities often focus on families and forget about those who do not have children. Partners who do not have children, are often overlooked, yet they can become the most isolated and lonely when their partners are away, very little is done for them, it is assumed that they can take care of themselves.

A number of suggestions indicate that some respondents thought that the current situation is confusing and that there was a need for more easily accessible information about the help available:

I'm confused and fed up with the sheer numbers of RN charities. Who do I go to if I need help? The RNBT doesn't help officers, RNRMC is official charity but RNOC is almost invisible. We want an independent site explains them all.

One stop shop and application to access charitable funding, with so many it may be challenging to know which ones can help in the circumstances.

Better advertising to service families (including extended family of serving persons) that they can make direct applications for support themselves, rather than going through a Welfare Officer.

Make families more aware that charities are there to help, no stigma involved. Publicise more on social media that they can help with situations that arise.

Other ideas included trying to reduce the stigma of applying to a charity by rebranding as a 'resource provider' and doing more to raise awareness in the wider society about the life of seafarers' families and dependants:

Represent seafarers and their families! Let the world know what life is like for those related to or dependent on a sailor because our voices are rarely heard! Make it easier for us to get help.

To summarise, the most frequently mentioned issue was childcare, followed by support related to the challenges faced by families during a deployment, and help with schools and education – often linked to deployment and moving around the country.

5.11.3.2. Merchant Navy

In terms of what kind of help and support charities should provide in the future, respondents with family connections to the Merchant Navy highlighted financial help, support with the costs of education and emotional support in particular:

More financial support as the children get older, asking about the condition of household goods, regular checks on the health and well-being of families in regards to debt managing.

Financial help, help with a holiday, help with school and education including college, further education and university.

More assistance with funding with courses.

Grant support for further education.

Support for the whole time so to cover from start to end of degree/PhD .shorter and quicker applications.

More emotional support, more support towards teenagers not just young ones.

Emotional support for partners and children of seafarers ie a phone in service for if anyone is struggling.

One respondent suggested the establishment of four family centres in Scotland, Wales, North and South England *that can provide respite care free for families in distress. have a network of support workers who can visit and advise families on what help is available.* Drop in centres and local support groups were also suggested by other respondents.

Communications were mentioned by a number of respondents:

The growth of connectivity onboard ship means that families can remain in contact throughout trips to sea. However there is a lack of guidance or advice on how these virtual relationships can be conducted. This issue will shape the way in which families communicate during sea time, but may also impact time ashore. Should those at home share bad news? What about arguments? How can people interact through potentially stressful times? This should be an issue the industry is tackling.

Better communications for seafarers at sea. We all have access to the internet, social media, Sky, etc. ashore but what about those at sea. We need free internet access on board ship. Electronic forums where we can share ideas, concerns, etc with like-minded people.

To have wifi available on all ships, so families can stay in touch.

A couple of respondents mentioned holidays including a holiday camp for seafarers children and discounts for holiday breaks. Other suggestions included: bereavement support, legal advice, a specialist service for parents and children who are being diagnosed and treated for dyslexia, and Autistic spectrum disorders, and help for those living inland.

To summarise, different kinds of support were most frequently mentioned, particularly in relation to families and education, followed by financial help.

5.11.3.3. Fishing fleet

A number of fishing fleet respondents suggested more financial help and advice for dependants and families should be provided in the future, at a more local level than currently available:

A very experienced benefits adviser to help and signpost. A point of contact for all families to pick up the telephone. A bit like SAIL line but not just central in London. Family breakdown and debt go hand in hand and more advisers who are able to help with the debt and benefits to enable families to cope whilst they are on their own for long periods with partner at sea. Something to bring back the seafaring community with one main charitable helpline that is easily recognised for all.

Support in times of bad weather when no money is being earned so mortgage payments don't get missed.

A local office and support worker in every port or ex-port like Aberdeen or Fleetwood as there are still seafaring families in these areas that need support that are easy to contact at any time not all are or a support worker in every port.

Social support was also suggested:

More on the ground support - more opportunities to meet face to face.

One to one support, engaging in new and different activities (maybe as a family), meeting other people out of your immediate friend group. I think getting away from it all and meeting new people helps us to see a bigger picture , also being engaged in specific activities enables us to focus away from the problems of the moment and therefore can create a much needed distraction in difficult times.

To meet other similar families, so we know someone in common with us.

Maybe some kind of group/club for fishermen's children who all miss their fathers.

Other suggestions included: help with costs of school uniforms, shoes, and extra-curricular activities, and raising awareness in other agencies of the help that the maritime charities can provide.

To summarise, support was most frequently mentioned, followed by financial assistance and activities.

5.12 Future changes

There was a common view that the impact of austerity on local authority services, and the effect of welfare reforms on families, would lead to greater demand for help and increased levels of debt among the families and dependants of seafarers. Increased needs associated with loneliness, access to the internet, caring responsibilities for older parents, and rented housing were also mentioned by stakeholders.

Falling numbers of seafarers were expected by some interviewees to result in reductions in requests for help, although the increasing complexity of cases was also highlighted.

5.13 Differences and similarities with the general population

5.13.1 Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

There was a strongly shared view among respondents that the lives of seafarers and their families were different from other families. Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that: 'Seafarers' families have different needs from most families', and 83% agreed that: 'Life is different for the children of seafarers from the life of other children' (Table 10). A high proportion of respondents (70%) also agreed that: 'The dependants of seafarers are more isolated than those of other workers'. In the previous survey, the proportion was lower with 56% thinking that life was different for seafarers and their families from other families.

Views about schools understanding of the stresses of being the child of a seafarer and the relative financial security of seafarers and their families were more varied. About one in five (19%) agreed that schools understand the stresses of being the child of a seafarer; while 38% agreed that seafarers and their families are less financially secure than other families (compared with 18% who disagreed).

Analysed in terms of the different groups, some key differences emerge. While the majority across all groups agree that 'Seafarers' families have different needs from most families', those in the RM&RN and MN groups are much more likely to agree that 'Life is different for the children of seafarers from the life of other children' than those in the FF category.

The FF dependants were however much more likely to agree than other groups that 'Seafarers and their families are less financially secure than other families' while they are less likely to agree that 'The dependants of seafarers are more isolated than those of other workers' compared with the RM&RN and MN dependants. The results illustrate that although there are many shared characteristics, the dependants and families of the different seafaring groups also have some distinct and specific features.

Table 10: Views on the extent to which seafarers and their families differ from others

N=474	Agree strongly %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Disagree strongly %
Seafarers' families have different needs from most families	45%	41%	12%	2%	1%
<i>RM&RN</i>	48	38	11	1	1
<i>MN</i>	32	51	15	1	0
<i>FF</i>	45	27	23	5	0
Life is different for the children of seafarers from the life of other children	43%	40%	13%	34%	1%
<i>RM&RN</i>	47	38	11	3	1

N=474	Agree strongly %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Disagree strongly %
<i>MN</i>	34	47	18	1	0
<i>FF</i>	23	35	23	9	0
Schools understand the stresses of being the child of a seafarer	4%	15%	36%	34%	12%
<i>RM&RN</i>	3	15	37	34	11
<i>MN</i>	4	13	32	35	15
<i>FF</i>	5	9	45	23	18
Seafarers and their families are less financially secure than other families	14%	24%	44%	15%	3%
<i>RM&RN</i>	11	23	46	17	3
<i>MN</i>	18	31	40	12	0
<i>FF</i>	55	27	18	0	0
The dependants of seafarers are more isolated than those of other workers	33%	37%	23%	6%	1%
<i>RM&RN</i>	36	36	22	6	1
<i>MN</i>	28	44	21	7	0
<i>FF</i>	18	45	27	5	5

Note: Subject to rounding

5.13.2 Views of maritime charity stakeholders on differences and similarities in needs of seafarers' dependants and their families with those of the general population

Most of the stakeholders interviewed thought that needs of seafarers' dependants and their families were very similar to those of the general population. However, they were heightened by the nature of seafaring life and the periods of separation (up to nine months in the Royal Navy), and uncertainty for some, that families experience. A number of interviewees drew parallels with the lives of single-parents. Debt and relationship difficulties could be compounded by absences and concerns about the dangers that some seafarers face.

The period of transition to civilian life for RN&RM families and dependants was perceived as a particular difference from the general population, and a challenging time. In addition, the families of disabled veterans would have to deal with the long-term

impact of disability. Among the fishing fleet, limited planning for retirement and a hand-to-mouth tradition in poorer fishing communities could put additional pressures on families and dependants.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has provided a useful insight into the needs of the families and dependants of seafarers in 2016, revealing both continuity and some change since the previous study in 2006.

The overall numbers of adult and child dependants is predicted to decline steadily across all three seafaring groups over the next twenty years from the current estimates of 173,000 adults under retirement age and 190,000 children. Some changes in terms of service in RN&RM are likely to increase turnover which will have a moderating effect on the decline in numbers, however, the number of potential beneficiaries will fall. Contrastingly, levels of need are likely to increase, at least up to 2020, as the impact of austerity measures, welfare changes, and increasing pressures on social provision are felt around the country.

While many maritime charities consider that the needs of seafarers' families are very similar to those of the general population, only heightened by the periods of separation and uncertainty created by life at sea, many dependants themselves thought that there were important differences between their needs and for their children from those of most families. Those with family connections to the RN&RM and Merchant Navy highlighted the differences for children, while those linked to the fishing fleet highlighted the financial insecurity for families.

In terms of the main kinds of need, there is considerable continuity with the previous study. Financial and emotional support, advice and help at times of crisis, such as illness and relationship breakdown, continue to be important needs which maritime charities can meet. The most significant change is the rise of the internet and social media as sources of information and communication, replacing some of the more traditional sources of information and advice such as GPs.

For RN&RM families and dependants, the specific needs that come through the survey and interviews are related to the naval lifestyle with long deployments and frequent moves around the country. Research evidence also suggests that long periods of deployment have a negative effect on family relationships⁵. Respondents highlight the need for emotional and practical support to help them and their children cope with the consequences of separation and the moving to a new area. Help with school admissions, medical appointments, and support for those with children with special needs was mentioned regularly in connection with moves. Childcare was a key feature of the help that spouses and partners need in getting and maintaining employment, especially during deployment or when moving to a new area. According to the Centre for Social Justice, spousal employment can be a crucial part of a successful transition to civilian life for some military families. The stability provided by a second income, combined with the support of social networks that come as a part of working, give families more resilience at a time of change⁶.

⁵ Centre for Social Justice (2016) Military Families and Transition, London: CSJ.

⁶ Centre for Social Justice (2016) Military Families and Transition, London: CSJ.

For Merchant Navy families and dependants, financial, emotional and practical support were the main areas of need. Help with the costs of education seemed to be a particular concern among this group. The respondents had an older age profile and as the most geographically dispersed group, often remaining in their established neighbourhoods, it seems possible that their needs are closer to those of the wider population than the other two maritime sectors.

Fishing fleet families and dependants seem to experience greater financial insecurity and appear to be generally poorer than the other groups, as reflected by the greater proportion on benefits among the respondents. This is echoed in recent research by the University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute which also suggests that fishing communities are close communities that can provide a degree of community support to families and dependants.

For maritime charities, the response to the survey indicates that they are doing well and their help is widely appreciated in meeting the needs of seafarers' families and dependants. Many commented on the value of the understanding the charities had of the pressures of seafaring life and its impact on partners and children. In terms of future needs, many expressed a wish for more of the kind of help that the charities currently provide.

However, there was a view that more could be done to enable partners and spouses to work through help with childcare and the costs of childcare and through advice or support on training. Given the likely impact of continuing austerity measures, charities may wish to look at doing more to maximise income through this kind of support as well as more help and advice on claiming of benefits for dependants and families in line with the approach of one of the Merchant Navy charities.

Communications were also an area where further development was frequently mentioned, particularly improvements to ship to shore communication. Providing more services online is also an area which charities may wish to consider. A number of respondents made suggestions about online help and advice, apps, and webchat services which could be made available on a 24/7 basis.

Seafarers' families can be difficult for the charities to find where they are dispersed around the country, and others are hard to reach, but there were comments that more could be done proactively to contact families and raise awareness of the kinds of help that could be provided to them. While some charities are well known, there are others with rather low profiles which would benefit from more active promotion.

Promotion is not just needed to reach families and dependants, but more widely to other services, particularly advice, education and health. Maritime charities could do more to raise awareness of their work to statutory and other service providers, as well as working with them to understand the impact of the seafaring lifestyle on families and dependants.

Some with RN&RM family connections commented on the plethora of charities and confusion as to which charity could provide what. There remains scope to simplify access to the wide range of help that is available.

Every year maritime charities provide help and support to a wide range of people enabling many to keep going through times of crisis and others to have a better quality of life with holidays, activities and equipment for their children. The study indicates that while overall numbers of potential beneficiaries will decline, the need for support will continue for many years into the future.

Appendix I – Organisations contacted

- Naval Families Federation
- Royal Navy Royal Marines Welfare Team
- RN and RM Children's Fund
- Royal Navy Benevolent Trust
- Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)
- Royal British Legion (RBL)
- Women's Royal Naval Service Benevolent Trust
- Greenwich Hospital
- Sailors' Children's Society
- Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution
- Royal Merchant Navy Education Foundation
- Nautilus UK Welfare Fund
- Aggie's
- Fishermen's Mission
- Shipwrecked Mariners Society

Appendix 2

Table 1: Projected number of dependants of serving and former RN personnel

RN	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050
All adult dependants	102,730	90,110	74,710	66,250	63,200
Dependent children	118,100	104,670	88,770	80,030	76,880

Table 2: Projected number of dependants of serving and former MN personnel

MN	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050
All adult dependants	45,120	37,240	28,690	28,280	30,750
Dependent children	46,590	38,450	29,620	29,210	31,750

Table 3: Projected number of dependants of serving and former FF seafarers

FF	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050
All adult dependants	25,070	19,810	16,010	16,120	16,250
Dependent children	25,890	20,450	16,530	16,650	16,770