



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

SEAFARERS HOMES WORKING GROUP

REPORT

Revised December 2005

**MERCHANT
NAVY
WELFARE
BOARD**

**CO-OPERATION BETWEEN NAUTICAL CHARITIES
REPORT OF THE SEAFARERS HOMES WORKING GROUP**

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I. MEMBERSHIP

Chairman Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB)
 British & International Sailors' Society (BISS)
 Broughton House
 Merchant Seamen's War Memorial Society (Springbok)
 NUMAST Welfare Funds
 Queen Victoria's Seamen's Rest (QVSR)
 Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society (RASS)
 Scottish Veterans' Residences (SVR)
 Seamen's Hospital Society (SHS)
 Sir Gabriel Wood's Mariners' Home
 Sunderland Aged Mariners' Home
 Tyne Mariners

The Merchant Navy Welfare Board Council encourages its Constituent Members to be represented on any of the Working Groups appropriate to their objects. Additionally the Reports of all the Working Groups are distributed to all Constituents, inviting any comments on the issues raised.

II. INTRODUCTION

In October 1997 King George's Fund for Sailors, with the support of a number of the maritime charities, organised the Conference of Nautical Charitable Organisations 1997 – CONCO 97. The delegates embodied representatives from all sectors of maritime welfare and included charities caring for merchant seafarers, deep-sea fishermen and the Royal Navy. The Merchant Navy Welfare Board used this initiative to set up Working Groups with the objectives of examining the current and future welfare requirements against the existing provision of services. Each of the Working Groups sets out to provide some positive indicators and guidelines to assist the Nautical Charities in their deliberations for the future.

The forum was originally entitled the Elderly Seafarers' Working Group and published a report in January 2000. Its name was changed to the Seafarers' Homes Working Group in June 2005 to better describe its objects.

III. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Working Group findings were that; -

As there is some scope for rationalisation of services it is recommended that organisations look closely at their role in concert with other nautical and non-nautical charities. Each charity should consider whether their role, under their existing charter, properly meets both the current needs and those in the foreseeable future, particularly taking into account the industry trends.

The Nautical Charities should continue to provide a range of accommodation for those living independently through to residential and nursing care.

All seafarers' homes review the trend in demand for their facility. In the event they perceive that their purpose no longer meets their objects they should review their governing documents. If appropriate they should seek advice from the Charity Commission (or its equivalent) and their appointed solicitors. Trustees not undertaking this should consider they may be in breach of their duties by the Charity Commission.

Trustee boards endeavour to appoint at least one member with experience and qualifications in caring for elderly people.

Societies should take very careful note of their ability to comply with requirements under the Decent Homes Policy and future legislation.

Where appropriate all charities providing accommodation should ensure that they maximise their income by applying a weekly maintenance contribution, equivalent to the level of Housing Benefit. Advice should be sought from the local authority regarding a fair rent/weekly maintenance contribution. Trustees not undertaking this should consider they may be in breach of their duties by the Charity Commission.

Trustees and managers should familiarise themselves with the Government's Supporting People programme and ensure that this funding is used to maximise the services to beneficiaries.

Charities utilise the MNWB funded consultancy services to ensure that they are maximising their available financial support.

MNWB to consider assisting in the appointment of a 'Care Support Officer' for the residents of those seafarers' homes in the Northeast coastal (areas where there is a high concentration).

Residents and beneficiaries should be encouraged to organise and/or participate in social events and within their local community.

Proper access should be available to technical, financial and legal advice and counselling services should be made available when necessary. Residents should be given the telephone numbers of the local Citizens Advice Bureau, Seafarers Benefits Advice Line and local counselling services. It also recommends that each resident's room be supplied with a handbook of useful contacts.

MNWB to review, with appropriate Constituents, whether there are opportunities to provide respite care via national agencies.

IV. MAJOR CHANGES

This updated report sets out to recognise **the considerable changes** that are, or have, taken place within care homes, hostels and, to a lesser extent sheltered housing and almshouses over recent years and the consequences for the future. **The Working Group considers that many of these will have a major impact on the future of seafarers' homes. These include: -**

- the impact of rapidly declining numbers of seafarers over the past forty years which affects the numbers of eligible potential residents (or beneficiaries).
- the improved lifestyle of seafarers, including better pension provision for the ratings, improved health (to meet medical standards) and less personnel leaving the industry with no family connections.
- the Government care and support programmes which encourage people to remain in their own homes for much longer with local authority support.
- legislation, under the Decent Homes Standards, requiring minimum standards in homes to be enacted between 2005 and 2010. (see Section V)
- all local authorities and statutory funders are implementing quality assurance tests and funding will be conditional upon the success of these.
- the strategic relevance, to local authorities, of a seafarers' homes in an area where there is no longer a significant seafaring community.

V. DECENT HOMES POLICY & PROPOSED LEGISLATION

In 2000, the government made a commitment to bring all public sector homes up to a decent standard, establishing a 10 year target and an interim target to:

"ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency by 2010, by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by a third between 2001 and 2004, with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas".

All social housing providers should meet the Decent Homes Standards. They apply to sheltered housing including non self contained or supported housing. Further details of this can be accessed from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website on <http://www.odpm.gov.uk> under 'Housing'.

The members of the Group emphasise that nothing contained in this report is intended to try and force change on any of the Nautical Charities. It is hoped, however, that all appropriate organisations will use the findings when considering their future strategy and that copies of this report will be widely circulated to all trustees.

In January 2005 the Board appointed a consultant on a one year renewable contract. His role is to provide charities involved with seafarers' home with advice on maximising funding. He is available to answer queries by telephone and correspondence and, on the Board's instruction, visit the Constituents and provide recommendations. This has been well received by all the Constituents visited. Advice and/or a visit can be arranged by contacting the Merchant Navy Welfare Board.

The Board believes that issues raised within the report should be discussed and will be pleased to arrange meetings of trustees of the charities involved with long term care.

VI. SURVEY OF OLDER SEAFARERS

The Working Group examined the 1997 Survey of Older Seafarers (of all ranks from ratings to masters, serving and retired) that was commissioned by NUMAST prior to CONCO 97. The Survey, which was conducted by Liverpool University's Institute of Human Ageing, had found that there was an expectation by merchant seafarers (officers and ratings) aged 49 and over, that proper designated facilities for their benefit would be available in the future. Notably more of the respondents were single and living alone when compared to the population as a whole.

The members agreed that the findings of this Survey indicate a continuing need for homes in the future. The basis of this report therefore uses this assumption to examine the geographical spread, categories of homes and care requirements that might be needed within the next one to two decades.

At the time of this Report, the Maritime Charities Funding Group (MCFG), are initiating a detailed study to ascertain the future demand for welfare services among the nautical charities. The findings of this Study, it is anticipated, will give a clearer indication of the likely requirements for seafarers' homes in the foreseeable future.

VII. LOCATION OF MNWB CONSTITUENT'S HOMES & FUTURE TRENDS

Location

A map showing the location of all the homes, known to be available to retired merchant seafarers, fishermen and dependents can be found in **Appendix 1**.

GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF SEAFARERS' ACCOMMODATION

The Working Group examined the spread of seafarers' accommodation within the United Kingdom and noted the following: -

- The South East of England is comparatively well covered by all categories although it has a relatively low number of retired seafarers.
- The South West has a small hostel in west Cornwall (Falmouth). This region has a large population of ex-seafarers.
- London has one hostel specifically for seafarers and another able to accommodate them for rehabilitation.
- There are no homes in central England.
- There is one set of almshouses in South Wales (Cardiff).

- The Northwest has a large population of ex-seafarers. There is one large complex in Wallasey specifically for seafarers and covering most categories. In addition there is an ex-Services care home in the Manchester area that will accommodate seafarers.
- The North East of England has several almshouses, but no care homes. There is a large population of ex-seafarers in this area.
- Scotland has one residential care home specifically for seafarers, in Greenock, which also has a specialist unit for Korsakoff's Syndrome sufferers. It also provides sheltered housing. Two ex-Services care homes will accommodate merchant seafarers, one of these requires them to have served in hostilities. In addition 'full board supported accommodation' and independent living houses and flats are available to seafarers, their spouses and partners. There is a large population of ex seafarers throughout Scotland, though many live in isolated communities.
- Northern Ireland has no dedicated accommodation, although there is one ex Services care home (Belfast) that will accommodate ex merchant seafarers. There is a large population of ex-merchant seafarers in Northern Ireland and Eire.

The Working Group recognised that it was a matter of personal choice as whether older people were prepared to relocate in order to live in a seafarers' home. In any event it was unlikely that they would wish to move long distances as they started to become infirm. Family and social ties often restricted many people, even over comparatively small distances, however the NUMAST 1997 Survey had shown that many retired seafarers were prepared to move to be with other seafarers.

The Working Group agreed that, with the declining numbers of British seafarers there is unlikely to be sufficient funds to build any further facilities on new sites.

Demographic Disposition of Retired Seafarers.

In 1997 NUMAST Welfare Funds in partnership with other organisations, undertook a study of older seafarers and their needs. There were 7,074 respondents and the listing of their places of residents are contained in **Appendix 4**. These should not be taken as definitive numbers, however they do provide a good indication as to the probable proportions. Note the survey included both officers and ratings aged 49 and above.

Trends

At the time of this report a number of MNWB Constituents had expressed their support for an independent analysis of future trends and needs as referred to in section VI. Such a survey will include a review of the likely numbers of retired seafarers and their dependents requiring financial support and homes in the future. The study will embrace all seafarers i.e. Royal Navy, Merchant Navy and fishermen.

Notwithstanding this review there is a general acceptance that, in line with the continuing decline of both the Merchant Navy and fishing industries, there will be a serious and adverse impact on the demand for homes from eligible persons. The

greatest difficulty is that of determining the likely timescale, although many believe that there are already indications that this is having a significant impact. An additional factor is that the Merchant Navy ratings have enjoyed the benefit of a pension scheme since 1978 which enables many to have a comfortable retirement in their own homes. It should be noted however that there may well be other reasons for people to move into supported living environments or registered care homes.

Another important issue, affecting the ongoing need for homes, is the anticipated longevity of residents. Within the general populace there is clear evidence that people are living longer. An additional factor for seafarers is that in the last two decades they have been encouraged, by legislation and practice, to lead a healthier lifestyle. These facts may mean that residents spend longer in seafarer's homes and may, perhaps, partially counterbalance some of the effects of the declining numbers.

Working Group members considered that the greatest adverse impact, of reducing numbers of seafarers, will be on almshouses and hostels for very different reasons. Almshouses are, as defined later in this report, locally based. As such, they provide housing for persons usually from a comparatively small area. Many are located in areas where seafaring has not been a major occupation for many years. Hostels, specifically for seafarers, tend to accommodate single people, almost exclusively men, many of whom have never known a permanent home and have found difficulty in adjusting to life ashore. These too are declining in numbers due to social changes.

All societies with the objects of providing accommodation specifically to seafarers and their dependents are urged to consider the future demand for their own homes. An indication can be found from examining the statistics, over perhaps, the last twenty years and compare these with the statistics for the industries contained in **Appendix 3**.

Seafarers UK (formerly KGFS) uses guidelines when deciding on the level of support for a society seeking a grant as follows: -

<u>Residents</u>		<u>Capital Grant</u>
<u>Seafarers</u>	<u>Non-Seafarers</u>	
80% or above	20% or less	100%
66.7% or above	33.3% or less	80%
50% or more up to 66.7%	50% or less	66.7%
Minority	Majority	*

*By recommendation according to circumstances but no more than 33.3%

The Working Group considers that these guidelines can provide a good indicator as to how much a seafarers' charity holds to what is probably its primary objective, that of assisting seafarers. Once a society, specifically caring for seafarers, approaches, or falls below, 50% of its residents from the seafaring community, the trustees are **recommended** to carry out a review to consider the future.

In the event that a society feels that it maybe approaching a situation wherein the purpose no longer serves its original objects, guidance should be sought from the Charity Commissioners and its solicitors. Failure to do this may place the trustees in breach of their duty. Notwithstanding their views will be taken into account and clearly it is important they consider the future of any assets. Neither the Working Group, nor the Board, would seek to influence such a decision. Trustees must, however, consider whether the founders and supporters principal object was to support seafarers, or perhaps, people from the local community. In the former case the assets must be considered for the benefit of seafarers and in this event should be disposed of accordingly.

VIII. ALMSHOUSES - INCLUDING INDEPENDENT LIVING SCHEMES - & SHELTERED HOUSING

A large number of seafarers' charities are involved in the provision of such accommodation. This includes some small organisations based in one site only. They are almost all entirely locally based providing exclusively for those retired seafarers and their dependents that have a local connection with the port.

Almshouses

General

Almshouses have existed for over 1000 years enabling people in need to retain their independence and to live in their local community. Each Almshouse Charity is independent and run by voluntary trustees. They normally provide needy people, mostly elderly, with a high standard of affordable housing in their community. There are almost 1800 separate almshouse charities in the UK with 2,600 groups of almshouse and over 30,000 dwellings provide accommodation for some 36,000 people.

The majority, if not all, of almshouses belonging to nautical charities are members of the Almshouse Association. This organisation publishes a book titled "Standards of Almshouse Management" which is available at a modest cost. This publication is seen to be the standard work and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has stated that: -

"The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) expects all social housing providers to meet the decent homes standard. This covers all landlords registered with the Housing Corporation including small associations such as co-ownership societies, co-ownership equity sharing societies and co-operatives.

The DTLR (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions) has issued detailed guidance on how to define a "decent home" for the purposes of measuring progress against the target. In brief a decent home will pass the following four tests. It must:-

- meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- be in a reasonable state of repair

- have reasonably modern facilities and services
- provided a reason degree of thermal comfort

In addition to complying with the regulatory code, almshouse charities (and Abbeyfield societies) are also required to comply with *The Almshouse Association Standards of Almshouse Management, 2003*”

Those nautical charities providing almshouses normally have a number of dwellings on a single site, although there are also some stand alone properties. As outlined above residents are encouraged to maintain their independence, living either on their own or as couples. The Working Group agreed that that the continuing provision of such homes, subject to demand and certain conditions, was desirable. Such accommodation enables residents to live independently, comparatively cheaply and within a secure and mutually caring environment.

The Working Group agreed that many of the recommendations were also relevant to other categories of similar accommodation. They therefore agreed that all providers of such accommodation should utilise the appropriate standards set out in “Standards of Almshouse Management” as above.

Those societies responsible for managing almshouses are strongly encouraged to become members of this Association if they have not already done so. It provides the following services to its member charities: -

Advice through its publications and in response to specific requests..

Assistance towards partnership with professional advisors who have specialised knowledge in a wide area.

Training via regular seminars and training meetings for trustees, clerks and wardens.

Funding advice to improve and upgrade existing almshouses and to build new ones.

Common Services including investments, insurance, loans, VAT services and supplier discounts.

Access to preferential loans for capital projects.

Representation on issues facing Almshouse Charity trustees in the 21st century.

The Association can be contacted at: -

The Almshouse Association
Billingbear Lodge
Carters Hill
WOKINGHAM
Berkshire
RG40 5RU

Tel: +44 (0) 1344 452922

Fax: +44 (0) 1344 862062

E-mail: naa@almshouses.org

Website: www.almshouses.org

Sheltered Housing and Housing with Support

General

Sheltered housing is housing designed to meet the needs of the elderly, including a range of support services, such as an emergency alarm system, communal facilities and a resident warden or scheme manager (the term warden has largely fallen into disuse and among larger housing associations they are now defined as scheme managers). Such accommodation can offer a range of services to help people live independently. This may be in a smaller and easier to manage homes, with the added security of having someone to call on in emergencies.

Sheltered accommodation differs from other housing because of the presence of a scheme manager, or warden, living on the site, or nearby, who can be contacted through an alarm system if necessary. Some sites may be linked to a remote alarm service. Some schemes are designed specifically for people with disabilities and may have additional facilities and specially trained staff to provide care.

Extra care sheltered housing offers a greater level of care and can be ideal for people who are less able to manage on their own, but who do not need the level of care available in a care home. Extra care housing offers independent but with professional staff, plus home care staff, on site. In addition there will be an emergency alarm system and facilities such as communal lounges, hairdressing, laundry, library services etc. Services offered will vary between schemes, but meals and some personal care are often provided.

Purchase Some sheltered housing scheme properties can be purchased so the resident is a home owner but has the additional reassurance of support if needed.

Local housing offices and/or the housing associations have their own eligibility criteria but this should include a general assessment of needs. There is sometimes a waiting list for sheltered housing.

Sheltered housing staff

Support is given by housing association staff, who sometimes live on site. General responsibilities of a scheme manager may include:

- making regular checks on residents well-being
- if required, liaising with residents local doctor and relatives
- managing the day-to-day running of the scheme

Normally, scheme managers or wardens do not provide care services for residents or carry out tasks such as shopping or cleaning. Residents can still apply for services, for example having meals delivered to their home if they have problems cooking, or help with bathing. The local authority social services department should be able to give details of these.

Retirement Housing Scheme

There are many variations between retirement housing schemes but the usually provide the following features:-

- Self-contained, with bathrooms and fitted kitchens
- Communal facilities, such as a laundry, lounge for social activities, gardens and guest room
- Estate Manager
- 24 hour emergency call centre assistance
- Pets welcome

Seafarers Homes Sheltered Housing

A number of nautical charities provide sheltered housing, most within the larger complexes that include care homes. It is believed that each of these organisations meets all the criteria set out in the general recommendations.

Housing Benefit

The members noted that there was reluctance among some societies to charge maintenance contributions up to the levels of Housing Benefit. An explanation of Housing Benefits is contained in **Appendix 2**. In not charging the maintenance contribution equivalent to Housing Benefit, the Working Group considered that trustees may be in breach of their duty.

This Benefit is determined by the local authority based on what is deemed to be a fair and proper maintenance contribution for a property of that size with in a particular area. In cases of hardship, but subject to a means test, those on a low income and in need of financial help to pay all or part of their maintenance contribution should be eligible. Individuals and couples can claim Housing Benefit if they pay maintenance contributions and their income and capital (savings and investments, usually below £18k is disregarded) are below a certain level. In these circumstances residents should either be expected to claim their Benefit and pay any balance, or the full maintenance contribution if an assessment finds that they are able to afford to do so.

The members of the Maritime Charities Funding Group will not look sympathetically at a grant application from a charity that does not charge a weekly maintenance contributions equivalent to Housing Benefit.

IX. HOSTELS

The Working Group noted that there are a small number of organisations providing hostel accommodation for serving and ex seafarers. Those seafarers requiring such facilities have reduced in recent years due, largely to changes in the social structure of seafaring.

The general perception of a hostel is to provide accommodation for short-term residents. This view is supported by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Recent ODPM policy briefing papers titled "Improving the Quality of Hostels and Other Forms of Temporary Accommodation" state that the code of guidance is to be revised. The revised code will set out clearly the minimum standards that will apply to all forms of temporary accommodation. The Working Group anticipates that such standards will become a legal requirement within the foreseeable future. The ODPM has also stated that individuals must have a choice to enable them to have a proper standard of accommodation.

Furthermore Scotland has its own legislation which is ahead of England & Wales. This is the Housing Scotland act, 2001 which defines devolved responsibility and should be taken into account.

Those societies responsible for providing basic accommodation are, in any event, encouraged to consider whether their existing accommodation, if below a reasonable standard, is morally acceptable in the 21st century. They are therefore urged to take action to comply with the 'Decent Homes' standards referred to in Section V, e.g. minimum room sizes.

Within the Constituent members of the Board there is only one organisation specifically providing hostel accommodation on a short stay basis. This is to provide rehabilitation and assistance to, usually homeless, ex armed services personnel and a few ex merchant seafarers. This is an excellent facility and a most welcome contribution, where residents are prepared to re enter a normal life.

Other societies, providing hostel accommodation for seafarers, do so partially for historical reasons. In previous times such establishments were used primarily by itinerant seafarers, with no homes, on leave between ships (and in rare instances are still used as such). For many they became their only home, either following retirement or when there were no more jobs at sea. All those organisations have subsequently recognised the undesirability of providing basic facilities for long-term residents and most are considering major refurbishment / rebuilding projects or closure and resettlement of the residents.

One Constituent has had lengthy discussions with their local authority which supports their proposals to provide new purpose built facilities that will be in the nature of low cost retirement flats/sheltered homes clustered housing and single bedroom flats. This authority has stipulated that in order for residents, and consequently the society, to receive financial help from the authorities, via Housing Benefit and the Supporting People Programme, there will be certain minimum standards.

Each resident must have a minimum recommended area as agreed with their Local Authority. This will fulfil the requirements of providing sheltered / bed-sit accommodation with an en-suite bathroom and kitchen area under. The cluster rooms should be of minimum, again as agreed with the LA, with 4 rooms per cluster, each with en-suite facilities and a communal living area that will include a kitchen / lounge area. All units should be suitable for special needs service users. Whilst this report emphasises that the requirement above is from one local authority, it must be seen that this is an 'industry standard'. Additionally the new development would also include a wide range of community facilities i.e. fitness suite, occupational workshop, IT

suite, training facilities, restaurant, chapel, library and various other general purpose / office facilities.

The majority of seafarer's hostels, though not all, provide hot meals and care facilities. Most do not have en suite bathroom facilities though organisations are recommended to consider the desirability of these and possible future legislative requirements.

The societies responsible for providing hostel accommodation are **urged** to ensure that they meet acceptable standards of accommodation that is morally acceptable in the 21st Century.

The Working Group noted that Government policy did not necessarily take account of social isolation when there were no longer communal facilities such as cafeterias.

The recommendations specific to hostels are as follows:-

- There should be provision of access to residential and nursing homes, for those reaching a frailer disposition (from other categories of homes). Each hostel should build up a relationship with local and seafarers' care homes for future referrals.
- The implementation of regular meeting with each resident by trustees and/or staff.
- At least some rooms should be designed for those with disabilities and include wheelchair access. A lift or stair-lift should be considered where residents' rooms are above the ground floor. Consideration should be given to the provision of low-level showers for those with mobility difficulties.
- All new build should meet mobility requirements, especially with regard to access and egress. In some local authority areas this is reported to be as much as 33% of the rooms.
- When considering refurbishment, consideration should be given to the desirability/ future legislative requirements of providing en-suite bathroom facilities.
- Provision of health care services including the need for transport when appropriate.
- Guestrooms, within a complex, to accommodate visiting relatives or friends.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of communal catering facilities in order that a well balanced diet can be provided. (This is not supported by LAs and will therefore need to be separately funded.) Charities should try to ensure that residents have a well balanced diet.
- The social needs are considered to be a priority. Hostels should endeavour to have communal facilities such as a garden, and a lounge (particularly a sun lounge) where residents can meet for a cup of coffee, play games etc. It has also been found that a common laundry area is often treated as a social amenity.

- That, almost by definition, the residents of hostels have a reasonable level of health and independence. Hostels should therefore be situated close to amenities such as health care, shopping, entertainment etc.
- The ‘strategic relevance’ of a facility maybe challenged by a local authority. i.e. they may question whether a home for seafarers any longer has a relevance to a their borough. This would have a major impact on the resident stream and funding mechanism.
- Beneficiaries should be encouraged to organise and/or participate in social events and within their local community.
- Proper access to technical, financial and legal advice and counselling services should be made available when necessary. Residents should be given the telephone numbers of the local Citizens Advice Bureau, Seafarers Benefits Advice Line and local counselling services. It also recommends that each resident’s room be supplied with a handbook of useful contacts.

X. CARE HOMES

Care Homes and Care Services

The main purpose of the Care Standards Act 2000 was to reform the regulatory system for care services in England and Wales. Care services for older people range from care homes and domiciliary care agencies through to private and voluntary health services (including private hospitals and clinics.) For the first time local authorities were required to meet the same standards as independent sector providers.

In England the Act provided for an independent Nation Care Standards Commission, as it was called then but is now called Commission for Social Care Inspection. (In Wales the functions are carried out by a body responsible to the National Assembly for Wales.) The Commission undertakes the regulatory tasks of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Care Standards Act 2000 replaced the regulations set out in the Registered Homes Act 1984, which was repealed in its entirety. The Act enables homes to provide both residential and nursing care in a way which is much more responsive to the needs of residents and much less procedural to manage. There are other homes which provide particular level of care for residents who are assessed as “elderly mentally infirm”. Such homes are seen as separate from those referred to above and have separate registration category. The Commission can impose conditions on care homes as to the category in which they are registered.

Additional NHS funds are available for long term nursing care. A number of local authorities have adopted a policy of grading homes with a view to identify and improve standards. This will lead to graduated funding.

In Scotland, the Regulation of Care Act, 2001, underpins all forms of care and housing support. The general thrust of this Act is similar to that of England & Wales

however, the detail can be different and each section of the 2001 Act must be studied to ensure compliance within Scotland.

The Care Standards Act uses the term care homes, personal care and domiciliary care agencies. They are defined as:

Care Homes

A care home is any home which provides accommodation together with personal care or nursing care or both if required for residents who are suffering from infirmity or disability. The definition is intended to cover the services provided previously by residential homes, nursing homes or homes that had dual registration.

Personal Care

“Personal care” includes assistance with the activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing and eating for people who are unable to do these things without assistance and extends to advice and encouragement. The intention is to include direct physical assistance as well as psychological support, for instance reminding someone to carry out daily activities such as washing and eating. ***NB This service is provided free of charge in Scotland.***

Domiciliary Care Agencies

These agencies supply staff who provide personal care for people in their own homes. The definition encompasses any agency that arranges the provision of personal care for people who need assistance by reason of illness, infirmity or disability. Individual care workers are therefore not included unless they manage the agency.

General

All charities should ensure that they are aware of the range of services in their locality and the availability of places in homes providing specialist care.

They should help to promote the setting up of a relative/residents’ association and support services for residents who have no relatives.

XI RESPITE

For the purposes of this Report, ‘Respite’ covers both the person in care and the carer.

Those people living at home, but having a level of dependency, can theoretically be cared for in any of the seafarers care homes. In reality, for economic reasons, beds cannot be set aside for this purpose and therefore respite is only available if the need coincides with a vacancy.

There is very limited opportunities among the nautical charities to provide respite care to either the dependent individual or their carer.

The Working Group agreed that the possibility of providing respite care, with a national provider, should be examined and this would be undertaken by appropriate members who would report to the Board.

XII PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE

Introduction

Supporting People is a government programme for funding, planning and monitoring housing related support services. Its aim is to improve the quality and effectiveness of the support services at a local level. The programme has been introduced since the publication of the Elderly Seafarers Working Group Report in 2000 and has had a substantial impact on the general living arrangements of the elderly and infirm.

Supporting People provides housing related support to help vulnerable people to live as independently as possible in the community, whether in their own homes, hostels, sheltered housing or other specialised supported housing. It is intended to help older people remain independent.

The programme provides complementary support for people who may also need personal or medical care. It only funds housing support but this can be part of a package of differently funded, but co-ordinated support which meets the needs of individuals. Supporting People offers support with: -

- debt counselling
- life skills training
- form filling
- advice on paying bills
- provision of emergency alarms

Supporting People came into effect in 2003 when local authorities took on planning, commissioning and monitoring functions of the programme.

The Supporting People helpline is: 020 7944 2556

There is more about Supporting People programme on the Supporting People website

- England & Wales; www.spkweb.org.uk
- Scotland; www.scotland.gov.uk/housing/supportingpeople

Providing Support in More Ways Than One

The Working Group considered previously that advice services played an important part in re-assuring older people. The Working Group re-emphasises the importance of such services and believes that, when necessary, a resident should be assisted in contacting Seafarers' Benefits Advice Line.

Charities should liaise with the public services and ensure that appropriate advice and assistance obtained when needed. This may be something as simple as providing advice about a letter received or completing a form. Equally it might be accessing assistance for a resident to obtain a package of care from a Domiciliary Care Agency.

When closer links have been forged with public services and better relations have been established with health services agencies and social services departments it becomes possible to influence decisions taken to support older people in their own homes. In the past some inappropriate decisions have been taken at case conferences and, in consequence, some inadequate arrangements have been made. In the future, charities may consider how best they might work together to develop support services for their residents.

The idea of introducing a service that supports people who are deemed to be living independently but, actually fall into a category that might be called “in between independence and dependence” is not new. The idea of a measured service for older people is to make available a range of support from independent living in their own homes to full care in a Home.

Charities are aware that many people who approach them with financial problems go on to talk about personal problems as well. Sometimes the personal problems are of greater concern but it is easier to talk about financial difficulties. Financial assistance is a part of the solution. The part that is missing is the assistance that comes with care support. Time should be taken to establish if an application for a grant is just that or whether there is more to it than that and it is really a request for other forms of help.

The term Supporting People has come to mean supporting people financially by earmarking money to buy the service that will support them.

The Government introduced Supporting People Programme with the intention of improving the quality of life of people who live in the community with support. The programme provides housing related support that aims to prevent problems developing to the point where a resident can no longer live independently.

Housing related support means support that underpins a person’s attempt to live as independently as they can in their own accommodation. In practical terms that could mean enabling a person to access their housing benefit entitlement, giving advice on home improvements, arranging home visits by a support worker.

XIII. POTENTIAL RATIONALISATION OF SERVICES

The Working Group agreed that, given the limited financial resources available among the Nautical Charities, encouragement should be given to examine means by which the best level of support, care and the continuity of care can be provided to residents.

The members recommended that all trustees look closely at the role of their organisation and review the situation regularly. It was felt important to consider the inclusion, on the board of such charities, of at least one individual with a professional knowledge of the long term care of the elderly.

The members further recommended that independent feasibility studies should be made available for those charities wishing to examine their future role or

requirements. It was noted that the MNWB would endeavour to facilitate a grant to cover the cost of such studies.

The Working Group agreed that this was a sensitive issue for both the trustees and officers. They took comfort from the fact the principal concern of all those involved was to provide the best possible arrangements for long-term care.

XIV. DEFINITION OF A SEAFARER – LENGTH OF SERVICE

The Working Group noted that it was a matter for each charity to observe its own rules governing length of service required for eligibility for residency within its Articles of Association/Trust Deed.

The members recognised however that many of the homes were supported by the seafarer's charities making grants to organisations. Many of these funding charities had an expectation that the ex-seafarers and their dependants, benefiting from their funds, had a reasonable length of service i.e. could be considered as bona-fide seafarers.

Charities should note that in instances of minimal service it is probable that an individual has worked, for a larger part of his or her career, in another industry. It is important to consider whether there are any long-term care facilities associated with that industry that maybe better placed to help.

XV. CONCLUSION

The Working Group wishes to emphasise that this report should be considered a working document. It will therefore be reviewed every two years and any suggestions can be forwarded to the Merchant Navy Welfare Board for consideration.

The Board would like to thank all the members of the Working Group for all their work and effort in compiling this report.

APPENDIX 2

Housing Benefit

Eligibility

To be eligible for Housing Benefit a person must pay rent and have an income and capital (savings and investments) below a certain level. Housing Benefit can cover all or part of the rent depending upon their circumstances.

Ineligibility

Those ineligible get Housing Benefit are people who:

- have savings of in excess £16,000, unless aged 60 or over and receive the 'guarantee credit' of Pension Credit
- live in the home of a close relative
- are a full-time student (unless disabled or have children)
- an asylum seeker or are sponsored to be in the UK

Other restrictions

When living with a partner only one person can get Housing Benefit.

When single and aged under 25 Housing Benefit is available only for bed-sit accommodation or one room in shared accommodation.

How much is it worth?

The maximum amount of Housing Benefit is the same as the 'eligible' rent. This is the amount used to work out benefit but may not be the same as the full rent.

'Eligible' rent

'Eligible' rent includes:

- rent for the accommodation
- charges for some services, such as a lifts, communal laundry facilities or play areas

Even if it is included in the rent Housing Benefit does not cover:

- water charges
- charges for heating, hot water, lighting, or cooking
- payments for food or fuel in board and lodgings or hostels

The amount of Housing Benefit also depends on personal and financial circumstances

A local council will consider:

- all income, including earnings, some benefits and tax credits, and occupational pensions (including those of a partner)
- savings (and a partner's savings)

- circumstances: such as age, the size of family and their ages, whether the beneficiary or any of their family are disabled, and whether anyone who lives with in the property could help with the rent

Criteria and rent

A council will also look at whether:

- the amount of rent is reasonable for a particular home
- a home is a reasonable size for the beneficiary and any dependants
- the amount of rent is reasonable for the area

‘Eligible’ rent may be limited to an amount that's reasonable for a suitably sized property in that area.

Payment

Council tenants will receive Housing Benefit straight into their rent account.

Non council tenants and those not living in an area covered by the Local Housing Allowance, can choose to have Housing Benefit paid directly to:

- a landlord
- the themselves (beneficiary)
- their bank or building society account

Effect on benefits

Housing Benefit does not affect any other statutory benefit entitlement.

Assessment

People are assessed for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit at the same time.

Those claiming other benefits

These people will need to complete a form to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (including Second Adult Rebate) with their claim pack if they are claiming any of the following benefits:

- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Jobseeker's Allowance

The form should be completed and returned to the local council.

Those not claiming other benefits

Those people not claiming Pension Credit, Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance can get a form for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (including Second Adult Rebate) from their local council. Alternatively it can be downloaded from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website.

Claiming in advance

Housing Benefit can be claimed in advance by those who know that they are moving to a new address, up to 13 weeks (17 weeks if aged 60 or over) before the move. This will not normally be paid before the move takes place.

APPENDIX 4

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BISS	British & International Sailors' Society
CONCO	Conference of Nautical Charitable Organisations
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
KGFS	King George's Fund for Sailors (now Seafarers UK)
LA	Local Authority
MCFG	Maritime Charities Funding Group
MNWB	Merchant Navy Welfare Board
MSWMS (Springbok)	Merchant Seamen's War Memorial Society (Springbok)
NHS	National Health Service
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
QVSR	Queen Victoria's Seamen's Rest
RASS	Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society
SHS	Seamen's Hospital Society