



**MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD**

**OLDER SEAFARERS' & FAMILIES**

**WORKING GROUP REPORT**

**MAY 2017**

## CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	3
<b>2. MEMBERSHIP</b>	4
<b>3. UPDATE OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SS07</b>	5
<b>4. MISCELLANEOUS</b>	9
<b>4.1. MCG Demographic Report January 2015</b>	9
<b>4.2. Numbers of Seafarers</b>	
a) MN Seafarer Statistics - DfT 2014	9
b) Merchant Navy Officers	10
c) Merchant Navy Ratings	10
d) Fishermen	11
e) Professional Yacht Sector	11
f) Black & Ethnic Minorities (BEM)	12
<b>4.3. Average Length of MN Service &amp; Future Trends</b>	12
<b>4.4. Qualifying Length of Service</b>	13
<b>4.5. Definition of Qualifying Service</b>	14
a) Definition of a Merchant Seafarer	14
b) Service on non-British Vessels	14
c) Other Qualifying Service	14
d) Exceptional Periods of Absence	15
e) Service in Wartime	15
<b>4.6. Exceptions to Full Qualifying Sea Service</b>	
a) Curtailment of Service due to Accident, Disability or Similar Cause	17
b) Curtailment of Service due to Family Illness	17
<b>4.7. Applications from Overseas</b>	17
<b>4.8. Proof of Seagoing Service</b>	17
a) Merchant Seafarers	17
b) Fishermen	18
c) Conclusion	18
<b>4.9. STATISTICS AND FUTURE TRENDS</b>	
a) MCG Demographic Report	19
b) MNWB Register of Grant Recipients	19
c) Life Expectancy	19
d) Government Reform of Welfare System	20

<b>4.10. OTHER CRITERIA</b>	
a) Definition of Need	20
b) Regular Grants – For & Against	20
c) Need v. Support	21
d) Age	21
e) Families, Children and Educational Needs	22
<b>4.11. DEPENDANTS, THE DEFINITION OF</b>	
a) Common Law Spouses and Partnerships	22
b) Separated Spouses	23
c) Divorced Spouses	23
d) Children and Other Dependents	23
<b>5. CONCLUSION</b>	23

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Merchant Navy Welfare Board introduced working groups in 1994. They had considerable input into the Maritime Charities Funding Group's Supporting Seafarers & their Families report of 2007 (SS07) and for a time met under that umbrella alongside colleagues from the Royal Naval (RN) charities. The report and subsequent reviews highlighted some very real differences in the approaches to welfare. The RN sector quite understandably sees both their serving and retired personnel as having more in common with those from the other two armed services. By mutual agreement the working groups have reverted back to MNWB, but all sectors remain in close contact through the Maritime Charities Group (MCG).

This working group was established as an amalgam of the three original groups that looked at grants to older ex-seafarers, support to families and accommodation providers. The members took the view that there are lots of common areas. In addition, there are very strict regulations governing the provision of all categories of homes, all of which are compliant and it is not the role of a working group to comment on this aspect.

This Group will continue to meet, normally twice yearly, to review issues of common interest. It will also publish biennial reports. These will be shared with the appropriate maritime funding charities where it is intended that they can be used to assist in prioritising their strategy.

**David Parsons, Chairman**

## 2. MEMBERSHIP

The members of the Working Group at the time of this report are:

MNWB ( <i>Chairman</i> )	Capt D Parsons
Care Ashore	T Goacher
Fishermen's Mission	Cdre D Dickens
Grimsby Sailor's & Fishing Charity	D Watt
IMarEst Guild of Benevolence	A Muncer
Marine Society & Sea Cadets	Capt C Woodward
Maritime Charities Group (MCG)	Mrs V Coleman
Merchant Navy Association	Captain John Sail
Nautilus Welfare Fund	M Howarth
Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest (QVSR)	A Campbell
Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society	Cdr B Boxall-Hunt
Sailors Children's Society	Mrs D Thomas
Seafarers' Advice & Information Line (SAIL)	M Cowley
Seafarers Hospital Society	P Coulson
Seafarers' Link / The Watch Ashore	Mrs C Rankin
Shipwrecked Mariners' Society	Cdre Malcolm Williams
Sir Gabriel Woods Mariners Home	S Bradley
SSAFA	R Hardman

The MNWB wishes to record its thanks to all the members who contribute to this Working Group.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SUPPORTING SEAFARERS & THEIR FAMILIES REPORT - 2007

#### 3.1 UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SS07

##### **Supporting Seafarers Report 2007 Recommendations – progress report**

The conference identified the following priorities for further work (*an update is included*):

1) Publicity about charities for seafarers: support to improve the information about charities that reaches seafarers and their families. *Improved and ongoing – considerable efforts have been made by the establishment of “Seafarer Support”. This programme, which is managed by MNWB and funded by MCG members, has an interactive website, is widely advertised in the maritime press and staff attend a number of relevant exhibitions.*

2) A directory of maritime charities: development and support for a comprehensive directory that is accessible on line as well as on paper. *Completed and updated. The Seafarer Support website, maintained by MNWB, contains an online guide to the maritime charities which is regularly updated and can be downloaded for a printed version. In addition the guide has been published in a directory format in early 2016 and distributed to all maritime charities. Updates will be forwarded on a 6 monthly basis.*

3) Updates and alerts for staff, trustees and volunteers: about national policies that impact on the lives of the seafaring community. *Many charities receive information from umbrella organisations such as the Charity Commission, NCVO, ACO etc. MNWB endeavours to forward ACO circulars. The Board is willing to look at circulating more information if wanted by members.*

4) Information about seafaring: collecting information that continues to present a UK picture of numbers, needs and service gaps. This area of further work would include targeted research. *MCFG (now MCG) commissioned a demographic review which was published in early 2015. Projections extended to 2050 on the basis that there are no major changes in expected employment patterns within any of the maritime sectors. The Working Groups will monitor future needs and gaps in provision and make recommendations.*

*At the time of this report MCG has also commissioned lifestyle surveys of Families & Dependents and Older Seafarers to better understand their needs and aspirations.*

5) Information about the health of seafarers (and former seafarers). *Improved and regularly reviewed by Seafarers Hospital Society. Considerable research is taking place to better understand industry related health issues.*

6) Information about the needs of minority ethnic seafarers (and former seafarers) living in the UK. *MCG recognises that there are a small number of ethnic minority seafarers’ resident in the UK. There are small communities of ex-Somali seafarers and their dependents known to reside in Cardiff, London (Tower Hamlets), Liverpool and Tyneside. There are also known to be communities of Chinese and Indian ex-seafarers in Liverpool and there are certainly others from ethnic minorities elsewhere in UK. A number of individuals and families are supported by maritime charities, financially and/or in accommodation, without discrimination. There is recognition that staff and volunteers working with such communities need to understand the cultural differences or be aware of the roles of other agencies who can assist.*

7) Improved information to non-maritime (mainstream) organisations: about seafaring and its impact on people’s lives. *Since it was established Seafarer Support has been widely publicised. More recently MNWB staff involved with the service have begun to attend non-maritime events to promote the service and improve awareness of the seafaring charities.*

8) Casework: support to develop effective caseworking systems and share expertise across charities. *Improved and ongoing. Nautilus Welfare Fund and Shipwrecked Mariners’ Society have worked in partnership to develop support workers for older people. Sailors Children’s Society utilise Family Support Officers in Portsmouth and Plymouth.*

*SS07 report, both on older seafarers and seafarers’ families placed considerable emphasis on the need for more ‘holistic’ approaches to caseworking. The recommendation emphasised that whilst financial support*

was needed, in most cases, many people also needed other forms of support. Examples were given of cases of bereavement where the remaining partner, or family, were struggling to cope with life changing issues which could be made easier with 'hands on support'. Examples were given of: families trying to cope with the emotional side of the loss of a parent, or child; a bereaved partner with little previous financial involvement in managing the family finances.

The view was taken, at that time that more effort could be made to access expertise to provide such support. These could be either employed (probably on a part-time basis) or utilise outside charities and other organisations. The hope was that this could become more widespread. It was also felt that providing such services could mitigate some of the financial support.

9) Assessment systems: shared development of appropriate systems to undertake and record assessments of applicants' needs. *Improved and ongoing.*

10) Grant making and decisions: shared systems, information and decisions across the sector. *Improved and ongoing. Since 2007 the MNWB has redeveloped its Almreg database. The database is now able to provide statistical and demographic information under virtually all the headings.*

11) Support groups: practical help to set up systems that offer seafarers and their families opportunities to support each other. *Improved using: 'Seafarers Link', this programme has enabled numbers of isolated retired seafarers to be placed in contact via conference call. This has led to some lasting friendships. Sailors Children's Society have also put in place a 'family forum scheme'.*

12) Eligibility criteria: review and refinement in the light of this and further research that defines length of careers at sea and evidence of hierarchies of need. *The MCG demographic research has provided some good signposting for future requirements. Importantly it has demonstrated that the likely demand will not peak until around 2020, but thereafter begin to decline increasingly rapidly. Unfortunately, there are very few reliable statistics that give much of an insight into the amount of time those in the MN or fishing industry spend at sea. In addition, little consideration has been given to addressing personnel who have left the sea but work in the associated industries ashore. This report recommends that, at least in most cases, this time ashore should be part of the accumulative time.*

13) Accreditation for charities: shared standards for various services and systems for review. *Some charities need to be properly accredited such as those providing accommodation. For others this is a voluntary issue. The charity standard is PQASSO but only Seafarers UK are known to have obtained accreditation. For some, such as SfUK, it is invaluable in demonstrating to corporate and statutory funders that the charity meets a required standard. For others, whilst it is desirable, it is also extremely time consuming, consequently costly and probably therefore difficult to justify (MNWB has placed this on hold for these reasons).*

14) For charities working with young people in maritime youth groups: targeted information resources to support training, ship visits and career development. *Improved and ongoing via Sea Vision.*

**Areas where charities suggested further work to support them is needed, and that are not described elsewhere in this report or the research, are set out below:**

15) Ask referring agencies to provide information in a consistent way about the issues facing potential beneficiaries. *Improved and ongoing.*

16) Information sharing among maritime charities about what each does and what other, general, charities do. *Improved and ongoing. Seafarer Support's online guide to the maritime charities. There is almost certainly much better understanding among the maritime charities of one another's roles. This enables closer collaboration. There is almost certainly more work needed to access information about and support from the wider charity network. The Working Group recommended that the Board should try and assist organisations to engage with local welfare providers.*

*The Working Group recommended that Seafarer Support provides an App to enhance the [www.seafarerssupport.org](http://www.seafarerssupport.org) website and improve the ability of caseworkers (or any individual) to directly contact appropriate UK maritime charities. A Seafarer Support App could be used by MN/FF caseworkers and be particularly useful to the many SSAFA caseworkers who may not have any MN/FF experience.*

- 17) Volunteer training to common standards. *MNWB has agreed to review opportunities to support its members to establish better, hopefully common, standards of volunteer recruitment, training and support.*
- 18) Support for improved volunteer and trustee recruitment. *As above.*
- 19) Help for charities to access sources of public funding (EU, government). *This is an area that still needs to be considered for development. MNWB will review this again with its members. The Board is considering taking on this latter piece of work as a long-term project.*
- 20) Disseminate the report to relevant government departments. *Completed.*
- 21) Share the research findings about, and support action to address, the needs of non UK seafarers visiting UK ports and the international context of seafaring. *Completed.*
- 22) Seminars to monitor progress against the research findings and recommendations. *Ongoing.*
- 23) Guidelines for shared standards in similar services. *Ongoing.*
- 24) Develop links between caseworkers and SAIL. *Ongoing.*
- 25) Action to reduce the regulatory bureaucracy for charities, especially for those working in more than one nation of the UK. *This is for umbrella organisations such as NCVO.*
- 26) Support for mutual recognition of seafaring qualifications and training across the different industry sectors. *This is the remit of industry representative organisations and trade unions.*

**Charities' experiences informed discussion of how different areas of work could best be developed. Discussion suggested ways in which most effect may be achieved, as follows:**

- 27) Publicity about charities should be clear and targeted to media used by seafarers and their families. ISAN (now ISWAN) and SAIL should be extended to reach more people. Information should also be accessible from websites, general and maritime organisations. Coordination and collaboration to produce good publicity will be important and the value of sector specific leads or umbrella organisations should be considered as one way of achieving this. Care should be taken in using the term 'charity' in order to make clear the 'support' available to seafarers and their families. *Ongoing. Much has been done.*

*ISAN merged with ICSW to become ISWAN and the referral line is becoming increasingly well used. There is potential for promoting this service more widely in the UK, especially through centres.*

*SAIL is also increasingly well-known and almost all maritime charities will refer appropriate cases to SAIL. At the same time SAIL provides easy to understand information on changes to legislation and statutory benefits. The service has now been made available to persons with a Royal Navy and Royal Marine background.*

- 28) A coordinated directory of all maritime charities is an important resource for maritime and other organisations. This will be of most value if available in paper and electronic formats, with interactive search facilities that support search by name, need and geographical area, and linked to individual charity websites. The responsibility for updating should be shared with charities listed. *Seafarer Support, through MNWB publishes an on line guide to maritime charities. Following a number of requests it has circulated printed editions in early 2016 which will be updated twice per year.*

- 29) Information updates and alerts for trustees and staff are needed. They should be carefully targeted and balance selection and 'a need to know'. Electronic formats are increasingly valued. A system should be flexible and respond to charities' needs and interests. *Charities took the view that they received enough information.*

- 30) Improved information is needed to increase awareness of needs in the seafaring community among non-maritime organisations. This requires coordination and carefully targeted work that can reach leaders and advocates for seafarers. Electronic formats are increasingly needed. *See 16 above.*



**31)** Support to develop effective caseworking requires collaboration to create a flexible system that can respond to particular charity interests while supporting confidentiality and shared action in response to applicants' needs. Caseworkers will need to be better trained, and have specialised skills relevant to work with children, older people or vulnerable adults. If possible their skills should be accredited. *See 8 above.*

**32)** Information that can build on the research and regularly update demographic profiles and understanding of needs in the community is important. Opportunities to use existing research and data collection (in public and voluntary services, maritime and other charities) should be maximised and information collected made accessible on a website. *See 4 above.*

## **3.2 CONCLUSION**

Depending upon the response of the members the Board is willing to consider appointing a person with a good understanding of the overall charity sector. This would, hopefully, provide an opportunity to provide better links to a range of services and support.

The Board would like to thank the members of the Working Group for all their work and effort and all other individuals and organisations who have contributed.

## **4. MISCELLANEOUS**

### **4.1 MCG DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT JANUARY 2015**

In February 2015 the Maritime Charities Funding Group (MCFG) – now the Maritime Charities Group (MCG) commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University to undertake a review of UK demographic profiles of Royal Navy, Merchant Navy and fishing fleet personnel and their dependants from 1945 to 2015 and provide projections to around 2050. The start date was chosen to cover the huge decline in naval personnel following the end of World War II and the anticipated decline in the number of veterans from that era in the coming years. This report, however, covers the Merchant Navy (MN) and Fishing Fleets (FF) where the declines started in the 1960s and accelerated through to the 80's.

Where possible, information on age, gender, ethnicity, disability and health was included. The aim was to obtain a clear picture of how the demographic profile is changing; and to use the available data to develop a credible and accessible dataset, which can be used to inform service planning, decisions about the use of resources, and other activities by a wide range of stakeholders, including grant makers and service providers. It is however important to emphasise that the projections are dependent on the assumptions used in the model. The further into the future they go, the more speculative they become.

The project follows and builds on a previous study by the University of Hertfordshire in 2007 commissioned by the MCFG, which provided projections up to 2020.

The report has been widely studied and welcomed as the most definitive demographic study of seafarers to date. Importantly for the Merchant Navy and fishermen it has, to a large extent, overturned the previously held belief that there would be a large fall in eligible numbers of retired seafarers around this time. Whereas this is true for the fishing industry, the Merchant Navy decline is expected to begin around 2023 when numbers will begin to fall quite sharply. In fact the report is wider than just statistics and projections as it usefully contains information on those with long term illness, dementia and alcohol problems.

The majority of recipients of charitable grants both in the past and at present are either MN ratings or deep-sea fishermen and/or the dependants of both. One reason for this is almost certainly because to many having no occupational pension provision. Notwithstanding applications come from across a range of all ranks and ratings.

This report has been widely distributed and can be downloaded from our website at: <http://www.mnwb.org/Publications>.

### **4.2 NUMBERS OF SEAFARERS**

The statistics and projections are well covered in the above demographic report which should be used in conjunction with this report.

#### **a) MN Seafarer Statistics – Department for Transport (DfT) 2014**

The DfT published the following statistics for the MN in 2014. There were:

- 10,910 certificated UK officers active at sea, 1% more than in 2013.

- 1,650 uncertificated UK officers active at sea, 16% more than in 2013.
- 8,420 UK ratings, a fall of 2% from 2013.
- 1,940 officer cadets in training, the second highest level for over a decade.

There was a <1% increase (22,830 in 2013) in the **total number of UK seafarers** active at sea between 2013 and 2014. This occurred principally due to a slight increase in the number of certificated officers by 60 and an increase in the number of uncertificated officers by 230. This was the first annual increase in the total number of UK seafarers, since 2010. Importantly it ‘bucks’ the projections in the demographic report which were based on information at the time. **More information can be found on:**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408026/seafarer-statistics-2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408026/seafarer-statistics-2014.pdf)

#### b) Merchant Navy Officers

The numbers of officers’ currently receiving, or requesting, assistance from the grant making charities continues to be comparatively small. This can be accounted for by the structure of the industry wherein, particularly in the past, the majority of officers were required, or at least encouraged, to join pension schemes. They also had (and some still have) better employment security and an opportunity to better prepare for the future.

The Working Group recognises that a large percentage of officers are now employed on foreign-flag vessels (often through manning agencies) and the situation is changing. It is believed that a number of officers, particularly those with no dependants, may have made little, or perhaps no, pension provision and/or have let their National Insurance payments lapse. This position is almost certainly exacerbated by poor job security where many officers are now employed on a voyage only basis with little, or no, ongoing job security. Furthermore, modern demands on income, like in almost every employment, mean that saving for a pension is seen as a low priority.

The members noted that, as a result of the above concerns, the applications for assistance from former officers and their dependants might increase. As recruitment has been low for a number of years, the current age of most officers is now over 45 and increasing numbers will retire over the next few years.

#### c) Merchant Navy Ratings

The number of ratings within the British merchant shipping industry currently is very much less than those employed in the 1970s. Among the more experienced and skilled ‘professional’ ratings, many now have company service contracts, which include pension provisions etc. These are found on RFA’s, specialist vessels and some ferries.

The number employed on foreign flagged vessels (non-UK owned) in traditional departments is very small. Nonetheless, under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, all those employed in any capacity are now defined as seafarers and this includes a considerable, but unknown, number of UK nationals, such as entertainers, shop staff, hairdressers etc. Almost all are on short term contracts with little security and may have no pension provision in place and in some cases, not paid their NI contributions.

**Recommendation:** *Several maritime charities recognise that non-traditional seafaring roles are now eligible for assistance. Those that do not are encouraged to do so.*

#### d) Fishermen

The fishing industry has seen a huge decline in employment due to foreign competition, fishing quotas and improved technology over the years. This continued between 2012 and 2014 when the numbers continued to decline as below:

**Fishing Statistics 1995 -2014 (UK fishermen)** (Source BBC News)

	Nos. F'men	Fishing v/ls
1995	20,000	
1996	19,810	
1997	19,429	
1998	19,048	
1999	18,667	
2000	18,268	
2001	17,905	
2002	17,524	
2003	17,143	
2004	16,762	7,002

	Nos. F'men	Fishing v/ls
2005	16,000	
2006	15,619	
2007	15,238	
2008	14,857	6,850
2009	14,476	6,801
2010	14,095	6,758
2011	13,714	6,702
2012	13,333	6,653
2013	12,952	6,457
2014	12,571	6,380

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
2012	10,280	2,160	12,450*
2014	9,772	2,073	11,845*

**\*Note:** These statistics are believed to include overseas nationals. The industry is increasingly supplementing its traditional work force with foreign seafarers from Eastern Europe, the Far East and West Africa, with some boats having only a UK skipper and perhaps mate.

There are also understood to be a number of experienced British skippers taking up work in overseas fishing vessels although numbers are unknown.

The Working Group considered that the numbers of fishermen and their dependants seeking help would begin to decline within the next few years. Any savings may, to some extent, be counterbalanced by the need for higher levels of support.

Many fishermen are also reaching retirement without adequate pensions and there could be an increase in charitable applications from the industry in the future. At the same time many of the traditional fishing ports are deprived areas with limited alternative work and there are increasing requests to help younger families.

#### e) Professional Yacht Sector

This is a relatively new sector within the Maritime industry. There are increasing number of large, or luxury, yachts which are operated either exclusively on behalf of their owner, or for charter purposes. In many cases particularly among the junior ranks the crews are itinerant and on very loose contracts with little job security, but many of these are UK and Commonwealth nationals. Among the more senior officers and Masters many will come from a Royal or Merchant Navy background. All should be regarded as professionally employed seafarers and therefore recognised as such by the maritime charity sector.

No meaningful statistics covering the numbers employed in this industry, or their nationalities, have been found. Both MNWB and Seafarers UK have made contact with the industry associations. Additionally Nautilus International has begun to recruit new members from the sector.

It must be likely, that in the future, some will begin to look for help from the maritime charities although it is impossible to predict the likely level of demand. Many will have no pension provision from this employment and some will probably not have paid their NI contributions.

**Recommendation:** *Several maritime charities recognise all professional yacht crew members as bona fide seafarers eligible for assistance. Those that do not are encouraged to do so.*

#### f) **Black & Ethnic Minorities (BEM)**

The SS07 recommended that more should be done to look at whether enough research had been undertaken to identify the BEM seafarers, both in terms of communities and whether their needs were being addressed.

The only known such MN communities in the UK are those of Somali origin. Somalia was one of a number of sources of ratings on British merchant vessels until the late 1970's and early 80's. Many of these elected to remain in the UK after they were unemployed. There remain a number of these ex-seafarers in East London, Cardiff, Liverpool and Tyneside. The latter two are believed to be comparatively small in numbers. The two larger groups receive support from Queen Victoria's Seamen's Rest (QVSR) in East London and Red Sea House in Cardiff. The most significant need is that of language and cultural understanding and both organisations have staff with those skills. Many receive regular and one-off grants from the maritime charities and some live in QVSR and Red Sea House. Almost all of these men are now over retirement age, although their dependents maybe younger.

Whilst there were numerous other BEM seafarers employed until the 1980's almost all of these are believed to have returned to their homelands after they left the British MN.

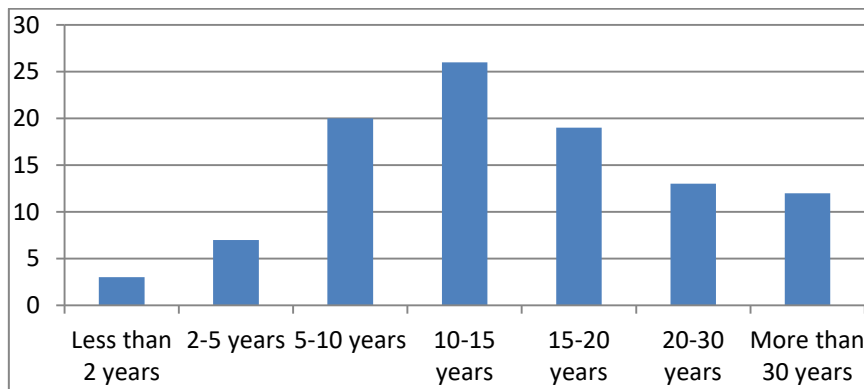
**Recommendation:** *When encountering ex-Somali seafarers contact QVSR, or Red Sea House, for advice and, if needed, interpreters. When encountering other BEM ex- seafarers look for appropriate local cultural support groups.*

*When encountering any BEM clients aim to ensure equality of in-service delivery without discrimination.*

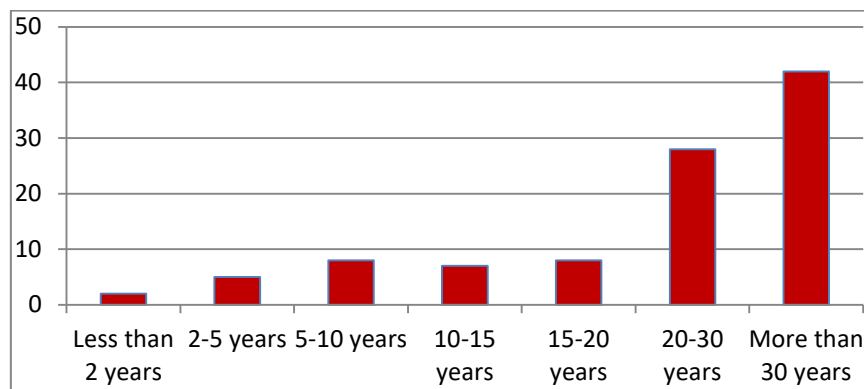
### 4.3 **AVERAGE LENGTH OF MN SERVICE & FUTURE TRENDS**

There are no official statistics covering length of service in the FF. The Board has, however, obtained two sets of statistics published in, or around 2004 for merchant seafarers. The first was published by the EU, but the UK is probably a microcosm of this, whilst the second was published by NUMAST (now Nautilus International) covering their members. The large difference can probably be explained as many officers tend to make the sea a career.

#### European Union Report c. 2004 – Mercantile Officer & Rating



#### NUMAST Members Report c. 2004 – MN Officers



#### 4.4 QUALIFYING LENGTH OF SERVICE

The minimum length of service needed by most maritime charities has remained unchanged for many years. This varies from one day to 20 years. The 2015 MCG Demographic Report provides an opportunity for charities to review their criteria.

The issue of length of service is a regularly debated topic. For example, SSAFA have one day's service for all ex-Services personnel, but quite properly their role is to seek grant and other support elsewhere (rather than their own funds), by almonising. Furthermore, particularly in the past, personnel were expected to commit to the armed services for a minimum of two years (National Service) and usually longer. The MN and FF are generic civilian employers and the only commitment is to a ship for the length of a voyage, or in the cases of contracted personnel, the length of the contract.

Charities considering very short length of service criteria, excluding special exemptions (see below), need to take into account that the person upon whom the eligibility is based will almost certainly have one or more other occupations, which will almost certainly also have their own benevolent funds. It is important to remember that those who donate to maritime

charities invariably expect that their money will be used to support seafarers and their dependants who have made a reasonable commitment to the industry.

Many seafarers leave the sea for shore related industries. Subject to the person upon whom the support is based having a reasonable length of service at sea, this report **recommends that all such** service ashore should be included when calculating eligibility. (It is important to take into account that this “accumulative service” would be the view of any shore based occupational benevolent fund.)

***Recommendation:** Following time at sea, all service in a maritime related industry ashore, should be included when calculating eligibility.*

Notwithstanding any of the comments above, any person who has served at sea, or their dependents, should not be refused at least assistance in signposting them to sources of help. This might include welfare benefits and assistance from non-maritime charities. Seafarer Support will assist in such cases.

***Recommendation:** That maritime charities ensure that all ex-seafarers, even with minimal service, or their dependents are signposted to appropriate sources of help, if necessary by Seafarer Support.*

#### **4.5 DEFINITION OF QUALIFYING SERVICE**

The Working Group made the following recommendations when calculating service at sea.

##### **a) Definition of a Merchant Seafarer**

Under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, all those employed in any capacity on a merchant vessel are now defined as seafarers and this includes a considerable, but unknown, number of UK nationals, such as entertainers, shop staff, hairdressers etc. Almost all are on short term contracts with little security. It also includes all workers including, for example, maintenance staff on offshore wind farm support vessels and all workers e.g. tool pushers, roustabouts, drillers aboard mobile drilling ships.

***Recommendation:** Maritime charities take into consideration that non-traditional seafaring roles may now be eligible for assistance, depending on the charities own criteria.*

##### **b) Service on non-British Vessels**

It is important for charities to note that the majority of UK seafarers now serve on foreign flag vessels and it is recommended that any such service should be counted in full. It is the responsibility of applicants to produce evidence.

##### **c) Other Qualifying Service**

The following should be considered as part of the qualifying service in addition to actual sea service:

- Time worked in port (normally UK) whilst the vessel was off articles
- Voyage leave periods – up to a period of several months
- Sick leave
- Study leave – employment related
- Time spent looking for new ship

- Compassionate leave
- Exceptional periods of absence as laid out below

*Note: The periods above are not recorded in Discharge Books issued prior to 1972.*

- Time spent ashore in the industry after service at sea.

#### **d) Exceptional Periods of Absence**

It is recommended that the following absences from the maritime industry should not be considered as detrimental when calculating service at sea qualifying periods.

- All periods of six months or less
- Irregular periods of up to twelve months

*Note: The length of periods of absence from the Merchant Navy or fishing industries has often increased in recent years due to the shortage of jobs.*

The Group agreed that local knowledge, in the absence of records, particularly among fishermen, would often help to build up an accurate picture in individual cases.

In cases where it was decided that a full grant was not appropriate, consideration might be given to providing a reduced amount dependent upon the seafarers' length of service.

**Recommendation:** That "reasonable" periods of absence are accepted and taken into account.

#### **e) Service in Wartime**

The members considered that service in wartime (widely defined) was often very stressful and traumatic. They noted that most charities currently now make special recognition of this service.

The Working Group recommended that, on humanitarian grounds, all wartime service - whether or not the hostility involved the UK directly (e.g. Vietnam, Iran/Iraq War) - should be counted as double i.e. 2 days for one served. The extent of war-like zones is documented with the Chamber of Shipping and the maritime trade unions.

The Veterans Minister finally agreed at the end of 2015 that Merchant Navy veterans should be properly defined and recognised under the terms of the Armed Forces Covenant. The formal definition is 'all those who have served on a civilian vessel whilst it was supporting HM Armed Forces' and encompasses all merchant seafarers from WWII, those who have taken part in campaigns such as Suez, the Falklands and Iraq, and those who have served at any time in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

There are now two possible sources of external funding. The first is the new 'Aged Veterans Fund (AVF)' introduced in 2015 by the Government, and the second is the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT). AVF has c£18m to distribute and is specifically designed to assist those veterans born before 1 January 1950 – those now aged 66+ - with non-core health, wellbeing and social care needs. The majority of MN Veterans will fall into this age category and, in any case, the work programme will subsequently be able to assist those younger by using existing charitable funds. There are some particular conditions attached to any AVF



application, the main ones being that it has to be a 'portfolio' application; in other words, submitted by a lead organisation but with other supporting entities, and secondly that it has to be made up of a linked group of projects. For many, these would be quite daunting conditions to meet, but in this case the MN Veteran community is well-placed to take advantage of them.

Seafarers UK is establishing a coalition to design an application that will meet the necessary conditions. The first action will be to draft an initial 'expression of interest' to see whether the national assessment team will consider a full application in due course. This expression of interest will be submitted by 1 July 2016 and initial work will be drafted by the MCG Project Manager but working in this case for Seafarers UK.

***Recommendation:***

- 1. That maritime charities, who have not done so, make special recognition of MN & FF veterans.*
- 2. Assist and support Seafarers UK when requested to enable access to funding under the terms of the Armed Forces Covenant*

#### 4.6 EXCEPTIONS TO FULL QUALIFYING SEA SERVICE

The Working Group agreed to recommend that the following exceptions to the requirements for service at sea should be considered:

##### a) Curtailment of Service due to Accident, Disability or Similar Cause

The Group considered that these were all valid reasons to leave either industry with insufficient service. All UK merchant seafarers are required to pass regular medicals for which they receive an ENG 1 Certificate. If they are found temporarily unfit, they receive an ENG 2 or permanently unfit, an ENG 3. Seafaring requires a reasonable level of health and those found unfit may well be able to find another occupation ashore. If a client has been found unfit to work at sea charities should examine their work history (if appropriate) after leaving.

##### b) Curtailment of Service due to Family Illness

The members took into account that service at sea usually necessitates prolonged absences from home. In situations of serious family illness, where long-term care of partner and/or children is needed, this should be considered as a valid reason either to leave, or have a break from, the industry.

The Working Group recommended that each case should be carefully examined upon its merits.

**Recommendation:** *That maritime charities, who have not done so, take special account of reasons to curtail service at sea.*

#### 4.7 APPLICATIONS FROM OVERSEAS

Consideration was given to providing financial assistance to ex-British seafarers and their dependants living overseas. The Working Group agreed that this could be a problem for many charities due to the difficulties of case working and distributing grants abroad. Exceptions can be made for expatriates living in EC countries such as France or Spain.

Any charity wishing to process applications from overseas could approach the British & Commonwealth ex Services League. This organisation works in many Commonwealth countries utilising dedicated caseworkers, embassies or consulates. Additionally, SSAFA also has caseworkers notably in Cyprus, Hong Kong, Germany, Malta and Spain.

#### 4.8 PROOF OF SEAGOING SERVICE

##### a) Merchant Seafarers

The Working Group considered that evidence of seagoing service was becoming an increasingly more difficult issue.

All seafarers serving aboard British registered merchant vessels or yachts (paid crew members) are required to hold a Discharge Book. Some other ships under the Red Ensign Group (comprised of the UK, Crown Dependencies and UK Overseas Territories) also

require a UK Discharge Book. This records dates of voyages, leave, training, sick leave and other periods.

Prior to the 1972 Merchant Shipping Act all records contained in Discharge Books were duplicated by the Registrar of Shipping and Seafarers (or at that time “Seamen!”). Those records from 1940 are held by the Public Record Office and in the absence of a Discharge Book, MNWB uses a registered researcher to produce evidence of service. Post 1972, whilst the Discharge Books were amended to cover more information such as periods of leave, sickness, study etc. no duplicate entries were taken and thus service, without these, is almost impossible to prove. If a client, upon whom the sea service is based, was a trade union or pensions fund member they (the client) can ask the appropriate organisation for a letter certifying that they were a seagoing member for a specific period. Whilst this is not necessarily definitive proof, it would be a good indicator. Also Certificates of Competency can only be awarded after a seafarer has served a minimum amount of time and therefore these can provide some evidence of service.

Particularly since the 1980s increasing numbers of UK seafarers, primarily but not exclusively officers, have served on foreign flag vessels and these all have different systems. Some will have their own version of a discharge book whilst, for others, it may simply be payslips. Unfortunately, this is becoming increasingly common and it is many of these seafarers who will be seeking help from the charity sector in the future.

#### **b) Fishermen**

The records of fishermen are even more fragmented and much less formal. Some fishing ports maintained meticulous records, whilst others had virtually nothing in place. Proof of service can often be via a Fishermen’s Mission Superintendent speaking to the local fishing community ‘elders’.

More information about MN and fishing records is provided in an MNWB handbook available to caseworker.

#### **c) Conclusion**

In conclusion the Working Group agreed that it would become increasingly difficult for the charities to prove service within the merchant shipping and fishing industries in the absence of written evidence and that there was no simple solution to the problem.

**It is important to remember that the onus to prove eligibility for support always rests with the applicant.**

## 4.9 STATISTICS AND FUTURE TRENDS

### a) Maritime Charities Group (MCG) Demographic Report 2015 – See 2.2.

### b) Merchant Navy Welfare Board Register of Grant Recipients

The Merchant Navy Welfare Board holds a ‘Register of Grant Recipients’. The original purpose of this register was to identify incidents of duplication and this still holds good today. At the time of this report duplication has now been minimised but, where this exists, it is always for good reasons and thus acceptable to both charities involved.

Importantly this database was extensively rebuilt in 2012 enabling it to provide much clearer statistics in defined categories e.g. backgrounds, age groups, areas (via postcodes), type of grants, reasons for grant. It also provides trends and these are included below.

#### MNWB Grant Statistics Summary Report

Year	Person	Number of Applications Received	Rejected Applications	Withdrawn Applications	Terminated Regular Grants	Singular One-Off Grants	Multiple One-Off Grants	Total One-Off Grants	Regular Grants		Regular Grants that have been duplicated	
									Awarded	Active	Awarded	Active
<b>2016</b>	Total No of Grants	1104	155	19	273	399	231	630	120	2977	8	102
<b>2015</b>	Total No of Grants	1166	184	28	286	446	217	663	174	3135	3	104
	Total No of Beneficiaries	852	170	26	284	446	97	543	174	3081	3	52
<b>2014</b>	Total No of Grants	1285	232	36	290	458	162	620	216	3251	2	118
	Total No of Beneficiaries	950	211	29	289	458	75	533	216	3190	2	59
<b>2013</b>	Total No of Grants	1395	257	35	307	451	224	675	205	3342	10	167
	Total No of Beneficiaries	984	229	30	301	451	100	551	202	3253	7	83
<b>2012</b>	Total No of Grants	982	97	20	48	342	209	551	224	3185	6	175
	Total No of Beneficiaries	647	88	19	47	342	93	435	221	3096	5	87
<b>2011</b>	Total No of Grants	1058	112	4	27	350	254	604	223	2990	10	174
	Total No of Beneficiaries	654	98	4	27	350	110	460	221	2900	8	86

It is important to note, from the above, that the numbers of:

- regular grant recipients increased between 2011 and 2013 but has begun to decline slowly since.
- One off grants awarded have fluctuated.
- Applications have increased overall since 2012 – almost certainly reflecting the cutbacks in statutory and LA funding.
- Duplications of regular grants are not significant and all charities involved are believed to have made a conscious decision to agree this.

### c) Life Expectancy

The MCG Demographic Report of 2015 includes details of life expectancy for each sector.

Public Health England also has downloadable documents including 'Recent Trends in Life Expectancy at Older Ages to 2014' available on their website:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/499252/Recent\\_trends\\_in\\_life\\_expectancy\\_at\\_older\\_ages\\_2014\\_update.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/499252/Recent_trends_in_life_expectancy_at_older_ages_2014_update.pdf)

**Merchant Navy:** improvements to the lifestyle of British Merchant Navy seafarers has inevitably led to greater longevity. The reasons for this are serious restrictions on alcohol consumption, certain restrictions on smoking and better health information. This will, however, to some extent be mitigated by higher stress levels and work patterns.

**Fishing:** the fishing industry requires working in very harsh environments with long hours and often a very stressful lifestyle, which will inevitably impact on long-term health.

**Wives and Partners:** in the main wives and partners should be expected to conform to the national patterns.

**d) Government Reform of Welfare System and Effect on Income Levels of Aged and Incapacitated Persons**

The members agreed that this continues to be a complex and fluid issue from which it remains impossible to draw any firm conclusions. It was generally agreed that levels of statutory support are decreasing thus placing a greater burden on individuals and charities.

#### **4.10 OTHER CRITERIA**

**a) Definition of Need**

The Group noted that the definition of need was subjective and a policy matter for individual charities to decide. Financial assessment should include income, expenditure and savings and whether there was entitlement to Welfare Benefits.

Particularly subjective is the value of a property if it is owned by the applicant, or beneficiary. It is very common for people to be asset rich and cash poor. Whilst it may be difficult in principle to justify the need to live in a property larger than is apparently needed, this must be treated with great sensitivity. This is particularly so if the person, or couple, can physically manage in the accommodation. The disruption of moving away from familiar surroundings, family and friends can be seriously damaging to older people's wellbeing.

***Recommendation:** It is recommended that charities should encourage caseworkers to examine an individual's or families' circumstances carefully when assessing need. Applicants should also be asked to explain fully, when appropriate, why they believed there is a need for financial assistance. Account should be taken of other family members, or lodgers, living in the property who are, should be, contributing towards the household income.*

**b) Regular Grants - For & Against**

Nautilus Welfare Fund have discontinued regular Grants to new applicants and withdrawn them from existing beneficiaries if it was felt that they would not be adversely affected following a review. Many of the recipients reviewed were found to no longer need regular grants due to increases in statutory benefits and changed financial circumstances. The

reviews were also used to identify opportunities for one-off grants that would improve the quality of the client's life.

The issue of regular Grants has been a subject of debate over many years. Some take the view that it is better to use funds for one-off grants that can make a real impact on people's lives. Others consider that the current maximum state pension of under £150 per week is totally inadequate unless the pensioner also receives statutory benefits. In reality the regular Grants amount to around an additional 10% on top of the pension and it is difficult to argue that this cannot be justified. Furthermore, many of the older ratings and fishermen have no occupational pension whatsoever so are therefore entirely reliant upon state payments.

#### **c) Need v. Support**

The Supporting Seafarers Report & their Families Report of 2007 placed great emphasis on the need for a more 'holistic' approach to caseworking among both older people and families. The two separate academic research organisations both emphasised that, whilst they recognised that many people were looking for and needed better financial support, via statutory benefits and grants, there was also a need for some practical support. They further emphasised that some of those ostensibly seeking financial support actually needed other forms of help, either as well as, or instead.

In the case of families, examples were given where one parent had died, was seriously ill or left home. In each case the children were often left confused, frightened and potentially damaged whilst, in the meantime, the remaining parent was trying to cope with the emotional stress and running the home. It was pointed out that there are a number of charities able to provide advice and/or counselling and other forms of support and that the Maritime charities could do more in the way of signposting. In the case of older families, examples were given of recently widowed husbands, or wives, who faced loneliness and were struggling to manage the family home and finances. Again it was felt that the Maritime charities could do more to provide signposting.

Once the report had been reviewed the MCFG (now MCG) positively discussed this and felt that there should be opportunities of having access to specialised and highly trained 'caseworkers' who could be 'parachuted in' to provide more in-depth support. Nautilus Welfare Fund has made some positive steps in this direction. These personnel are currently in three locations, with high numbers of retired seafarers and this to be extended to for further areas. The Sailors Children Society provide a number of family support workers again in Portsmouth and Plymouth.

The potential of providing better support to those in need from a maritime background could be considerable. Ideally having access to the right organisations and personnel to assist any client anywhere within the United Kingdom should, in the view of this report, be an important goal. Furthermore, whilst the costs of providing such expertise would be more than those for a traditional caseworker, some of this at least would almost certainly be offset by savings in grant support.

#### **d) Age**

The Group agreed that an age criterion was a matter for individual charities. Circumstances such as ill health, unemployment and family illness should be taken into account. It was also felt that cognisance should be taken of state pensionable age, which has increased slowly for

men and quite considerably for women. Members noted that there might be increased financial difficulties for unemployed older people who were below the state retirement age, thus not in receipt of a state pension, but also considered too old to find other employment. It is recommended that the almonising charities give special consideration to these circumstances.

**e) Families, Children and Educational Needs**

The Group agreed that the needs of families and children varied greatly and recommended that every case should be individually examined on merit. Recipients should include families where the children are the responsibility of legal guardians, commonly grandparents.

There are two charities that will give financial support to children who have lost one or more parent. These are the Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphans Institute (UK wide) and Sailors Orphans Society of Scotland (for families living, or originating, in Scotland). Both recognise that, if the non-seafaring spouse has died, then the seafarer is unlikely to be able to continue at sea. In any event the loss of a parent from a seafaring family is likely to have a major adverse financial impact.

The Sailors' Children's Society will assist the families of all seafarers (MN, RN and fishermen) by way of regular and one-off grants. This may include long term serious illness of a parent, single parents after a family breakup, loss of income due to unemployment etc. Assistance can include an annual week's holiday in one of their mobile homes located in a number of leisure sites around the coast.

The Royal Merchant Navy Education Foundation can assist towards the education of children at all ages, normally up to a first degree. Support is dependent upon proven need and might include top-up fees for nurseries, coaching, equipment (e.g. sports or musical instruments), assistance with school fees (for children already in the private sector, when through a change of circumstances parents are unable to cover the costs) and support towards tertiary education. Apart from young babies every child will be in education, often starting with a nursery. The DWP Benefit Entitlements will cover the costs of nursery care for up to 15 hours per week (for ALL families – irrespective of income, for 38 weeks per year – aggregate term time) to assist parents.

It was also noted that other nautical and non-nautical charities may be able to assist in such circumstances.

**4.11 DEPENDANTS, THE DEFINITION OF**

**a) Common Law Spouses and Partnerships**

The Group recognises that, today, many relationships exist between unmarried couples – in some cases of the same sex, where marriage has recently become legal. Discrimination would almost certainly leave the charity concerned wide open to criticism and possibly even legal action. Charities are asked to consider that there may be greater needs for common law spouses or partners as they are often excluded from the state and private pension entitlements for married persons. Caseworkers should be encouraged to look for evidence of an established partnership.

## b) Separated Spouses

**Recommendation:** *The Working Group recommended that they should normally be treated as if they were still married.*

## c) Divorced Spouses

**Recommendation:** *The Working Group recommended that a divorced spouse should normally be considered eligible for assistance. It noted if the length of the marriage was equivalent to, and coincided with, the qualifying service period they should be regarded as eligible.*

*In cases where this criterion was not met, then consideration should be given to any special circumstances and the possibility of a pro-rata grant being given.*

*Eligibility would normally lapse where a former dependant has remarried or is living in a partnership with another person.*

## d) Children and Other Dependants

**Recommendation:** *The Working Group recommended that:*

*Children or Other Dependants should be defined as the son, daughter, or ward (of a guardian) of the person upon whom eligibility is based who:*

- *is under the age of 20 years.*
- *is over the age of 20 years and in full time education.*
- *has a physical or mental disability regardless of age.*

## 5. CONCLUSION

The report is being made available to all the Board's Constituent Charities, all of whom are cordially invited to join the membership in the future if it is appropriate to their spheres of interest. The Working Group will continue to meet regularly, normally twice per year and produce biennial reports.

In May 2017 consideration was given as to whether the group should be devolved in two separate entities – those providing financial support (grants) to individuals and families and those responsible for seafarers' homes. The members unanimously agreed that there were many areas of common interest and that the composition should remain unchanged.

The Merchant Navy Welfare Board gratefully acknowledges the advice and support of all the members of this important Working Group.

**Captain David A Parsons MNM MNI**  
**Chief Executive**

24<sup>th</sup> May 2017