

A young person in a Sea Cadet uniform, including a dark blue beret with a crest, a dark blue jacket over a white collared shirt, and a red life vest with black straps. They are looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Another person in uniform is blurred in the background.

LAUNCHING INTO LIFE

The long-term impact of
work with young people

My LegaSea

A multigenerational impact study of Sea Cadets



Report written by **Anna Louise Spencer** and **Tony Jeffs**
on behalf of the Marine Society and Sea Cadets.

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Anna Louise Spencer

My LegaSea lead researcher

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	3
Foreword	7
Glossary	8
1. Introduction	9
Executive Summary	10
Overview of the Report	13
2. Context	14
Sea Cadets	15
Defining Work with Young People	18
Existing Research	
Policy Context	19
Youth Impact Models	
Current Practice	20
National Citizen Service	
Uniformed Youth Organisations	
Summary	21

3. Approach to Research	22
Survey	24
Interviews and Focus Groups	
Analysis	
Limitations	25
Ethical Considerations	
4. Findings	26
Demographic Overview	27
Group	
Gender	
Ethnicity and Nationality	28
Geography	
Age – Generations	30
Summary of Quantitative Data	32
Positive Impact of Sea Cadets	
Impact Indicators	34
Summary of Qualitative Data	42
Interview and Focus Groups	



5. Detailed Qualitative Findings	46
Context	47
The Can-do Attitude –	
Enabling Environment	48
A Different Kind of Education	49
Wide Range of Activities	50
Uniform and Structure –	
Self-discipline and Respect	51
Community and Connection	53
Change in Perspective	
Social Support and Inspirational Adults	54
Friendship / Teamwork	57
Ongoing Contribution to Society	58
Capability	59
Skills for Life	
Problem Solving	60
Leadership	
Coping with Challenges	61
Confidence	62
Courage and Confidence	
Communications Skills	64
Recognition, Achievement and Pride	
Maturity and Independence	65
Wellbeing	
Catalyst	66
Shape Life Direction	
Prepare for working Life	67
Wide Range of Life Courses Post-Sea Cadets	
Resilience in Work	68
Summary	69
Data Themes	
Survey Free Text Questions	
Overarching Thematic Map	70

6. Discussion	72
A Different Kind of Impact	
Enabling Environments	74
Empowering Education	
Reframing Risk	
Long-term Belonging and Community	75
Courage and Confidence	76
Progressing through the Ranks	
Skills for Life	77
7. Conclusion	78
References	82
Appendix	85





FOREWORD

I became particularly aware of the good work of Sea Cadets through my involvement with Maidenhead Unit (local branch), where I have been welcomed into the role of President. Through my local unit I've seen how Sea Cadets works within the community, reflecting its needs and building on young people's strengths to create positive outcomes and foster positive relationships.

I know good youth work can have a transformative effect on a young person's life, and just as importantly have an effect on society as a whole. I have written before about the importance of the shared society where we focus not just on our individual rights but on the responsibilities we have to one another. Sea Cadets, through an amazing group of volunteers, provide engaging activity to young people, delivering them qualifications and skills while instilling a strong set of values and confidence, setting many of our youth on the path to being positive contributors to the society of tomorrow.

Seeds planted early in a young person's life blossom as they mature, as they face their own challenges and make their own way in the world. Structured youth work can play a vital role in strengthening and preparing young people for the opportunities and challenges ahead, rather than merely responding at the point of crisis.

I am therefore very pleased to welcome this '*My LegaSea*' research; combining academic rigour and multi-generational scope. This study uses real-life experiences to answer the question of how youth development changes lives in the long term.

While, of course, this is an important examination of the effectiveness of Sea Cadets, and how it inspires learning and personal development in its members, drawing on a naval theme, we should also note the wider implications of this research for the youth sector as a whole. Ultimately, it clearly evidences the significance of uniformed youth programmes as a key investment in children's development, both for today and for their futures.



Mrs Theresa May MP

Glossary

Colours	practice of hoisting and lowering the flags
Commanding Officer (CO)	senior ranking officer in charge of the unit
Communications (naval)	learning semaphore, Morse code and similar skills
Communications (PR)	profession of marketing
Corps	a main subdivision or branch of a military establishment
Deck	area in a unit where parade and colours take place
Drill	instruction or training in military exercise
GNTC	Girls' Nautical Training Corps
Leading Hand	or leading cadet – a senior rank for cadets within the unit
Longitudinal	research study with the same cohort over an extended period
Maritime	connected to the sea, especially in relation to seaborne trade or naval matters
MSSC	Marine Society and Sea Cadets
Multigenerational	research study with participants from different age groups
Nautical	of or concerning navigation, sailors, or the sea
Parade	display while marching or assembling for formal inspection or ceremonial occasion
Petty Officer (PO)	rank within the unit
Pulling	term previously used in Sea Cadets for rowing
Qualitative	research that focuses on measuring quality not quantity
Quantitative	research that focuses on measuring quantity not quality
Seamanship	the skills, techniques, or practices of handling a ship or boat at sea
Triangulate	employing multiple sources or approaches to analyse data in order to enhance the credibility of a research study
Unit	a local Sea Cadets group
Wardroom	the social room on the training ship for adult volunteers
Youth Work	the social and personal development of young people through informal education
Youth Development	a targeted and individualised approach to working with young people widely encountered in the United States of America



Of the nine generations of former cadets who participated in the **My LegaSea** survey:-

95%

believed Sea Cadets had a positive long-term impact on their life

1. INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

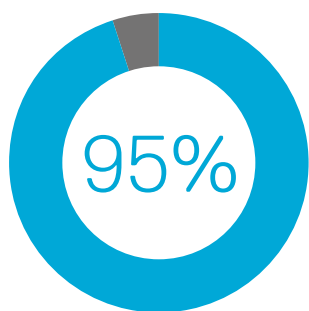
Sea Cadets aims to help young people to launch well into today's world. Utilising a unique mix of adventure and education Sea Cadets strives to ensure members are better equipped to face the multiple challenges they inevitably confront over time. In recent years Sea Cadets has sought to formally evaluate the impact of its work. Like similar exercises undertaken by other youth sector agencies these surveyed existing members. These evaluations have enabled Sea Cadets to adapt their practice to better address the needs of extant and future cadets in terms of short-term positive impact. Unfortunately however, such investigations provide no real evidence of the long-term impact of such engagement. The *My LegaSea* project addresses this gap by asking former members to verify the long-term

impact of their involvement with Sea Cadets. Drawing upon statistical evidence, interview data and other source material, *Launching into Life* seeks to discover exactly the impact Sea Cadets has had on the life-course of thousands of previous members.

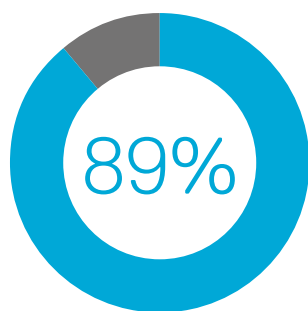
Launching into Life presents quantitative and qualitative data that reveals how Sea Cadets influenced the lives of the research participants over, in some cases, more than half a century. Whilst the evidence relates exclusively to a single organisation the findings clearly have wider implications for other youth organisations. *Launching into Life* demonstrates the merits of extending the youth impact agenda beyond a narrow focus on the measurement of short-term outcomes.



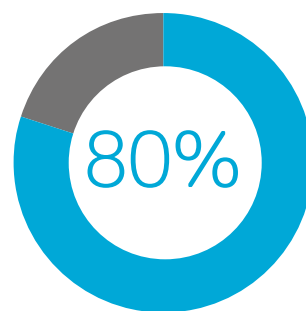
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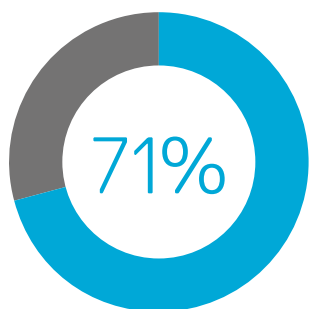
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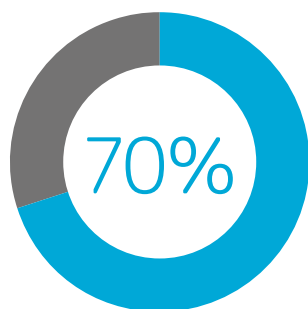
said Sea Cadets developed their independence and skills during their time as members



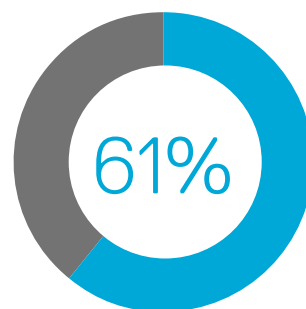
reported that Sea Cadets had increased their independence and skills in the longer term



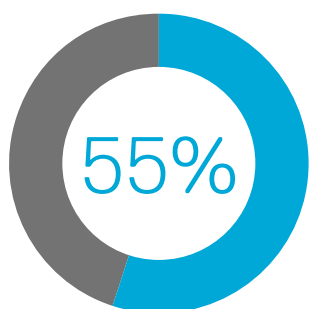
reported Sea Cadets improved their happiness and wellbeing whilst they were members



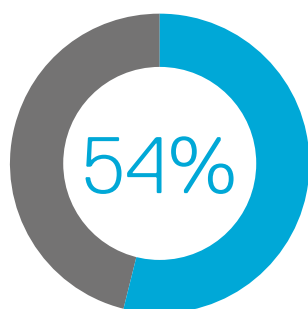
thought Sea Cadets helped them cope with challenges in the longer term



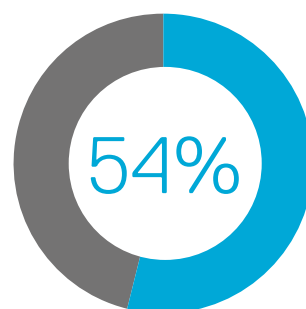
credited Sea Cadets with inspiring them to seriously consider a Royal Navy or maritime career



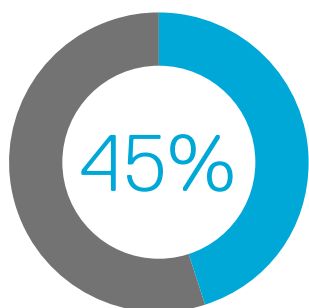
deemed Sea Cadets to have helped them gain qualifications during their time as members



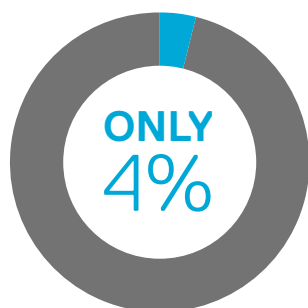
reported Sea Cadets helped them with their careers during their time as members



said Sea Cadets helped them with their careers in the longer term



confirmed Sea Cadets contributed to their long-term wellbeing



were unable to identify a specific long-term impact on their lives

These statistics indicate that Sea Cadets had a consistent and enduring beneficial impact on the lives of survey participants across the different generations that engaged in the research.

All the former cadets who took part in the interviews and focus groups provided additional details about how Sea Cadets played a beneficial role in their lives. The evidence confirmed that community and connections created within Sea Cadets fostered capabilities and confidence that had a positive catalytic effect on their personal and professional development for life. The accounts given by respondents drew attention to eight key areas:

- **The value of impact studies that embrace long-term evaluation.**
- **The transformative effect of the enabling environment created by Sea Cadets.**
- **The vital role of Sea Cadets' empowering educational approaches, particularly with respect to the lives of those who did not always flourish within mainstream schooling.**
- **The importance of reframing risk and appreciating the value of challenging experiences safely supervised that occur within Sea Cadets' experience.**
- **The significance of the lifelong friendships and sense of belonging that Sea Cadets nurtures.**
- **The fostering of courage and confidence through Sea Cadets that enables former members to navigate later life with greater resilience.**
- **The value of progressing through the ranks in Sea Cadets which for many played a pivotal role in preparing them for their working life.**
- **The range of skills for life developed in Sea Cadets that proved advantageous in the long-term.**



OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Launching into Life commences with a succinct review of the contemporary youth work sector with particular reference to the two dominant approaches to evaluation employed within it – values-focused and outcomes-focused.

Section three outlines the research format.

Sections four and five summarise the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data assembled by the research.

Section six discusses key areas of impact and some of the most significant ways Sea Cadets influenced the lives of the research participants.

The final section summarises the conclusions concerning the impact of Sea Cadets on the life cycle of former members. Recommendations for future research with specific reference to Sea Cadets are also contained within this segment.

Of the nine generations of former cadets who participated in the **My LegaSea** survey:-

89%
said Sea Cadets
developed their
independence
and skills during
their time
as members



2. CONTEXT

Demonstrating the value of informal educational work with young people has been a challenge stretching back to before the beginning of the last century when pioneers such as Maud Stanley and Robert Baden-Powell were asked to justify their work. More recently we have witnessed a growing expectation on the part of funders to be supplied with hard evidence that their investment has secured 'value for money'. A demand that has led to the advent of a range of techniques which lay claim to being able to assess the impact of various programmes and modes of practice. All these attempts to quantify outcomes have however avoided any attempt to gather substantive evidence as to the long-term benefits accruing from membership of a youth work organisation. The need to address this gap formed part of the motivation for the *My LegaSea* research project which is the first UK-wide¹ multigenerational study to focus on the long-term benefits of participation in youth activities.

1. Sea Cadets also includes units located in Malta, Bermuda and the Channel Islands as well as the UK – however no former cadets from Bermuda participated in this research.

2. CONTEXT



SEA CADETS

Sea Cadets is unique among the Ministry of Defence (MOD) sponsored cadets in that it is not run by its respective Service. Although it maintains a longstanding and fruitful affiliation with the Royal Navy, Sea Cadets has always been an independent self-governing charity. This autonomy allows Sea Cadets to draw on the naval traditions whilst enjoying the maximum flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing needs of each generation. The resultant balance of tradition and innovation is reflected in key aspects of the contemporary Sea Cadets 'offer'.

The existing charity traces its origins to 1756 and the outbreak of the Seven Year's War when Jonas Hanway, a London-based philanthropist, founded the Marine Society to encourage young men and boys of good character to join the Royal Navy. Incorporated in 1772 the Society commissioned the world's first sea training ship in 1786, the 350-ton sloop Beatty. The Society continued to provide sea training up until the Second World War, by which time it had trained and equipped an estimated 110,000 men and boys.

The Sea Cadets movement dates back to 1856 when sailors returning from the Crimean War established the 'Naval Lads' Brigades' in a number of ports. This was more than two decades prior to the formation of the Army Cadets and the Boys' Brigade, making Sea Cadets the first uniformed youth organisation to be established in the UK, if not worldwide, and possibly anywhere. In 1910 the Navy League sponsored a small number of independent units, which after 1919 received Admiralty recognition. In 1942 these combined to become the Sea Cadets Corps with a parallel organisation for young women – the Girls' Nautical Training Corps. In 1955 a Marines Cadets division of Sea Cadets was introduced (later becoming the Royal Marines Cadets), and in 1980 the Girls' Nautical Training Corps amalgamated with the Sea Cadets Corps to form the modern day Sea Cadets.

MSSC was formed in 2004 with the merger of The Marine Society and the Sea Cadet Association. This new body retained the constitution of The Marine Society. Sea Cadets has since continued to thrive and grow with around 15,000 cadets across the UK, as well as being part of a worldwide association of Sea Cadets.² Engaging young people from 9 to 18, the median length of stay for a young person is two years and two months, with an average joining age of 12 and leaving age of 14.²

Vital to the success of Sea Cadets is an adult volunteer base of approximately 9,000 people giving up their time on a weekly basis to sustain the work of Sea Cadets³. This high ratio of adult volunteer to young Sea Cadets is replicated in very few other youth work settings. Sea Cadets' longevity and the exceptionally high ratio of volunteers to cadets is a key indicator of the organisation's past success in encouraging a sense of civic duty and commitment to the well-being of young people amongst previous generations of members (Jefferies, 2018a). This ratio also reflects the degree to which the adult volunteers perceive Sea Cadets to be a worthwhile organisation.

Like other major uniformed youth charities such as the Scouts or Guides, Sea Cadets is a federation with over 400 local units run as independent charities by volunteers. These are located in towns and cities across the UK and devolved nations, engaging young people from a wide range of backgrounds⁴. Whilst receiving extensive support from the national charity, local units are each reliant on raising local funding for their existence. This creates opportunities to build relationships with their local community and local businesses to invest in the work of Sea Cadets. Like the other MOD-sponsored cadets there is extensive training activity funded by the national charity on offer to cadets outside of their local unit. This includes fully funded residential and boating centres and an offshore fleet, all with employed staff together with a heavily subsidised

district, area, national and international training, events and competitions programme. Cadets participate in a national training programme built around rank progression, specialisations and proficiencies and a consistent ethos built on the customs and traditions of the Royal Navy.

Sea Cadets' distinctive approach is documented in their outcomes framework (Marine Society and Sea Cadets, 2016: 8) [see *Table 1*]. This framework, which builds on decades of experience, was formulated on the basis of previous evaluations of the organisation's work conducted by New Philanthropy Capital (NPC). Using the outcomes framework as a foundation, cadets, parents and volunteers all contributed to recent research designed to measure the impact of Sea Cadets upon existing members (Denselow and Noble, 2018). This enquiry found Sea Cadets recruited members from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, and that it positively influenced young people's lives notably by enabling them to aspire and achieve. The same report summarised contextual evidence of the ways in which Sea Cadets fostered: educational engagement; access to leisure and educational opportunities; social inclusion; a reduced risk of anti-social behaviour; raised self-esteem; the acquisition of life skills; and the benefits of a structured environment (Denselow and Noble, 2018).

The previously referenced NPC report acknowledged that the model of impact measurement they employed did 'not provide a full picture' in part because it had, for obvious reasons, no access to 'data showing the career paths young people choose' after leaving Sea Cadets (Denselow and Noble, 2018: 31). The *My LegaSea* project addresses this shortcoming, and incidentally that of many other similar studies of youth work, by seeking to unearth long-term evidence of impact and outcomes.

2. Ongoing MSSC Monitoring – end of year figures, March 2020.

3. Volunteers each gave on average 550 hours per annum in 2018/2019. Valued at the median hourly wage of £13.08 equates to £54.4m per annum. See *The social value of volunteering* (Haldane, 2014).

4. Units (approximately 1/4 of total units), are in 60 of the 80 local authorities which contain the most left behind neighbourhoods. See *Left Behind? Understanding communities on the edge* (Local Trust, 2019).



EXPERIENCE

What is Offered

- Adventure and challenge
- Progressive training
- Personal development
- Competitions and events

What makes it special

- Nautical focus
- Customs and traditions of the Royal Navy
- Breadth of activities and experiences with opportunity to specialise

What is the cadet experience

- Positive relationships
- Sense of belonging and identity
- Inspirational

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Life Skills

- Motivation
- Self-confidence
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Citizenship
- Innovation
- Initiative

Values

- Respect
- Loyalty
- Self-discipline
- Commitment
- Honesty and Integrity
- Courage⁵

Qualifications

- Internally accredited
- Externally accredited (BTEC, DofE and national governing body)⁶

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Attendance and engagement in school

Improved post 16 destinations / labour market participation

Long-term wellbeing

Reduced risky / problem behaviours

Increased participation in communities

Table 1: Sea Cadets Outcomes Framework (adapted from MSSC, 2016: 8)

5. Courage was reintroduced to the values set in 2019.

6. External qualifications include awards accredited by – Royal Yachting Association, British Canoeing Union, British Sub Aqua Club, Duke of Edinburgh Award, St John Ambulance Brigade, Institute of Leadership and Management, and BTECs.

DEFINING WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Sea Cadets self-identification as ‘the leading maritime charity for youth development’ raises in passing an issue relating to youth sector terminology. Simply put youth work and youth development do not always mean the same thing and in the UK it is the former which has been predominately employed to describe informal education with young people since the late 1930s (Jeffer, 2018b). The identifying features of youth work according to the Albemarle Report comprise voluntary ‘association, training and challenge’ (Ministry of Education, 1960: 52). More recently organisations within the field have extended that definition to embrace ‘the social and personal development of young people’ through informal education (Unite the Union, 2013: 3; National Youth Agency, 2010). Youth development focuses on the delivery of interventions designed to aid the emotional, physical and intellectual development of young people in order to ensure a smooth transition to adulthood. Philosophically it is predominantly problem-centred and places an emphasis on individuals rather than groups. The model, like the term, is one imported from North America. Youth development first gained traction in the UK following the publication in 2002 of the Department for Education and Skills policy document *Transforming Youth Work – resourcing excellent youth services*. Its introduction was accompanied by a policy re-orientation ‘towards “delivery”, accreditation, individualisation and targeting’ (Smith, 2003: 46). Advocates of youth development have dismissed youth work as unstructured and resistant to evaluation (Stuart and Maynard, 2015). Whilst supporters of youth work have styled youth development as an instrumental problem-centred approach which perpetuates negative stereotypes leading to individualised interventions that devalue contextualised, relational and open-ended forms of practice (Nolas, 2012; Smith, 2003).

Sea Cadets have endeavoured to avoid becoming embroiled in this ongoing controversy by seeking to embrace the best components of both models. Firstly, by following the sectoral trend toward youth development in public articulations of their work and by emphasising targeted results within their outcomes framework (MSSC, 2016). Secondly, by retaining the best traditions of youth work, which entails offering voluntary, associational, open-access programmes which incorporate a clear commitment to social education and the promotion of teamwork and group-orientated activities.

EXISTING RESEARCH

My LegaSea is the first UK-wide, multigenerational study into the long-term impact of work with young people. This differentiates it from the preceding studies which were ‘short term’ and of ‘limited ambition’ (Jeffer, 2018a: 1). Prior to *My LegaSea* the closest that came to a ‘longitudinal study’ were those undertaken by Howard Williamson and Bob Holman (Jeffer, 2018a: 1). The former was an ethnographic study of those involved in a youth project located on a South Wales council estate who were ‘followed up’ when they reached their early forties (Williamson, 1981; 2004). The latter was an account of a project located in a similar setting where participants were interviewed after a 20-year hiatus (Holman, 1981, 2000). Whilst ‘interesting and helpful they are fundamentally journalistic’ and small in scale (Jeffer, 2018a:1). Other instances of research undertaken over an extended time-span include *Inventing Adulthoods* (Henderson et al., 2006) and the Audit Commission investigation into the life-time cost to society of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) (Godfrey et al., 2002; Coles et al., 2010). Both emphasise social factors and policy; neither assess the impact of either youth activity or youth work interventions.

The two prime sources of UK longitudinal research are *Understanding Society – UK Household Longitudinal Study* (UKHLS) and the *British Household Panel Survey*. UKHLS uses birth cohorts to monitor societal change and life course trajectories (Pelikh, 2019). *The Centre for Longitudinal Studies – British Cohort Study* (BCS70) and the *Millennium Cohort Study* follow age group cohorts during their lifetimes. None of these are being used to evaluate the impact of youth activities and youth services. Feinstein et al. however used age-16 data from the BCS70 to investigate the impact of ‘age-16 leisure contexts [on] later adult outcomes’ (2006: 305). The study was ‘small in scale and limited in scope’ (Jeffer, 2018a: 1) and the validity of its approach and findings were understandably mistrusted by the wider youth sector (The Education Committee, 2011). What the findings of this study inferred was that open-access centre-based youth work might actually have a negative impact in terms of behavioural outcomes.

Goodwin et al. sought to evaluate the long-term impact of the 1980s Youth Training Scheme (YTS) on trainees’ employment profile (2020: 28). In doing so they built upon Andy Furlong’s work comparing YTS trainees to the BCS70 1986 sweep of data (1987; 1993). Goodwin et al. offered a partial insight into the long-term impact

of a specific youth intervention, but their analysis was limited to measuring individual outcomes. Moreover, they only interviewed 25 people all drawn from a single generational cohort. So, in terms of breadth and depth it was far narrower in scope than the *My LegaSea* research.

POLICY CONTEXT

Since the onset of the present century, youth work has experienced an almost unbroken period of decline. Notably, the once dominant local authority sector has faded into virtual obscurity. The exceptions have been the 'faith-based' sector and uniformed organisations, all of which have predominantly remained in a steady state in terms of membership and number of units. As central and local government spending on youth work has fallen, so the pattern of investment has altered. In particular the available funding has been targeted towards specific localities or forms of identified 'need'. Overwhelmingly, the funding provided by both local and national government has been short-term and primarily coupled to pre-ordained outcomes and outcome measures (Davies, 2019).

During the last decade, two reviews of non-formal work with young people have taken place – The Education Select Committee Report (2011) and The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Youth Affairs (2019). In the same period, the government published only one youth policy statement – *Positive for Youth* (2011). All three advocated linking funding to impact measurement and called for the introduction of a common methodology for evaluating youth work programmes (Education Select Committee, 2011; DfE, 2012; APPG, 2019:). In addition, *Positive for Youth* called for the expansion of the voluntary sector and increased involvement by private business, as well as the use of asset-based models similar to those encountered in youth development approaches (DfE, 2013). The 2019 APPG review focused on service provision, workforce development and young people's representation within statutory agencies and policy-making bodies. Accentuating a need for consistent, open-access provision (not just targeted and short term interventions), it recommended 'a standardised and national system for evaluating' the youth sector, linked to a theory of change embodying six outcomes (APPG, 2019).

The focus within reviews and policy upon the need to evidence youth impact through outcome measurement as a pre-requisite for funding has been, according to Tania de St Croix, 'at least as powerful' as the spending cuts in 'reshaping' the youth sector (2018: 431). Certainly, fewer and fewer youth work agencies prioritise the expressed needs of their users and communities, and more and more dance to the tunes of the funders who pre-set the outcome measures. None of these documents discuss long-term impact, opting instead to focus solely on the measurement of outcomes 'achieved' during the timespan of the interaction. Within all three, one encounters negligible analysis or recognition of the contribution of uniformed groups, or more specifically cadet organisations. These are overlooked despite the proportionately greater role they are playing within a dwindling wider youth sector.

YOUTH IMPACT MODELS

Methodologies relating to youth impact fall into two broad categories – outcomes-focused and values-focused. In part this divide parallels the distinction between youth development and youth work discussed earlier. The former tending to adopt outcomes-focused, product-oriented approaches; the latter giving preference to values-focused, process-oriented models (Ord and Davies, 2018). Neither category has so far exhibited any desire to evaluate long-term impact.

The outcomes-focused approach within the youth sector is frequently linked to the *Catalyst Framework of Outcomes for Young People* (McNeil et al., 2012) a document commissioned by *Positive for Youth* and to the subsequent *Framework of Outcomes 2.0* produced by The Centre for Youth Impact (McNeil et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2019). Both seek to gauge whether or not a pre-set measurable outcome has, or has not, been achieved. Outcomes-focused interventions tend to embody theories of change, logic models and business cases which form a basis from which a 'youth impact' can be calculated (McNeil et al., 2019; Noble, 2019; Noble et al., 2020; NYA, 2019). Predictably these frameworks have been adopted and disseminated by strategic youth sector organisations who favour the commissioning of youth services on the basis of pre-set individualised outcomes (McNeil et al. 2019; NYA, 2019). Critics, including advocates of a values-focused approach, caution that the focus on commissioner set outcomes privileges a policy and funding agenda which for obvious reasons concentrates on a restricted gamut of skills, attributes and results which can be readily

recorded and accredited. An approach which detractors claim discourages practitioners from paying due attention to those educational objectives that can only be achieved as a result of sustained contact lasting months and years rather than days and weeks, as well as to those outcomes that cannot in essence be measured at all. How, for example, can one measure if one has taught a young person to be courageous or to act with humility? The simple answer is one cannot.

Values-focused approaches generally endorse evaluation techniques based on the quality of the youth work process rather than individual outcomes (Ord and Davies, 2018; de St Croix, 2020). Principally, this is achieved by adopting methodologies that are not overly bureaucratic, and which do not compromise the values of youth work (Slovenko and Thompson, 2016). Values-focused models of evaluation advocate a focus on the personal inter-action between the youth worker and the young person. Therefore, it tends to be critical of monetised mechanisms linked to a social return on investment which risk privileging predetermined metrics at the expense of young people's experiences (de St Croix, 2018; McGregor, 2015). Hence values-focused approaches draw attention to the need for impact measurement to avoid an over-reliance on quantitative data. More specifically they place great importance upon participatory formats such as storytelling and recollection which in part take into account an extended perspective (Cooper, 2018b; McGregor, 2015).

The two models have their own strengths and weaknesses. At its best the outcomes-focused model generates hard data and replicability which allows for limited forms of impact to be computed and communicated. Values-focused approaches develop analysis specific to the youth work context. Historically neither prioritised the evaluation of long-term impact. Sea Cadets has been committed to conjoining the strengths of both in order to gauge the impact of their work. Indeed, the *My LegaSea* project borrowed elements from each but in essence stands apart from them as a result of its aspiration to weigh the long-term impact of the Sea Cadets' 'offer'.

CURRENT PRACTICE

National Citizen Service

National Citizen Service (NCS) launched in 2011 is currently a focal point of UK youth policy and the 'most heavily centrally funded service' (APPG, 2019: 23). One indicator of the scale of the investment in NCS is that the current annual budget is equivalent to the total reduction in spending on all local authority youth services between 2008 and 2016.⁷ NCS offers every 15 to 17 year old the opportunity to take part in a residential experience and a short social action project. Fewer than one in five of those eligible to take part do so. A number of evaluations relating to NCS have been completed however only the first relating to the 2011 and 2012 pilots included any qualitative data (Clery and Kotecha, 2013). Those that followed focused on quantitative data. None sought to assess long-term impact opting to prioritised monetising the benefits of NCS (Panayiotou et al., 2017; Jump and Simetrica, 2017).

UNIFORMED YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Sea Cadets are part of what are categorized *uniformed youth organisations*. This term encompasses not only Sea Cadets but also Royal Air Force Air Cadets, Army Cadets, and similar public service cadets (Police, Fire, St John Ambulance) as well as other uniformed groups, notably the Scouts, Girlguiding, Girls' Brigade, Boys' Brigade and Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade. Youth United Foundation, launched in 2012, is the national body which serves as a networking agency for this disparate grouping.

A widespread misconception relating to the role of the various cadets is that their prime function is to aid recruitment to the armed services and disseminate a military ethos (Batsleer, 2014). Such criticisms, apart from displaying a poor grasp of their history, overlook the inherent structure of cadetting which has consistently adopted a multi-faceted educational programme.

7. Between 2008 and 2016 reductions in local authority youth services expenditure exceeded £380 million; during the same period over 600 centres closed (Unison, 2016). NCS budget for 2016-2020 is £1.26 billion (National Audit Office, 2017: 4) which equates to approximately £300 million per annum.

Recent investigations relating to the impact of uniformed youth organisations have focused on the extent to which they encourage social mixing (ComRes, 2018) and their social action roles (Youth United Foundation, 2015). A study into the *Societal Impact of Cadet Forces* was commissioned by the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) in order to compensate for a 'conspicuous lack of research that specifically evaluates the impact of organised uniformed youth groups' and 'of cadets' (Moon et al. 2010: 4). Unfortunately, this did not venture beyond the period of membership in terms of assessing impact. In 2015 the Ministry of Defence, Combined Cadet Force Association and the Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation (CVQO) commissioned the University of Northampton to research the social impact of the expansion in the number of school-based cadet units. Currently only interim findings are available. The first interim report which concentrated on the economic value of these units suggests membership positively influences: school engagement; community inclusion; the development of self-confidence; the nurturing of communication and leadership skills; and progression within armed forces for those who subsequently enlist (Institute for Social Innovation and Impact, 2017). The second interim report focussed on the extent to which membership improved social mobility; self-efficacy; and attendance, engagement and behaviour in the school setting (Bajwa-Patel et al., 2018: 2). Although examining only school-based units this study has served to draw attention to the educational element within the cadet 'offer'.

Finally, mention should be made of an independent study which surveyed 40 women aged 20-55 who were Sea Cadets and subsequently served as adult volunteers. The investigation sought to assess how their involvement in Sea Cadets influenced their career trajectory. It found membership and affiliation as an adult volunteer all had a positive long-term effect (Raisborough, 2007).

SUMMARY

Evidence of meaningful impact with respect to the youth sector is limited. NCS provides a large body of data but only short term impact, for a narrow age group and it concentrates on value for money rather than the possible benefits accruing from engagement. Uniformed youth evaluations have so far focussed on specific interventions or themes without seeking to ascertain long-term impact.

All earlier evaluations carried out with reference to the work of Sea Cadets are outcomes-focused and centred on the outcomes framework. These sought the opinions of current cadets and their parents and adult volunteers.

My LegaSea uniquely offers evidence of long-term impact a dimension absent from all previous research relating to youth sector outcomes.



Of the nine generations of former cadets who participated in the **My LegaSea** survey:-

80%
reported that
Sea Cadets had
increased their
independence
and skills in the
longer term

3. APPROACH
TO RESEARCH



3. APPROACH TO RESEARCH

My LegaSea findings were collated from material generated by (a) an online survey; (b) face-to-face interviews; and (c) focus groups. The research employed quantitative and qualitative methods which yielded a substantial body of evidence.

This research was funded by Sea Cadets. The primary purpose being *to understand and evidence what, if any, impact Sea Cadets has had on people's lives over an extended period of time.*

The researcher had no prior association with Sea Cadets, the Ministry of Defence or any uniformed youth organisation. A qualified community and youth worker with experience of volunteering with neighbourhood and faith-based youth and community projects, she was previously employed by a regional youth work charity as well as researching interdisciplinary practice in the voluntary and public sector. The *My LegaSea* Advisory Panel comprised three external academics and senior staff from MSSC.



SURVEY

Over 3,000⁸ individuals completed the online survey making the findings statistically significant.⁹ Respondents were aged 18 to 92 and reflected the geographic spread of local units and gender mix of membership [see *Figures 1-4* and *Tables 3* and *4* below]. It gathered information on the impact of Sea Cadets relating to both the respondent's period of affiliation and their adult lives. In addition, respondents were invited to submit illustrative examples of how Sea Cadets influenced their later lives. The survey was promoted via Sea Cadets own social media, the use of Facebook promotion, e-bulletins and print publications, as well as by local news and radio outlets across the UK, all with the aim of contacting ex-members who were not part of existing Sea Cadets networks.

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Over 100 former Sea Cadets took part in face-to-face interviews and focus groups. Each commenced with open-ended questions relating to their past involvement with Sea Cadets. This was followed by a discussion of their experiences post membership which asked them to reflect on what, if any, impact the organisation had had on their adult lives. Finally, there came a series of prompted questions based on Sea Cadets values, mindsets and long-term benefits [see *Table 2*].

Those who attended an interview or focus group were principally recruited via the online survey. A diverse sample were selected with an emphasis placed on reaching different generations whilst simultaneously ensuring a geographic spread. A minority were recruited by the use of snowball sampling (Morgan, 2008). Besides individual interviews, location specific focus groups took place in Orkney, Stonehaven, Glasgow, Hebburn, Fleetwood, Wakefield, Weston-Super-Mare, Guildford and Jersey. One focus group held in London focused specifically on former members of the Girls' Nautical Training Corps.

ANALYSIS

Quantitative survey data was reviewed to detect trends spanning the various decade cohorts and to ascertain multigenerational impacts. Qualitative data was coded and analysed to identify and map themes and findings from the research. Quantitative and qualitative analysis was triangulated to improve the reliability of the data (Salkind, 2010).

Values	Mindsets	Long-term Benefits
Respect	Can-do Attitude	Attendance and engagement in school
Loyalty	Determination	Improved post 16 destinations / labour market participation
Self-discipline	Humour	Long-term wellbeing
Commitment	Service	Reduced risky/ problem behaviours
Honesty and Integrity		Increased participation in communities
Courage		

Table 2: Sea Cadets' Values, Mindsets and Long-term Benefits

8. 3102 with ~70 duplicated responses.

9. Based on estimated loose upper bound of the total Sea Cadets population since 1940 a conservative calculation of the significance of the quantitative data in the survey was achieved. The survey data has a confidence level of 95 with a confidence interval of + - 1.79. Although this is only an estimate, it is significantly lower than the common best practice benchmark of 95/+ - 5 demonstrating a lower margin of error giving confidence in the significance of the quantitative data.

LIMITATIONS

My LegaSea survey and the *Launching into Life* report represent a notable advance in terms of research into the impact of youth work. However, the study is limited in three respects. First, although significant effort was made to recruit beyond the existing Sea Cadets network, restrictions of time and resources meant those who took part were disproportionately drawn from a cohort that was more likely than not to hold favourable or neutral attitudes towards Sea Cadets. Furthermore, although every opportunity was given for those involved to articulate adverse judgements the research questions did not overly concentrate on negative impact. Consequently, there may be an unintended positive bias within the data. Second, the asymmetrical reliance upon online recruitment to the survey restricted participation to those with online access. Strenuous efforts were made to address this shortcoming by the use of local media and the distribution of hard copies of the survey, but this met with only limited success. Third, the attention paid to the multigenerational analysis meant comparative analysis in relation to other areas of interest such as gender, class, and ethnicity may well warrant future exploration.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Underlying ethical issues were given due consideration throughout. Involvement was voluntary with individuals giving informed consent prior to partaking. The research was supervised by the MSSC Safeguarding Team and all negative responses were reviewed for safeguarding concerns. None however necessitated a safeguarding case review or investigation.



Image provided by Ray Bullock



Image provided by Ray Bullock

Of the nine generations of former cadets who participated in the **My LegaSea** survey:-

71%
reported Sea
Cadets improved
their happiness
and wellbeing
whilst they were
members



4. FINDINGS

This section presents an overview of the *My LegaSea* data commencing with a summary of the demographic background of those taking part, prior to appraising the statistical data from the quantitative survey. Finally, the themes that emerged from the qualitative research are discussed.

The key findings from the quantitative data are that Sea Cadets exercised a consistently positive effect on: the development of skills; the capacity for autonomous behaviour; the ability to cope with challenges; the selection of positive career pathways; and the maintenance of personal wellbeing. With respect to the qualitative data the main conclusions related to the way the context, community and connections offered by Sea Cadets fostered capabilities and confidence that in later life nurtured an array of personal and professional achievements. This was prevalent and clearly recognised by those surveyed at all ages.

4. FINDINGS



DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

GROUP

In the survey 94 per cent of respondents identified as having been members of Sea Cadets, the remainder belonged to either Girls' Nautical Training Corps (GNTC) or Navy League. Of those who were interviewed or contributed to a focus group 74 per cent were Sea Cadets and 26 per cent GNTC. Amongst survey respondents 43 per cent had been, or currently were, adult volunteers attached to Sea Cadets, as were 49 per cent of those who were interviewed or part of a focus group.

GENDER

Of the survey respondents 28 per cent were female, 71 per cent were male and 1 per cent identified with another gender or none.¹⁰ Regarding those interviewed or who took part in a focus group, 32 per cent were female, 65 per cent were male and 3 per cent identified as another gender or none. The proportions of those interviewed are more in line with the current gender profile of Sea Cadets which records 37 per cent as female.¹¹ The research included representation of non-binary and transgender identities. A breakdown of gender compared to age is provided below [see *Table 4*].

¹⁰ The disproportionate number of male respondents amongst older cohorts reflects the fact that prior to 1942 there were no female units or mixed provision; the number of the former increased gradually from 1942 onward.

¹¹ Based on Sea Cadets monitoring up until 31/05/2020.

ETHNICITY & NATIONALITY

Of the survey respondents 97.6 per cent were white (British, Irish or other) and 2.4 per cent were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups. Given the interview and focus group sample drew heavily from the initial survey, as was to be expected, a majority were white British. However, perspectives from different ethnicities and nationalities were prioritised when inviting people to be interviewed or partake in a focus group. The composition of this sample as a consequence included the following:

- Five from BAME groups.
- Two from Northern Ireland.
- Five from Wales.
- Sixteen from Scotland.
- One from Malta.

Amongst those interviewed or who attended a focus group five per cent were from BAME groups; currently 8 per cent of Sea Cadets share that background.¹² The lower percentage within the research profile reflects the levels of ethnic diversity within the host population at the point in time when many older participants were themselves Sea Cadets.

GEOGRAPHY

Sea Cadets has over 400 local units distributed across the UK, nearly all of these were represented in the survey sample. *Figure 1* shows the distribution of survey participants according to their statutory regional area. The blank responses are those who supplied insufficient information to authenticate their location. The geographic spread of survey participants is broadly comparable to the current distribution of Sea Cadets units [compare *Figure 2* and *Figure 4*]. Sea Cadets units, it should be stressed, are to be found in an assortment of communities – rural and urban, coastal and landlocked. Regarding interviewees and focus group members, the location relates to the Sea Cadets unit they previously belonged to as a young person [see *Figure 3*].

Responses by Region

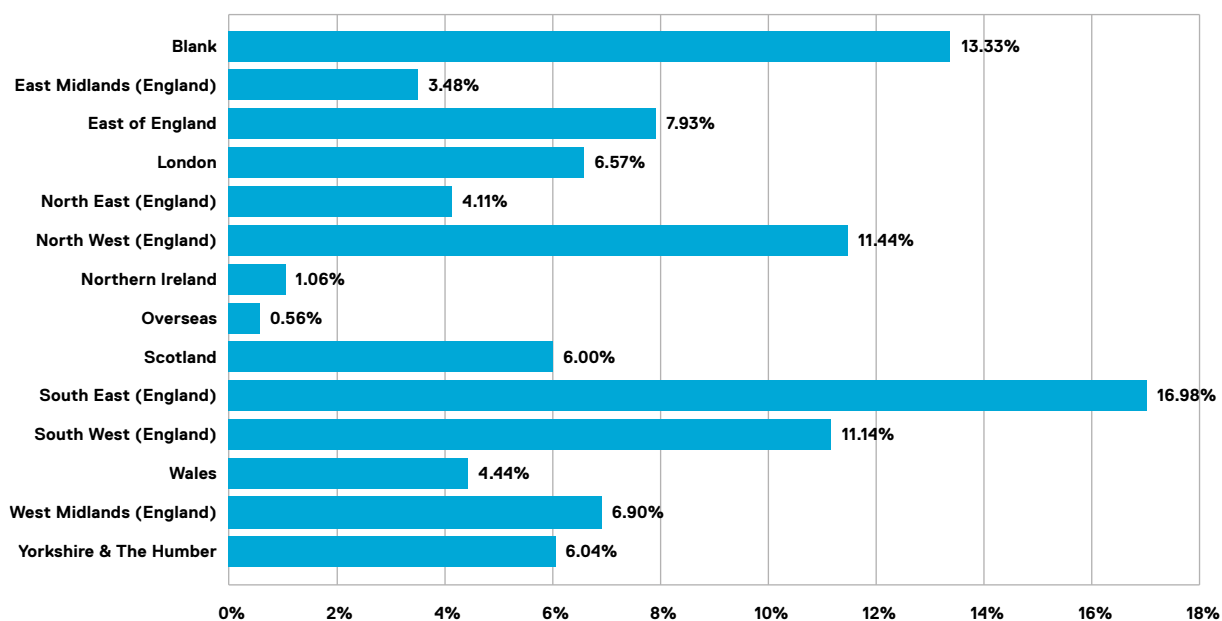


Figure 1: Geographic Spread of Survey Participants by Region

¹² Based on Sea Cadets monitoring up until 31/05/2020.

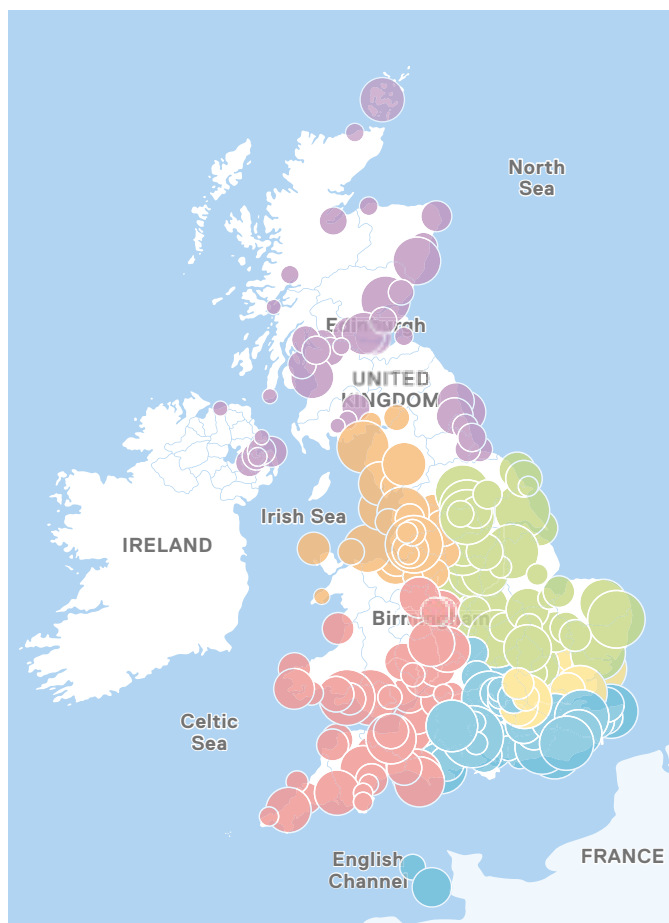


Figure 2: Geographic Spread of Survey Participants (local unit when in Sea Cadets)



Figure 3: Geographic Spread of Interview Participants (local unit when in Sea Cadets)



Area	Survey Stats.	Fieldwork Research				Total Participants ¹³	Current Cadets ¹⁴
		Interviews	Focus Groups	Total Interactions	People		
South West	669	10	1	11	14	671	2,906
Eastern	528	9	1	10	20	538	2,817
Southern	666	5	2	7	15	669	2,644
Northern	408	10	4	14	26	423	2,268
North West	472	10	1	12 (+1 written)	18	477	2,029
London	359	6	1	7	9	359	1,601
TOTAL	3102	51	10	62	102	3127	14,265

Table 3: Summary of Participant Locations by Sea Cadets Area

At present Sea Cadets units are organised across six areas. The sample included representation from all six areas and the numbers for each broadly correlate with the existing spread of membership [see *Table 3*]. The higher turnout for the Eastern Region focus group resulted in that area being marginally over represented.



Figure 4: Map of Six Areas of Sea Cadets with unit locations

AGE – GENERATIONS

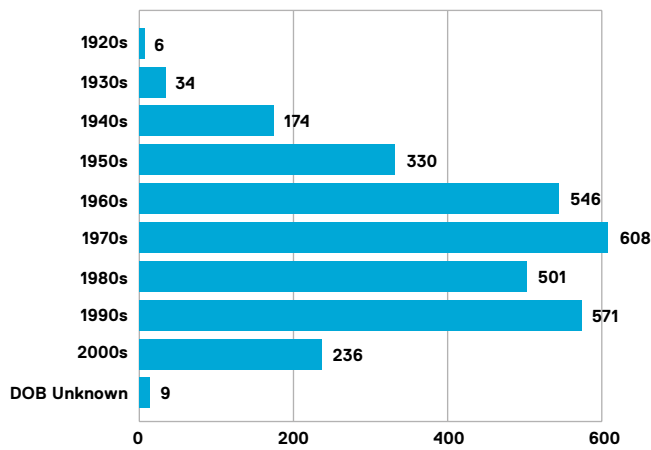
My LegaSea predictably paid heightened attention to cross generational trends. The survey contained the perspectives of former cadets aged 18 to 92. The graphs on the next page show the decades when respondents were born [see Figure 5]. Helpfully the distribution of the *My LegaSea* sample equates to that of the UK Household Longitudinal Study (Pelikh, 2019: 6, 20). In the following analysis the decade cohorts accord with the years when participants were members, therefore those adopted by the study span from 1930 to the decade beginning 2010. Findings relating to the final decade are obviously less expansive due to the limited number of years since those involved left Sea Cadets; nevertheless it was deemed helpful to include this group.

Nine decades were represented in the interview sample [see *Table 4* on next page]. The higher number of those in their 50s and 60s probably reflects their inclination or ability to attend a focus group. The older end of the sample (90 plus) were constrained by virtue of the restricted pool of potential contributors. The younger end of the sample (teens) were afforded a lower priority due to the limited extent to which they would be competent to evidence long-term impact.

13. Most participants were involved in both the survey and interviews/ focus groups so the overall number is similar to the total survey participants. However 25 interview/ focus groups participants were not recruited via the survey, but some completed the survey after their face-to-face interaction which will have led to them being double-counted.

14. Based on Sea Cadets monitoring up until 31/05/2020.

DOB Year (by decade)



DOB Year (by decade)

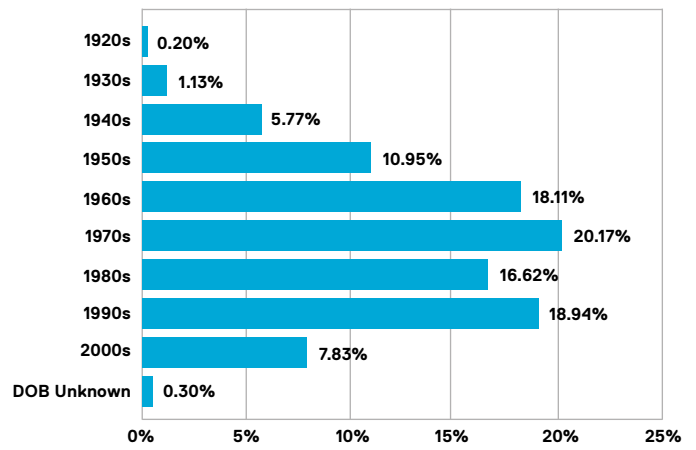


Figure 5: Spread of Ages in the Survey

Gender	Teen	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	80s	90s	TOTAL	%
Male		22, 27, 29, 29	31, 34, 37, 39	41, 46, 47	51, 51, 52, 54, 54, 55, 55, 56, 56, 57, 57, 58, 58, 58, ~58, 59	~60, 60, 61, 61, 61, 61, 61, 62, 62, 63, 63, 63, 64, 65, 66, 66, 66, 69, 69	70, 71, 72, 72, 75, 78, 79	84, 85, 86, 86, 88, 89, 89	90, 90, 91, 92	67	65.0 %
Female	18	21, 25, 26	30, 34, 34, 38, 38	42, 43, 43, 43, 44, 44, 44, 45, 45	50, 50, 52, 54, 55, 59	60, 61, 64, 64, 64, 66	70, 73	85		33	32.0 %
Non-Binary / Other		20, 25			54					3	3.0 %
TOTAL	1	9	9	12	23	27	10	8	4	103	
%	0.9%	8.7%	8.7%	11.7%	22.3%	26.2%	9.7%	7.8%	3.9%		

Table 4: Age and Gender Profile of Interview Sample

SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

This section presents the principal findings from the quantitative data produced by the survey. Based on initial analysis of the data it concentrates on multigenerational long-term impact. Former cadets were asked questions to help them gauge the impact of Sea Cadets on their lives. This included selecting from the ten indicators used by Sea Cadets in their ongoing evaluation programme.

POSITIVE IMPACT OF SEA CADETS

Ninety-five per cent of former cadets in the survey judged Sea Cadets to have had a positive long-term impact on their lives. All ages agreed the experience was enjoyable (96 per cent) and moreover that this experience remained valid and appropriate for contemporary young people (96 per cent). All generations shared in equal measure a belief that Sea Cadets had had a consistent beneficial impact on their adult lives [see Figure 6].

The survey found amongst former members four key impacts:

- 80 per cent said Sea Cadets developed their independence and skills.
- 70 per cent said Sea Cadets improved their ability to cope with challenges.
- 54 per cent said Sea Cadets helped progress their careers.
- 45 per cent said Sea Cadets contributed to their long-term wellbeing.

Survey participants were asked to encapsulate in a solitary word the long-term impact Sea Cadets had had on their lives [see Figure 7]. The leading six replies re-appeared across all the generations. Conspicuously the positive experiences and confidence building role that Sea Cadets performed, figured in the top three choices of every age group. Likewise, *discipline* and *respect* were prevalent within all generations, but more so amongst 1970s and 1980s cohorts. Whilst *life changing* and *amazing* featured prominently, they enjoyed a higher approval rating amongst more recent cohorts. *Friendship* and *camaraderie* scored well across the board, emphasising the value ex-cadets placed on the social inter-actions and relational skills Sea Cadets tendered. What was also consistent was the extent to which former Sea Cadets valued the positive social and personal aspects of membership.

Do you think that your involvement with the Sea Cadets has had a positive long-term impact on your life?

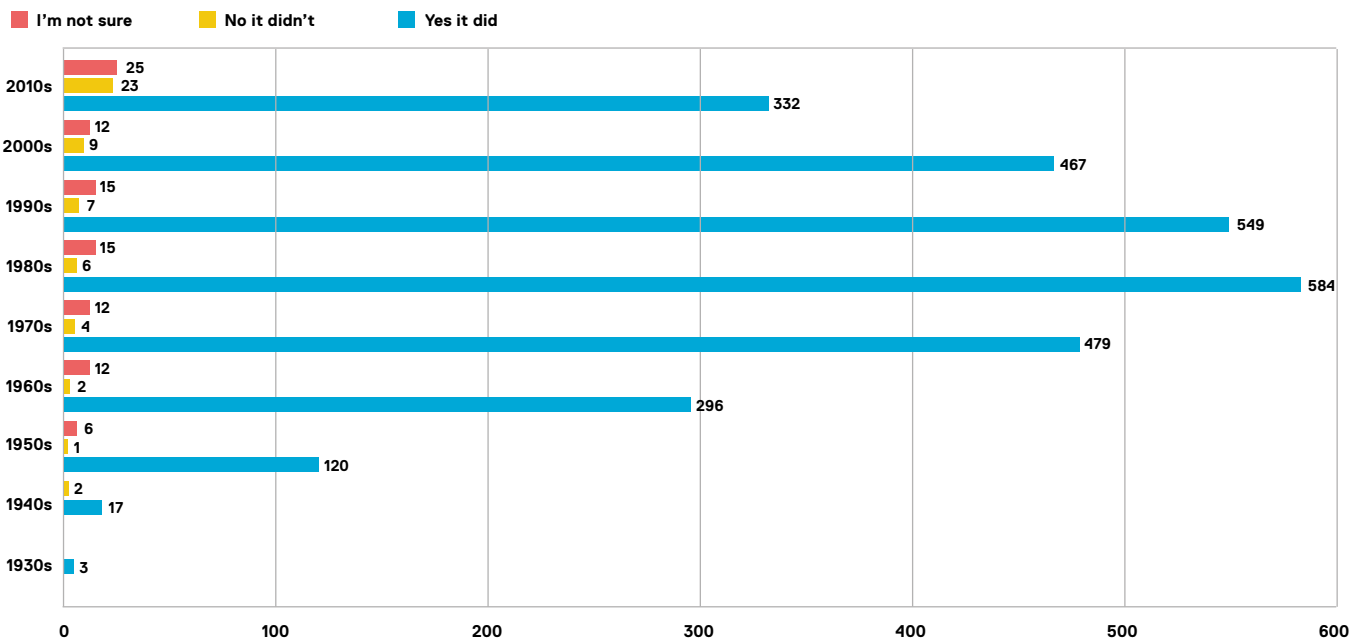


Figure 6: Positive Long-term Impact by Decade Cohorts



What one word would you use to describe the impact Sea Cadets has had on your life?

Cohort during Sea Cadets 1940s 1950s 1960s 1970s 1980s 1990s 2000s 2010s Unknown

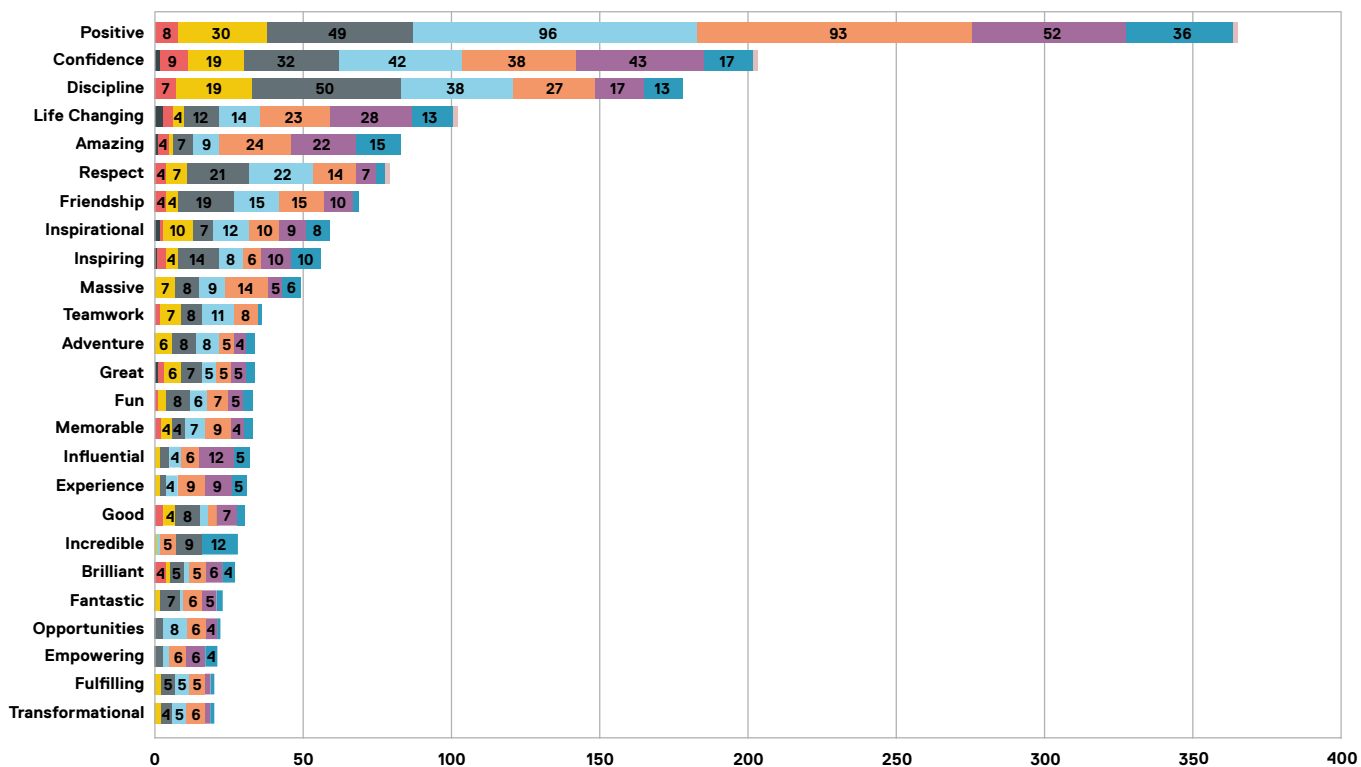


Figure 7: One Word to Describe the Impact of Sea Cadets

IMPACT INDICATORS

Survey participants were asked to think about the ways Sea Cadets impacted on their lives. The first set of indicators related to what might have been a positive impact *during* their period of membership; the second set to how their membership had an affirmative impact on their life *after* they left. The overall percentages for all survey participants are presented and reviewed below.

IMPACT DURING SEA CADETS

Responses relating to impact during their period of affiliation are outlined in *Table 5*. These are compared with the reactions given to a similar set of indicators by current Sea Cadets in 2017.

Across the ten indicators only 1.46 per cent of survey participants failed to identify any area of impact. This meant 98.54 per cent credited Sea Cadets with having a constructive impact on their life whilst they were a member. In particular assimilating *independence* and the acquisition of *skills* were selected by 88.56 per cent of former cadets. The second most prevalent were *happiness* and *wellbeing* opted for by 71.28 per cent. A cluster of three indicators relating to employability were the next most frequent. This encompassed the 60.76 per cent who acknowledged that Sea Cadets encouraged them to seriously envisage a career in the Royal Navy or maritime sector.

Indicator	%	Cadets 2017 ¹⁵
Provided independence and skills ¹⁶	88.56	87.44
Improved happiness and wellbeing	71.28	81.00
Inspired to consider Royal Navy or maritime career ¹⁷	60.76	72.12/ 63.75
Helped gain qualifications	54.49	86.78
Helped get a job	53.93	79.68
Increased participation in local community	52.37	77.70
Made me healthier	41.63	73.17
Helped keep out of trouble ¹⁸	33.12	68.32/ 54.21
Supported attendance at school ¹⁹	13.10	68.01
None of the above	1.46	--

Table 5: Impact Indicator During Sea Cadets

¹⁵ Data from Sea Cadet Annual Survey of Current Cadets 2017, this informed the NPC 2018 report (2579 participants).

¹⁶ The Sea Cadet Annual Survey of Current Cadets 2017 used the phrase 'skills for life' which was deemed similar enough for a basic comparison.

¹⁷ The Sea Cadet Annual Survey 2017 this asked the Royal Navy and maritime career questions separately hence the two figures.

¹⁸ The Sea Cadet Annual Survey 2017 used the phrase 'reduced my involvement in risky or antisocial behaviour' in the indicators, However elsewhere it used 'Sea Cadets has stopped me from getting into trouble' – both statistics are included in the order stated in this note.

¹⁹ The Sea Cadets Annual Survey 2017 used the phrase 'helped me to do better at school' the sentiment is significantly different from 'supported attendance at school' so limited comparison was possible between the data.

Across the generations just 13.10 per cent of survey respondents perceived Sea Cadets to have buttressed their *engagement* in school. It should be noted that two divergent factors emerged when this topic was raised during interviews and focus groups. One was that a meaningful portion did not feel they had need of any assistance as they were already motivated to learn when in school. Whilst those who were semi-detached or disengaged from school enjoyed the alternative learning environment Sea Cadets afforded and did not wish for more. Given these comments it is perhaps to be expected that only a minority spoke about how Sea Cadets extended their engagement with education. The response is also in stark contrast to the 68 per cent in the 2017 data. However, rather than focussing on 'supported attendance in school' the 2017 Survey asked if Sea Cadets had helped cadets 'to do better at school'. The different question means direct comparison is not possible, but the strong view of Sea Cadets helping cadets to do better in school is possibly more reflective of the consistently high impact across the two surveys for acquisition of skills, happiness and wellbeing, which would all contribute to doing well in life generally, including when at school.

When broken down by decade cohorts [see *appendix* items 1-20], the data revealed younger survey participants identified higher impact in specific areas. Sea Cadets generating engagement in the local *community* increased from 16 per cent amongst the 1940s cohort to 62 per cent in the 2000s cluster. Sea Cadets helping to gain *qualifications* rose from an average of 34 per cent across the 1940s and 1950s to 77 per cent in 2000s cohort. Sea Cadets supporting long-term *wellbeing* increased from 63 per cent in the 1940s to 75 per cent in the 2000s.

On the other hand, analysis by decade [see *appendix* items 1-20] revealed a waning in the impact of Sea Cadets *apropos* keeping members out of trouble amongst younger respondents. Here we confront a decrease from 63 per cent in the 1940s to an albeit still significant 40 per cent in the 2000s. It is not unreasonable to assume this decrease reflected a growing belief amongst respondents that they were not actually at any risk of being in trouble. One important reason for that assumption of self-belief could well be their membership of Sea Cadets.

Data from the 2017 Sea Cadets Annual Cadet Survey²⁰ [included in *Table 6*] furnished a basis for comparison between cadets' responses at the time of their participation with those of the multigenerational survey respondents. In passing it should be noted the 2017 data parallels much of the data accumulated by other youth work organisations in being outcomes focussed and assembled at the point of interaction or closure.

As noted above both contemporary and former cadets when asked to reflect on their past experiences strongly identified *independence* and *skills* as the primary impact emanating from their time spent in Sea Cadets. Each also agreed that supporting *wellbeing* and employability were two other key benefits. In addition, at the time of their membership in 2017, they tended to rate more highly than their predecessors the involvement they had with the Royal Navy, and participation in *communities* and *keeping out of trouble*. These differences however may not signal a generational shift because responses from younger participants (the 2000s and 2010s cohorts) in the multigenerational study were closer in sentiment to the older cohorts than to the 2017 cadets.

Variations between impact recorded during involvement and that documented later in life will reflect shifts over time as to what individuals deem to be meaningful and important. Young people evaluating impact who are involved in a youth programme may attribute more value to a recent activity than those assessing its merits with the benefit of hindsight. The one exception to this trend is the weighting given to *independence and skills*; here former cadets agreed with this stance more enthusiastically than the current cadets.



²⁰ The Sea Cadet Annual Survey 2017 used a five point scale whilst the My *LegaSea* survey employed a three point scale. Both of the positive responses from the scale used in the 2017 survey ('a great deal' and 'a fair amount') were taken as equivalent to a 'yes' response in the My *LegaSea* survey.

IMPACT AFTER SEA CADETS

A set of indicators were given to *My LegaSea* survey participants which related to the impact of Sea Cadets on their lives after their departure [see *Table 6*]. Here again *independence* and *skills* emerged as the most significant element for all of the various age cohorts with 79.5 per cent of respondents opting for this indicator. The ability to *cope with challenges* came second scoring 69.75 per cent followed by career (54.03 per cent) and wellbeing (44.64 per cent).

Five of the indicators relating to *after* leaving Sea Cadets exhibited an increase of impact in terms of the score awarded them by younger survey participants. The main examples were: progression on to *higher education* which increased from 21 per cent in the 1940s cohort to 49 per cent amongst the 2000s cohort; *career* progression from 42 per cent in the 1940s to 62 per cent in the 2000s; participation in *communities*

doubled from 16 per cent in the 1940s to 32 per cent in the 2000s; ability to *cope with challenges* rose from 58 per cent in the 1940s to 73 per cent in the 2000s; and developing *independence and skills* went from an average of 71 per cent across the 1940s and 1950s to 85 per cent in the 2000s cohort.

Two areas revealed a movement in the opposite direction. Careers in the Royal Navy decreased from 42 per cent amongst the 1940s cohort to 17 per cent in the 2000s, whilst careers in the wider maritime sector went from 21 per cent in the 1940s to 15 per cent in the 2000s. Trends that may well reflect the significant decline in the number of naval and maritime vacancies during the intervening years. However, it should be noted that between the 1990s and 2000s the percentage considering a career in the maritime sector almost doubled from 8 to 15 per cent. In total 37.98 per cent of respondents went onto a career in either the Royal Navy or wider maritime sector.

Indicator	%
Provided independence and skills	79.50
Helped cope with challenges	69.75
Helped with career	54.03
Improved long-term happiness and wellbeing	44.64
Helped engage with further/higher education	35.82
Increased participation in local community	31.31
Led to career in Royal Navy	25.87
Helped establish long-term healthy lifestyle	22.85
Led to career in wider maritime sector	12.11
None of the above	4.15

Table 6: Impact Indicators After Sea Cadets

21 Comparing the impact indicators from *during* and *after* involvement in Sea Cadets there were two anomalies. First 'inspired considering Royal Navy or maritime career' became two discrete indicators. Second 'helped gain qualifications' and 'supported attendance at school' were merged into one indicator 'helped engage with further/higher education'.

COMPARISONS OF IMPACT DURING AND AFTER INVOLVEMENT IN SEA CADETS

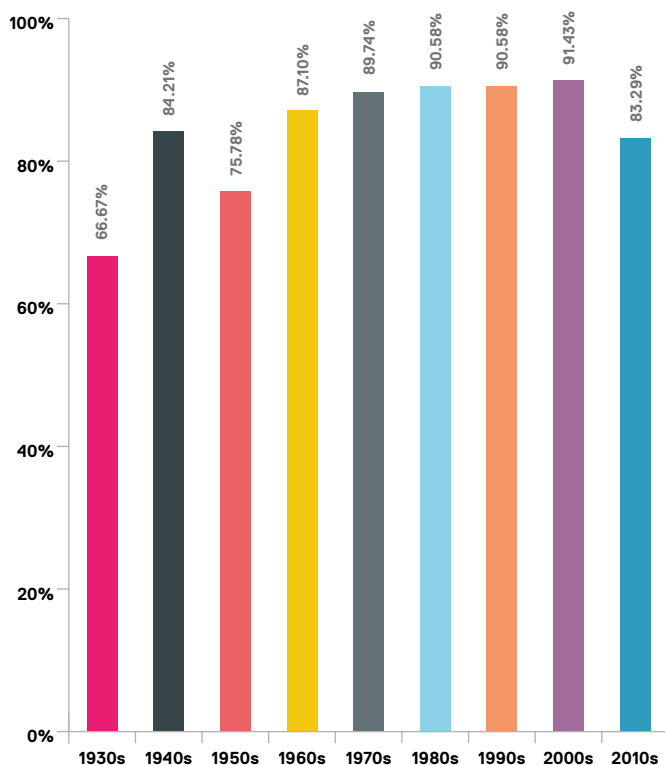
The four most prevalent areas of impact for survey participants *after* leaving Sea Cadets will now be compared to their equivalent indicator from the *during* their time in Sea Cadets starting with *independence* and *skills*.

INDEPENDENCE AND SKILLS

The most significant long-term impact of Sea Cadets on respondents' lives both *during* their involvement and *after* leaving was the independence and *skills* it fostered. Amongst respondents to the survey 89 per cent reported Sea Cadets gave them *independence* and *skills* during their involvement and 80 per cent that they subsequently benefited from having acquired those characteristics as a cadet. Cadets from the more recent decades tended to award these an even higher rating. Amongst those from the 2000s it stood at 91 per cent during membership and 85 per cent in later years. Furthermore, 87 per cent of current cadets surveyed in 2017 identified with this as an area of impact.



Q16 - Provided me with independence and skills I could use



Q17 - Provided me with independence and equipped me with skills for life

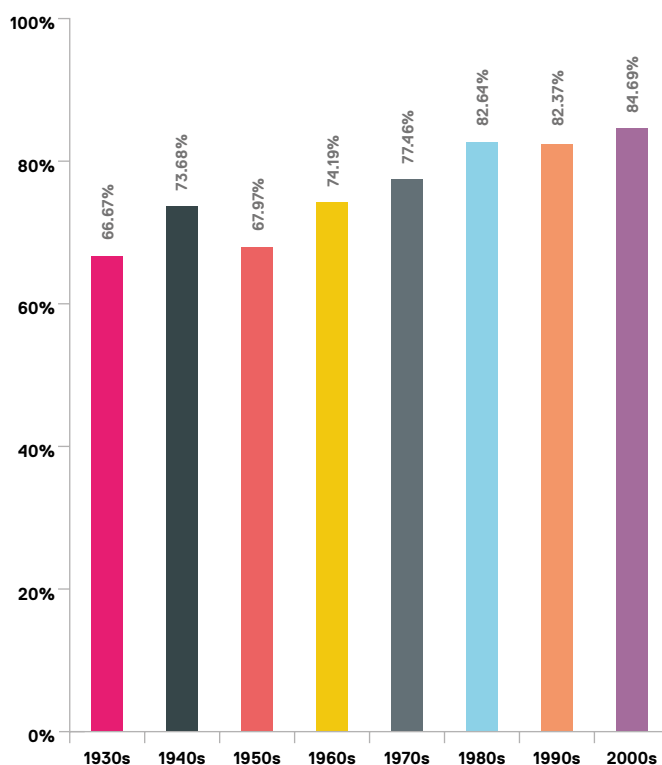
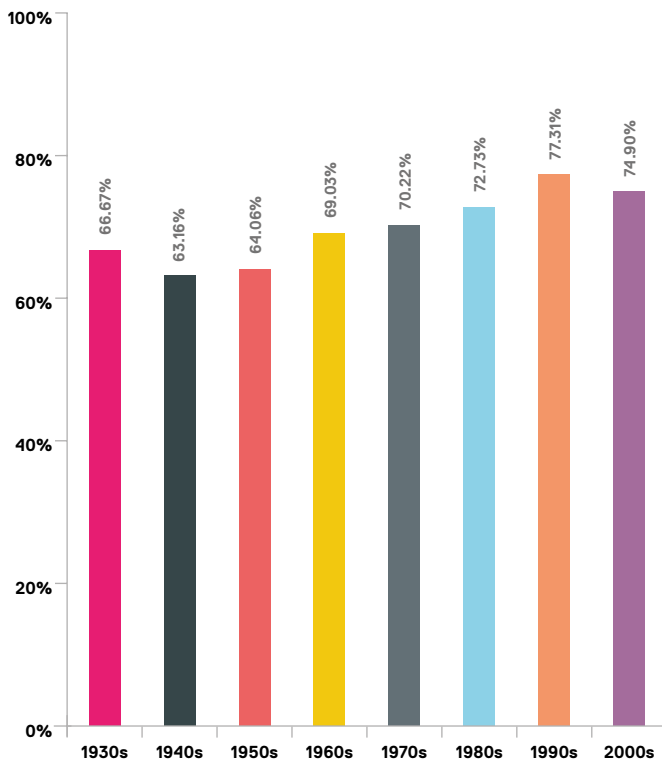


Figure 8: Long-term Impact – Independence by Decade Cohorts

Q16 - Improved my happiness and wellbeing



Q17 - Improved my long-term happiness and wellbeing

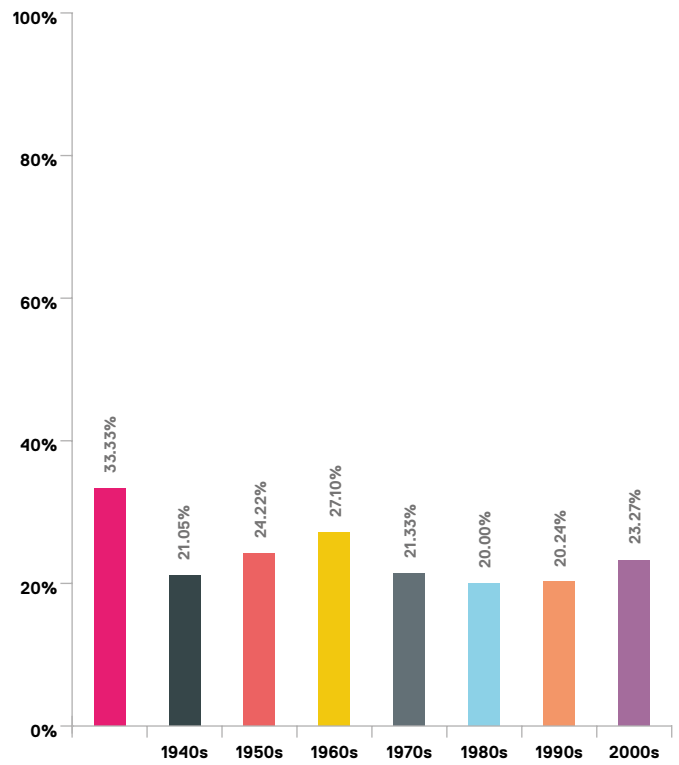
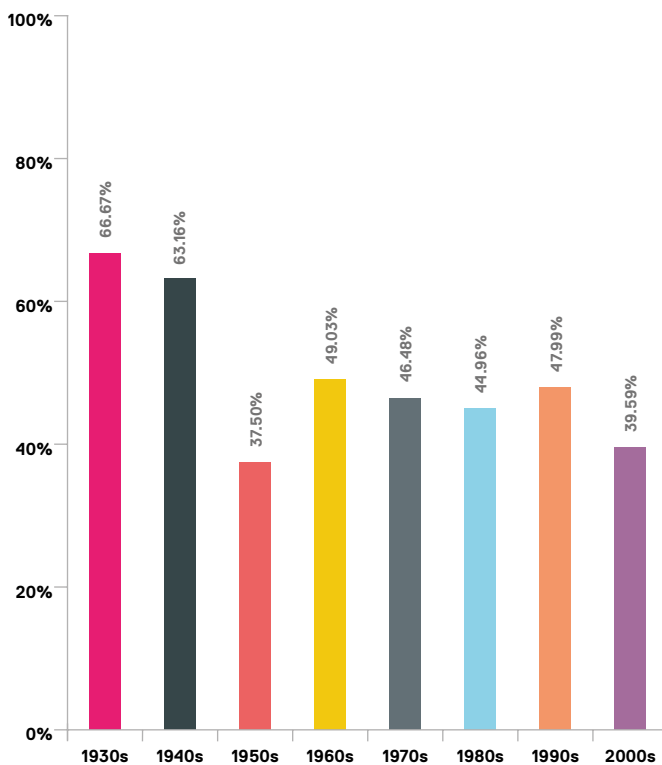


Figure 9: Long-term Impact - Wellbeing by Decade Cohort

Q16 - Helped keep me out of trouble



Q17 - Helped me cope with challenges I have faced in my life

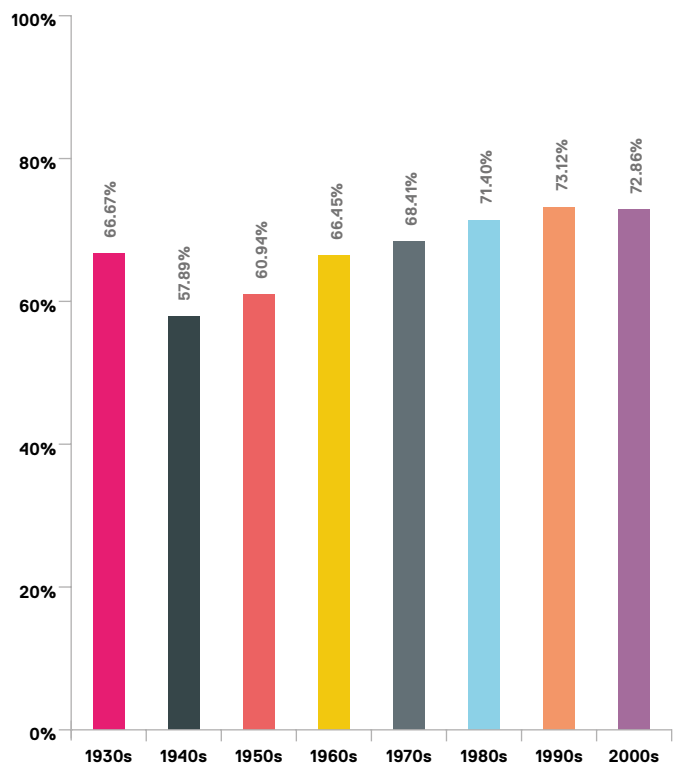


Figure 10: Long-term Impact - Challenges by Decade Cohort

WELLBEING

Survey respondents consistently rated *wellbeing* as a high-ranking area of impact both during and after their period of membership. This was a marked feature across all cohorts. What was impressive is that there was a steady increase in the percentage experiencing improved *wellbeing* in recent years. But the oldest (former cadets now in their 80s and 90s) proved an exception. They reported a significantly higher impact gained from membership on their long-term *wellbeing* [see the right hand graph of *Figure 9* opposite]. The oldest cohorts it should be noted lived through the Second World War and rationing, an era when Sea Cadets played a more direct role in sustaining their wellbeing via provision of canteens, uniforms and fitness training.

COPING WITH CHALLENGES

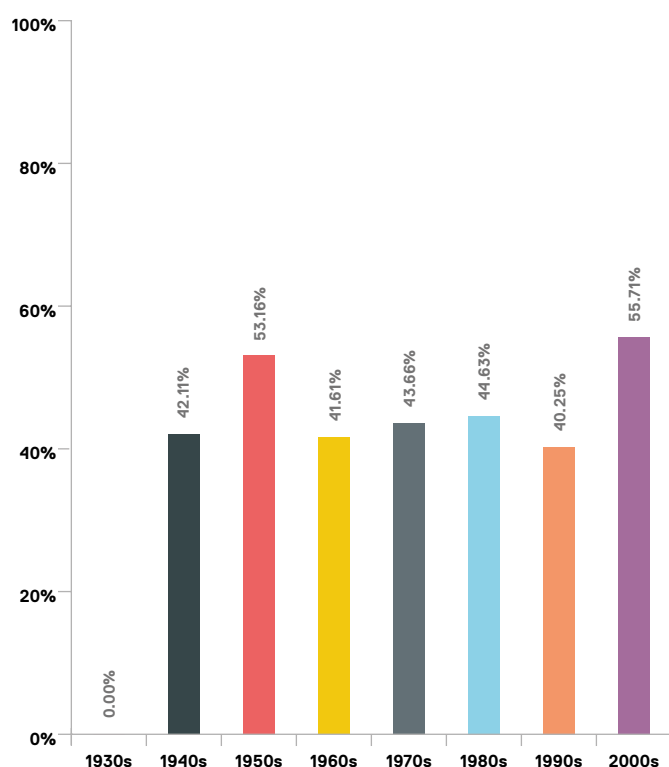
One confronts a conspicuous divide concerning responses to the 'keeping out of trouble' and 'coping with challenges' indicators as an upshot of the latter having a markedly higher impact after *leaving* Sea Cadets than the former did *during* membership. This may in part be explained by an adjustment in the terminology used in relation to the two indicators.

Certainly, respondents identified more favourably to the concept of *coping with challenges* than with *keeping out of trouble*. One connotation of the shift between these two may reflect the degree to which an individual is awarded agency or viewed as part of the problem. *Keeping out of trouble* plays into notions of unruly teenagers at risk of being led astray whilst *coping with challenges* conveys an impression of resilience and being in possession of a capacity to navigate external challenges and temptations.

CAREERS

Feedback from the survey spoke of how Sea Cadets had a greater impact on the career prospects of more recent generations. Within the oldest cohort during Sea Cadets [see first bar of left graph in *Figure 11*] nobody commented that being a cadet had helped them get a job. This may be linked to the fact that then after leaving cadets usually embarked on their national service and a buoyant job market meant few school-leavers encountered any obstacles in finding work. Also given the lower school-leaving ages many may well have joined Sea Cadets either after, or a matter of months prior, to entering the labour force.

Q16 - Helped me get a job



Q17 - Helped me with my career

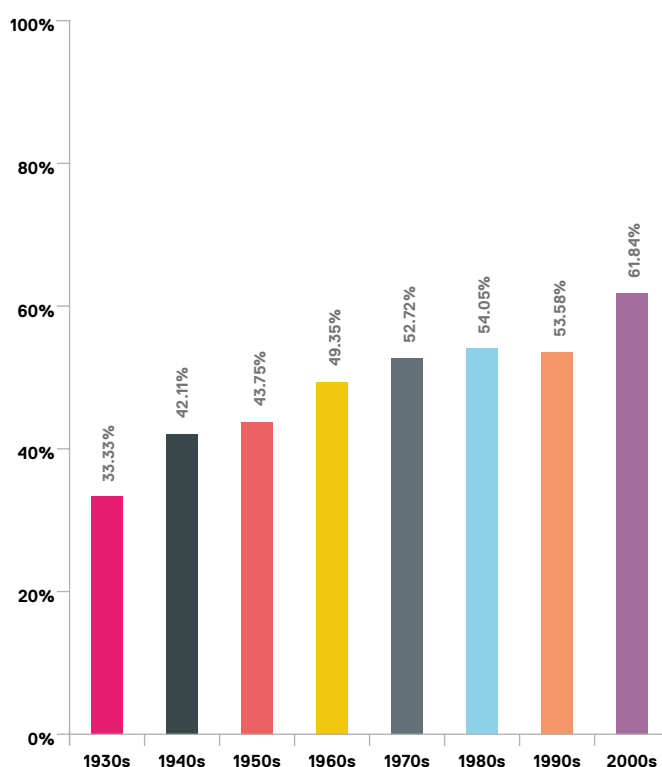


Figure 11: Long-term Impact - Career by Decade Cohort

Comparing these two indicators highlighted how survey participants came to believe Sea Cadets had an enhanced impact on their careers after leaving the cadets rather than *during* their involvement. This is especially the case at that point in time when they sought to embark on a career or alter their trajectory. Comparing responses once again underlined the merits of delaying the evaluation process rather than seeking to speculate on a likely impact.

Besides the wide-ranging contribution Sea Cadets made to survey participants' career development, it self-evidently also played a distinctive role for those who embarked on naval and maritime careers. Amongst those answering the survey 60.76 per cent said that *during* their time in Sea Cadets they were inspired to seriously consider a Royal Navy or maritime career. Subsequently *after* leaving Sea Cadets 25.87 per cent did embark on a Royal Navy career and 12.11 per cent entered the wider maritime sector. Proportionately more than half who were initially encouraged to consider naval or maritime career eventually did so. Further, this means that at a combined 37.98 per cent more than a third of former members surveyed took up a career within the maritime sector after their time with Sea Cadets. It is not clear from the survey or interviews to

what extent this is because Sea Cadets endorses pre-existing interest in a young person or inspires an interest through their experiences with Sea Cadets. Either way it means Sea Cadets plays a meaningful part in raising awareness of young people to possible careers in adulthood across the maritime sector.

CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT

Sea Cadets benefits from the contribution of 9,000 plus volunteers. Many were themselves once a sea cadet with 43 per cent of survey participants currently or once adult volunteers [see *Figure 12*]. Encouragingly there has been a cohort by cohort upsurge in the percentage returning to serve as an adult volunteer. Between the 1950 and 2000 cohorts there has been a 35 per cent growth in the percentage completing this journey. Given that national levels of volunteering are in long-term decline these figures indicate Sea Cadets is bucking this trend by becoming ever more successful in inculcating in cadets a sense of social responsibility and public service ethos, as well as teaching them respect for the values that flow from making a commitment to Sea Cadets and the principles it embodies.

Have you ever been a Sea Cadets Volunteer?

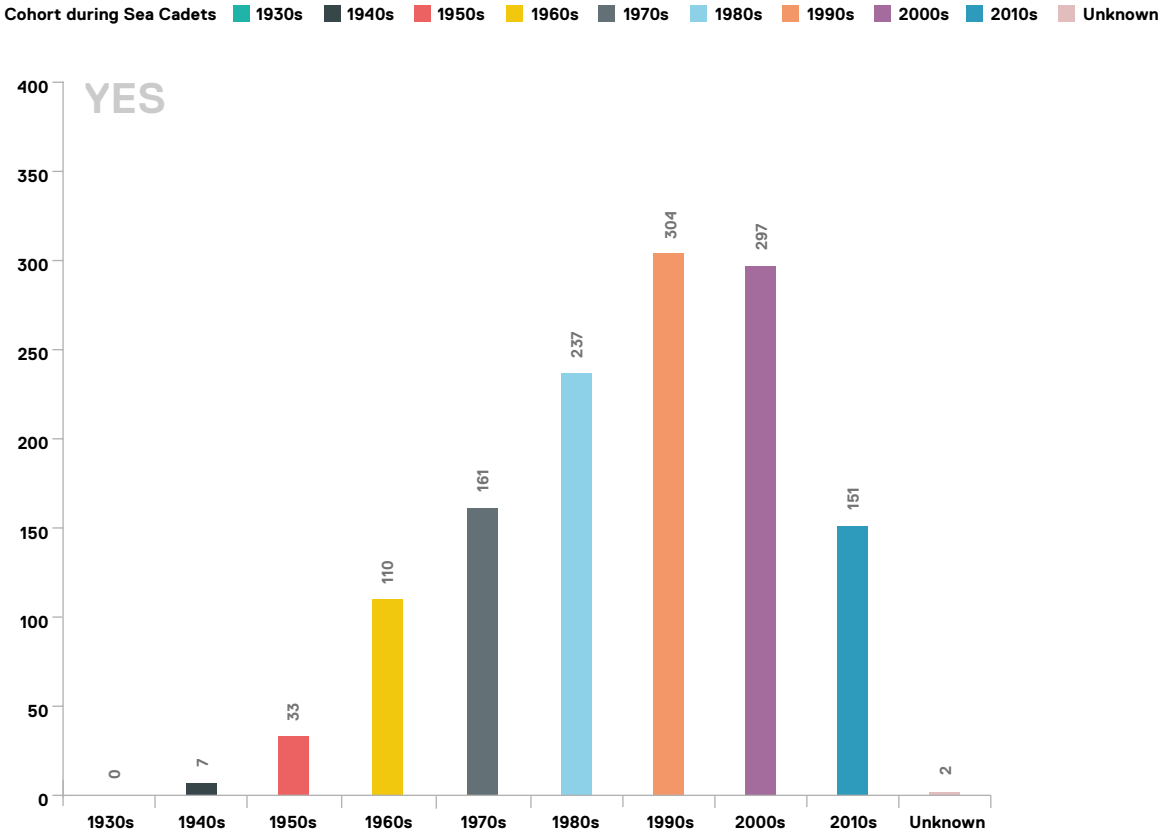


Figure 12: Sea Cadets Volunteer – by Decade Cohorts



SUMMARY OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Qualitative data was primarily gathered through interviews and focus groups. Both afforded rich descriptive data. In addition, a limited quantity was obtained via two free text questions within the survey. The data from the interviews and focus groups was analysed first, due to it being more comprehensive. Then the qualitative data from the survey was studied and used to cross reference emerging themes in order to retrieve what findings were true for the bigger survey sample.

The qualitative data gave extensive evidence of the comprehensive ways Sea Cadets had had a positive long-term influence on former cadets' adult lives. These include the way the *context* and sense of *community and connection* experienced in Sea Cadets provided a durable grounding for life. As well as the *capabilities* and *confidence* which gave participants the practical and emotional capacity to make the most of their adult life, Sea Cadets also acted as a *catalyst* in the lives of a majority of participants by helping them to achieve their personal and professional aspirations.

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUPS

There were 10 focus groups, 51 interviews, plus a solitary written submission. In excess of 100 former Sea Cadets contributed 50 plus hours of audio reflections that précised their memories, musings and analysis. Both the interviews and focus groups followed a similar trajectory. Commencing with open-ended questions designed to promote consideration of their cadet experience, the years that followed and what, if any, impact Sea Cadets had on their adult lives. After the participant-led contributions a set of flash cards that encapsulated key elements of the Sea Cadets experience were employed to stimulate discussion. The sequence was devised to allow the researcher to acquire a comparative understanding of unprompted and prompted contributions.

All interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analysed for themes and patterns. The analysis identified nine thematic headings and 33 themes [see *Figure 13*]. Three of the headings were pre-defined by Sea Cadets – values, mindset and long-term benefits. The values and long-term benefit themes were drawn from the organisation's outcomes framework (MSSC,

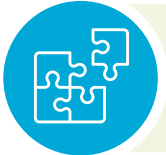
2016: 8) and the mindset themes were obtained from a briefing document for staff and volunteers authored by the Captain of Sea Cadets (MSSC, 2019). The latter document elucidated the ethos of Sea Cadets and clarified the behaviour, attitudes and *modus operandi* expected of all associated with the organisation. This ethos draws on the customs and traditions of the Royal Navy and the briefing outline explains how these relate to Sea Cadets. The three thematic headings and their 15 component themes were introduced towards the end of interviews and focus groups in the form of flashcards.

The remaining 18 themes were generated from an analysis of participants' responses to the open-ended questions. These were categorised into six thematic headings to clarify the ways Sea Cadets impacted the lives of research participants [see *Figure 13*]. The first of these headings, *background*, stands apart from the other five, given it relates to the social dynamics surrounding the participants' lives and their motivation for joining Sea Cadets. The most prevalent reasons for enlisting were through friends (34 per cent), family (26 per cent) and an ambition to join the Royal Navy (16 per cent). Others included it being perceived as better than the alternative youth groups then available, the visibility of Sea Cadets in public life and schools, the fact it was local, and the excellent reputation of the organisation. The remaining five thematic headings represent the assorted aspects of Sea Cadets' impact on participants' lives. The first two refer to the organisational culture, whilst the remaining three focus on the attributes and benefits Sea Cadets cultivated in relation to the participants' future.

Context speaks of the positive impact of the Sea Cadets experience, its structure and activities. *Community/Connection* concerns the constructive relational environment fostered by Sea Cadets. *Capabilities* are the practical and tangible developmental skills, while *Confidence* refers to social and personal development. Finally, *Catalyst* signifies the ways Sea Cadets launches people into life, in this case how life courses were positively impacted by time spent in the cadets. Although these different areas of impact overlap and interrelate there is a sense of a journey that emerges through the qualitative data [see *Figure 14*]. A journey which conveys a sense of the cumulative impact that builds through the totality of the Sea Cadets experience which carries over and merges into adulthood.

Interviews & Focus Groups Thematic Map

BACKGROUND



- Reason for Joining
- Personal Social Circumstances

VALUES



- Commitment
- Courage
- Honesty & Integrity
- Loyalty
- Respect
- Self-Discipline

MINDSET



- Can Do Attitude
- Determination
- Humour
- Service

CONTEXT



- Equality & Diversity
- Nature of Sea Cadets Experience
- Sea Cadets Specialisms
- Connection to the Water

COMMUNITY / CONNECTION



- Social Experience
- Skills
- Social Support
- Development

CAPABILITIES



- Different kind of Learning
- Situational Skills
- Skills for Life

CONFIDENCE



- Increased Opportunities
- Developing Leadership
- Recognition
- Maturity
- Independence

CATALYST



- Supporting Life Progression
- Field of Work
- Profession
- Direction
- Purpose

LONG TERM BENEFITS



- School
- Community
- Post 16
- Risk
- Wellbeing

Figure 13: Thematic Map from the Interviews & Focus Groups

Impact Model for Structured Youth Development

Unprompted Responses ●

Sea Cadets Prompted Responses ●

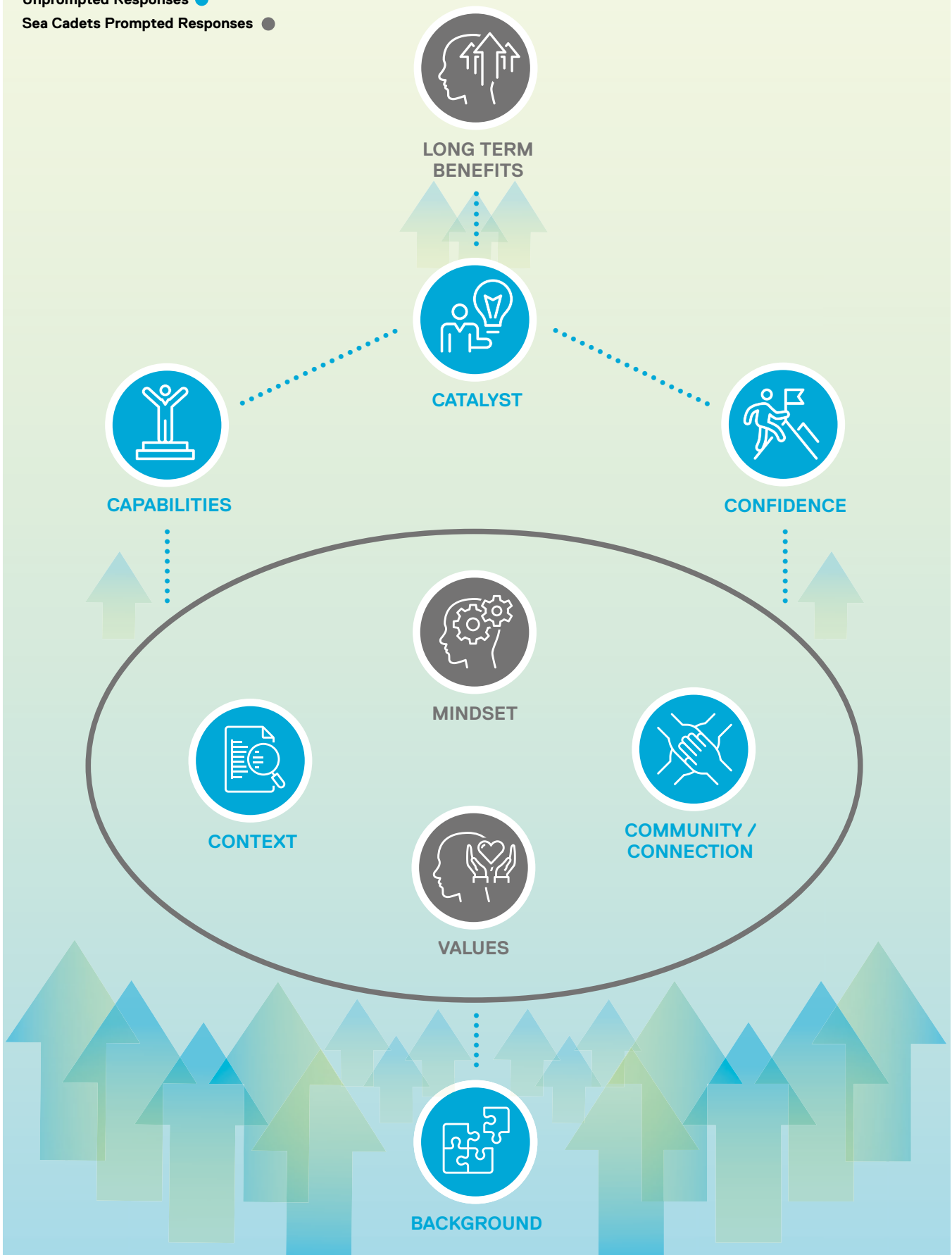


Figure 14: Qualitative Impact Journey

Values	No. Prior	No. After	Mindset	No. Prior	No. After	Long-term Benefits	No. Prior	No. After
Commitment	13	51	Can-Do Attitude	16	55	Wellbeing	2~	47
Respect	22	48	Humour	7	54	Post 16 Destinations*	45*	44
Self-Discipline	29	48	Determination	9	50	Communities	46*	43
Loyalty	-	46	Service	1	40	Reduced Risky	7	39
Courage	-	44	All	-	8	Behaviour	-	36
Honesty & Integrity	4	40				School Attendance		
All	-	25				* incl. 40 being prepared for work ~ explicit mentions of wellbeing		

Table 7: Breakdown of Sea Cadets Prompted Themes²²

Like previous evaluations of youth work and attempts to quantify impact, this one identified themes that are fluid and interrelated. Each served as a foundation for discussion, rather than as a fixed and finite category. Hence the impact journey diagram [see *Figure 14*] reflects broad bands wherein research participants evidenced the various ways in which the impact Sea Cadets had was prolonged and embedded within their adult lives.

Each prompted heading relates to a different unprompted one [see *Figure 14*]. *Values* and *mindset* connect to *context*, *community/connection* as well as *confidence*. The *values* and *mindset* each inform the culture and environment created by Sea Cadets but are also traits sustained, for many, into adult life. The prompted heading of *long-term benefits* relates to *catalyst* and involves the specific ways Sea Cadets positively impacted on a life course.

Table 7 lists the values, mindsets and benefits participants were prompted to consider during the latter stages of an interview. Responses were documented according to whether individuals spoke about the given topic prior to or after a flash card was revealed. This helped to identify which pre-defined traits of Sea Cadets resonated most strongly before it was alluded to by the researcher.

The pre-defined themes are itemised in *Table 7*. Those in bold had a high unprompted response. In the *values* category those who took part most forcefully associated instilling a sense of *respect* and *self-discipline* with their time in Sea Cadets. In the *mindset* category the strongest connotation was with the *can-do attitude* and the positive culture they encountered. In the long-term benefits category supporting *post 16 destinations* (progression into work and post-school education or training), as well as an ongoing *participation in communities* received persuasive unprompted responses. In this long-term benefits category *wellbeing* requires further consideration. Very few spoke explicitly about wellbeing prior to being prompted. However, as the wider thematic map shows [see *Figure 13*], there are a number of areas under the *confidence* and also the *community/connection* headings that articulate ways in which Sea Cadets contributed to future *wellbeing*. The limited responses prior to prompting in the analysis may reflect an unfamiliarity with this term more than a reduced impact. The numbers identifying *wellbeing* as an extended impact after the prompt cards were shown lends weight to that interpretation. Here, as with the data from the survey [see *Table 6* and *Figure 9*], *wellbeing* was in fact an area of meaningful impact for those involved in focus groups and interviews.

²² All numbers given are out of a possible total number of interviews and focus groups.

Of the nine generations of former cadets who participated in the **My LegaSea** survey:-

70%
thought Sea
Cadets helped
them cope with
challenges in the
longer term

5. DETAILED QUALITATIVE FINDINGS



5. DETAILED QUALITATIVE APPROACH

This section is assigned to an analysis of the qualitative findings and is arranged according to the five thematic areas outlined above: context; *community and connection*; *capability*; *confidence*, and *catalyst*. Limitations of space mean it is only possible to scratch the surface of the innumerable ways Sea Cadets beneficially impacted the lives of respondents therefore the narratives selected reflect areas of noteworthy or recurring significance. Particular attention has been given to accounts which illustrate consistency of impact over time. Individual reminiscences are re-produced with full permission and attributed with the first name, age and former cadet unit. A few requested anonymity: their comments are reproduced with only the gender, age bracket and general locality of the local unit given.

CONTEXT

Sea Cadets has always welcomed into membership young people from every walk of life and background. For some joining meant a continuation of existing friendships, even in some cases a furtherance of a family connection. However, in other instances it entailed engaging with an unfamiliar community and facing novel challenges. A proportion recalled the invaluable role the organisation played in helping them overcome poverty, growing up in care, the loss of close family and similar trials.

The experience of adolescence is not a fixed entity, with the various generations of Sea Cadets encountering both similar and divergent impediments



and challenges. However, many aspects of the Sea Cadets experience and the benefits it offered have remained constant. Whether the former cadets joined in the midst of the Second World War or following the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis they entered into an organisation that took those circumstances into account without losing sight of the importance of retaining activities and modes of behaviour that drew upon the best traditions of the Royal Navy. Whilst the organisation has clearly modernised and ensured its systems, protocols and training offer is appropriate and relevant for young people today, this careful marrying of past and present means that many key elements of the Sea Cadets experience on offer today would be instantly recognisable to former cadets from previous decades.

THE CAN-DO ATTITUDE – ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The virtues of the enabling environment fostered by Sea Cadets was time and time again acknowledged. Women and those dealing with adverse personal circumstances in particular stressed how they valued the Sea Cadets' mindset of holding fast to a can-do attitude. They appreciated a culture that encouraged them and their peers to do more than they imagined they were capable of and which gave them permission to try something new and taxing. Especially when it was all too often the case that home or school had instilled in them the need to keep expectations low, play safe and circumvent risk.

'I think I appreciate the dedication of the staff, the time they gave me, the opportunities. They didn't say, "No, you can't do that" ... I was a little less fortunate in those days, so to be put in a, "Yes" atmosphere where it was, "Yes, yes you can, yes we will," to go into that atmosphere and build those relationships, that stayed with me.'

Female, 50s – North West Area

'I think the impact the cadets made on my life, [was] you can achieve anything you want if you put your mind to it and when you get hurdles or obstacles come up against you, it's not a time to accept defeat, it's time to think, "How do I get over this one?" or "How do I get round this one?"'

Barry, 61 – Hackney East Sea Cadets

The benefits of an enabling environment and a can-do mindset was evident with respect to many facets of their adult lives. From having the confidence to apply for a job or putting themselves forward for an unfamiliar task at work, to being willing to try new things, grasp opportunities and tackle challenges were all facets that respondents viewed as in part, or whole, attitudes inherited from the Sea Cadets' experience. The can-do attitude was repeatedly linked to their ability, in later life, to respond to testing situations, solve complex problems and keep going in adverse circumstances.

'The can-do attitude... I'm not put off by anything. In fact... if it's difficult I'm more attracted, "Right, let's get stuck in and find a way through this." I mean you can see that's got its roots back from when you're younger, when you're doing exercises and doing stuff in the cadets and you're trying to do something you haven't done before.'

Julian, 56 – Buxton Sea Cadets



A DIFFERENT KIND OF EDUCATION

The can-do attitude was also evident in respondents' attitudes to the matrix of learning opportunities Sea Cadets offers – in the unit, on the water and elsewhere. Participants recalled that the education was practical, hands-on and possessed a self-evident relevance to later life. Whether it occurred during regular weekly sessions or on national courses it gave cadets the chance to learn in ways they could readily relate to.

'Joining Sea Cadets gave me the ability to vocationally learn, that was independent to school. If it had anything to do with actually engaging in school, then that probably would have been counter-productive to me, because I needed something different, not something that was associated with that mainstream education that was looking for an academic mind. I need a different way of learning, and Sea Cadets fulfilled that different way of learning.'

Carol, 54 – Weston-Super-Mare Sea Cadets

'Sea Cadets offered me so much more than school did because at school you had to fit into their boxes, whereas with Sea Cadets you were an individual. We all found different things that we were good at, and I wasn't particularly keen on canoeing but I loved sailing and pulling, but you were able to do that, you weren't forced into a pigeon hole... I wouldn't volunteer to go back and do anything in school, but I always volunteered for Sea Cadets.'

Kathrine, 44 – Kingston & District Girls Nautical Training Corps

Sea Cadets in effect created inclusive learning environments that accommodated neurodiversity and what Howard Gardner refers to as 'multiple intelligences' (1983). The mix of methods and formats was appreciated by participants who recalled that the learning was adaptable and tailored to suit their needs, interests and abilities as well as accommodating their differing learning styles. In particular respondents recalled how Sea Cadets provided them with the chance to discover something they were good at rather than being forced into following standardised educational methodologies which so often demoralised and disheartened those who did not find traditional schooling suited their needs.

'What we were doing outside of school with the cadets was outside learning so we were still learning lots and it might have not been your stereotypical school agenda... but I feel like it helped us more because we were learning it in a setting where we were more engaged.'

Frankie, 20 – Dunbar Sea Cadets

'I wasn't academically clever anyway, but I didn't fall behind everybody else. Sea Cadets in fact if anything helped certainly. I was regularly asked by the headmaster to go in uniform to school and talk in assemblies about what we were doing in the cadets and what I was doing in particular... and I'd talk about courses I'd done, things I'd done, places I'd been.'

Mark, 54 – Huddersfield Sea Cadets

Sea Cadets gave participants the chance to learn in settings which captured their imagination and made the educational experience enjoyable and worthwhile. Sometimes these formats were supported and applauded by schools who came to appreciate the difference it was making for pupils who did not always flourish in mainstream schooling. Additional benefits included the reassuring environment provided by their peers which flowed from the ways in which Sea Cadets promoted a collaborative team approach to learning. A number of respondents recalled working on homework and revision together with other cadets. Something made possible by a sense of community and mutuality which integrated cadets of differing ages and backgrounds.

For some, Sea Cadets instilled an appreciation for learning that carried over into their adult life, something they did not always feel was nurtured within school. The positive experiences and achievements which arose within Sea Cadets became for many a foundation which cultivated and stimulated a desire to learn and move forward into new educational pathways and career options.

'One thing that the cadets did help develop in me was a sense of purpose. In the last couple of years at school I didn't do very well at all and failed most of my O Levels. I came away with an O level in metalwork and it was the only one I got. But, interestingly, I was doing really well in Sea Cadets... I now understand myself. My learning style is I'm a pragmatist. I need to see a point in doing something. Since then, whenever I'm doing something I'm interested in, I do well. So, I did well in Sea Cadets. I became a Leading Hand. I won the prize for the best cadet in the unit... I think that brought the best out in me. I've since gone on and got a first-class honours degree in investigative studies and law. As soon as I went in the Navy it was like someone flicked a switch, so I went from doing badly academically to all of a sudden coming top in exams and doing well because it's something I believed in. So, yeah, that was definitely a theme for me which started with Sea Cadets.'

Julian, 56 – Buxton Sea Cadets

Sea Cadets delivered for many a treasured empowering education that was distinctive from what they encountered elsewhere. It presented an opportunity to learn and achieve in exciting and rewarding ways. The emphasis within Sea Cadets on an educational model that was concrete, hands-on, experiential, flexible and which took place in a wide variety of settings opened fresh vistas for many. In addition, one of the benefits flowing from this diverse model was that it equipped cadets for learning in the adult world. Here was a building block for life that enthused many to become educators themselves. A number became teachers and lecturers whilst others found their niche in educational roles such as youth worker, sports coach, performing arts tutor and educators focused on special educational needs. Often participants attributed their passion for learning and their vision of education as an enabling process to the inspirational individuals who taught them during their time in Sea Cadets. Something that led many to return to Sea Cadets as adult volunteers so that they might repay that debt.

WIDE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES

As we have been reminded Sea Cadets offered members a rich array of activities and pursuits for which cadets found they possessed an unexpected talent.

'For me, the fact you get your knockbacks, you're able to get back on your feet really quickly. You just look at the situation and go, "I can do that." I think for me that was particular to Sea Cadets, that there was always something there you could be good at.'

Nicola, 55 – Hornchurch & Upminster Girls Nautical Training Corps

Affiliates recalled the assortment of specialisms Sea Cadets provided. Amongst those cited were: catering; communications; drill (parade); engineering; fieldwork; leadership training; music (band); navigation; outdoor adventure; paddle sports; peer educator training; physical training; rowing; sailing; seamanship and water sports. The diversity regularly carried over into adult life in the form of hobbies and career pathways. Linda (64) of Wood Green Girls Nautical Training Corps (GNTC) told how the experiences as a member helped to propagate so many opportunities. After leaving GNTC she travelled Europe as a professional drummer prior to working in a number of male dominated professions including local authority health and safety. The love of the natural world nurtured by GNTC led to her acquiring a lifelong enthusiasm for walking and other outdoor activities. Even the kayaking skills have come in handy now she is employed in nature conservation. Linda spoke with warmth and gratitude of the inspirational role played by the female GNTC leaders who gave her access to opportunities way beyond those typically available to a young woman growing up on a London council estate. Music, outdoor adventure, sailing and paddle sports were just some of the enduring passions GNTC cultivated.



UNIFORM AND STRUCTURE – SELF-DISCIPLINE AND RESPECT

Sea Cadets derives much that makes it distinctive from the Royal Navy traditions embedded in its offer. Each local unit is in effect a training ship that cadets come aboard for their weekly parade. Irrespective of whether it is a school hall, portakabin or purpose-built venue, every local unit adopts the conventions of being aboard.

Young people and adult volunteers assemble to form a ship's company. All wear uniform, all have designated ranks, and all parade as one at the beginning and end of each and every session. That sense of common purpose was something scores of former cadets prized.

The close bond between Sea Cadets as a youth organisation and the Royal Navy as a real-world adult organisation distinguishes the former from a majority of youth groups and clubs. That connection bestows a distinctive sense of continuity and for a sizeable proportion a destination. The uniform, routine and values of Sea Cadets are grounded in the abiding traditions of the Royal Navy. Many participants recalled with affection the benefits they accrued from the discipline and spirit fostered within them. Describing how the traits cultivated during their time as a cadet, helped mould their values and lent an added measure of stability to their life.

'I came from a poor background and therefore had little by way of possessions. I always wanted to join Sea Cadets and when I was old enough, I did. I remember we had to pay a small amount of money each week (25p I think it was) 'as subs'. I eventually got a uniform which I was so proud of and I really looked after it like it was my only possession, it was better than any clothes I possessed!'

Steve, 67 – Fleetwood Sea Cadets

'It's like a great equaliser as well really because you're all in the uniform and you can't tell the difference between people that live in a mansion and people that live in a tent because you're all equal and you've got a hierarchy of demand and you get on with it. So, I think particularly people from a less advantageous background, it definitely gives you access to things.'

Female, 50s – South West Area



As the above testimonials signify many believe the uniform permitted them to feel an equal amongst equals. For some it furnished a sense of self-worth and esteem, so that individuals who in other circumstances and settings knew or felt they were less privileged than their peers could as a cadet shed that stigma for a time at least. The uniform promoted an assured sense of pride in appearance, but it also generated a heightened feeling of self-respect; both of which were not always forthcoming in either their home or school lives.

'...as a young kid, I didn't have a particularly great home life, it wasn't horrific, but I was really lucky to have somewhere to go and where... I felt very safe, very structured and very boundaried, and that's something I've learnt about the values, certainly [in my work] as a therapist, about what you can offer someone... so it's had lots of different knock-on effects for me personally.'

Kathrine, 44 – Kingston and District Girls Nautical Training Corps

'In my personal life, I have a sister and we lost our parents when we were 17, so Sea Cadets was like that extended family, so although you were going through that huge, traumatic life changing time, on a cadet night you were Able Cadet Bell having to take the deck for colours, and it was kind of like a bit of normality, which at the time for me was quite key. So being a GN was really important, it was a constant that actually gave me stability.'

Ruth, 52 – Biggleswade Girls' Nautical Training Corps

The consistency and format of Sea Cadets provided many with a cherished sense of stability and safety, particularly for those navigating turbulent and uncertain times in their personal lives. The structure for some contributed to their identity formation, not least when their achievements in the world of Sea Cadets imparted status. Often the known quantity of their Sea Cadets rank and role provided a release from the wider problems and tribulations that were impacting on their lives elsewhere.

L: *Respect, I think it has changed a lot over years. So when I was a cadet, it had to be given automatically and there were certain leading cadets, and more senior cadets who perhaps you didn't necessarily respect, but you were slightly scared of. But I think it is, it's different these days, but I do think it's still definitely something that Sea Cadets instils on young people. It's not just instant now...*

J: *So, you've got to look at it differently.*

L: *Yeah, you can't necessarily expect it to be instant these days. But you have to show that you earn that respect, and it is given, but it's a slightly different way of having to build that respect with young people these days.*

H: *I think it's more like building trust initially.*

Lynn, 42, Jean, 61 and Holly 25 – Wakefield Sea Cadets

C: *It was respectful.*

R: *You appreciated the people who were above and below you, and there was a pecking order.*

C: *You had to work to get further up.*

R: *And if you wanted up that pecking order you had to put some effort in, but a lot of people are missing that... if you want it you've got to work for it.*

Ruth, 30 and Caera, 25 – Glasgow Sea Cadets



Respect was embedded within the Sea Cadets ethos. Here was a characteristic all generations valued. However, it appears to have altered over time. For older generations respect was usually automatically awarded to those more senior in age or status. By way of contrast younger participants communicated an impression that respect was negotiated between themselves and the adult volunteers. What remains constant across the generations is that Sea Cadets is a setting wherein members learn to have healthy and mature relationships with authority. Respondents spoke appreciatively of Sea Cadets as an environment that encouraged tolerance of others, especially those dissimilar to oneself. The most prevalent understanding of respect that was recounted was connected to self-discipline and the structured approach which equipped cadets to look after themselves and take responsibility for their own well-being and that of others.



COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION

The following section is devoted to the various ways Sea Cadets fostered a positive social and relational environment. According to a high proportion of respondents Sea Cadets proved to be a setting where members learnt to interact with peers, adults and the wider society.

CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

Numerous participants recounted how the relationships formed in Sea Cadets broadened their horizons and enriched their awareness of the world around them.

'It opened my mind that there was an outside world.'

Ray, 89 – Kings Lynn Sea Cadets

'Coming from Jersey, you might not appreciate early on that you don't know what the UK's like at that age, there wasn't the internet, there was only two channel telly... so when you went to the UK, even at 18, having seen all of it with cadets, it was an eye opener. But at least I walked into it and didn't walk out of it again. [Sea Cadets] set me up for life, it really did.'

Keith, 59 – Jersey Sea Cadets

Many described how the activities and experiences Sea Cadets gave them opened up fresh vistas and introduced them to new ideas. This seemed to be noticeably so for those resident in small, sometimes isolated communities. Irrespective of where they lived the rich extended network of Sea Cadets experiences opened up opportunities to travel, visit unfamiliar places and meet individuals from contrasting backgrounds.

As a result, Sea Cadets broadened horizons and perspectives. This was especially so for those that participated in water-based activities. Learning to respect the unpredictability of nature emboldened cadets to take account of things beyond their familiar frame of reference. It invited them to look out upon a world that was bigger than themselves and which placed their individual needs and concerns in a sharper perspective. Of course, these opportunities for expanded experiences were only made possible thanks to the expertise and dedication of adult volunteers and support of the national charity.

'It was respect in Sea Cadets – it's respect one another, respect all and obviously respect the sea. The GNTC motto was "Ready to Serve".'

Linda, 64 – Wood Green Girls' Nautical Training Corps

'The memories that stand out most for me from the cadets are going away on the tall ships and the training ships, so the Royalist, Jack Petchey, John Jerwood, those are the best memories I've ever had with the cadets, just simply being away from home and having that independence, that really made it what it was... The one I remember most was going on the Royalist, we sailed across the Channel, did a lot of independent stuff 'cause a lot of us on the course at the time were trying to go for the highest qualification, so there was a lot of navigating and independence and they sort of let us a bit loose on the ship really! ...We went to a tall ship festival in France and that was more of a cultural experience in the sense that we got to go onto other ships and meet other sailors, from France, Russia, Spain, Italy, that had all gathered there and we got to experience almost like a new way of life because there were people who lived on those ships and had spent their entire life sailing and gave us the insight to see where we were going with ourselves really.'

Frankie, 20 – Dunbar Sea Cadets

Sea Cadets presented young people who joined with openings that made it possible for them to meet and mix with individuals from an eclectic assortment of backgrounds, including cadets and adult volunteers drawn from every corner of the British Isles. In the process it enabled cadets to explore and engage with an assortment of attitudes, lifestyles and viewpoints that they would have been unlikely to encounter in school or a mainstream youth group or club.

'It definitely gives you confidence, it pushes you out of your comfort zone and makes you do stuff, rather than hide away and go try new things, find out it's fun and you actually quite like it.'

Emma, 43 – Wakefield Sea Cadets

'You're challenged and you're pushed to do things that are outside your comfort zone.'

Alan, 70 – Stonehaven Sea Cadets

Former cadets recounted how the organisation emboldened them to go outside of their comfort zone and try out novel experiences. This helped them acquire a sense of perspective and an inclination to be open to fresh ideas and ways of doing things. By encouraging them to acquire this aptitude during their teenage years Sea Cadets generated within respondents a willingness to be more open-minded, adventurous and disposed to embrace change in their adult life.



SOCIAL SUPPORT AND INSPIRATIONAL ADULTS

Across the generations the research found contributors who had anecdotes which conveyed in one way or another how the social and educational support of an adult volunteer they met through Sea Cadets had come to play a meaningful, even vital, role in their life. Grown-ups whose wise counsel and example they recalled with fondness; people who helped them mature and face up to life's challenges with heightened confidence.

'Sometimes there are things that you don't necessarily share with anyone like some elements of my disability... I don't think [Commanding Officer Herdman] fully understood the gravity and the importance of his help. The shock of my mother dying at 10 brought about a medical issue which was challenging at that age. I had a father, I could have told my father, but it was easier, to share my situation with somebody that came forward and said, "Well, I'll help you." It was help in a practical manner from the Commanding Officer who with great respect plus understanding, aided me in my specific needs. [Commanding Officer Herdman] had children. He had four children so he knew what he was doing, so I do appreciate his help. I'll always appreciate it.'

Martin, 64 – Blackpool Sea Cadets

The presence of proficient adult volunteers in cadets' lives for a prolonged timespan gave many respondents close contact with trustworthy, dependable and perceptive adults, who provided, often at crucial times, support and guidance. The above passage is a remarkably powerful illustration of how one volunteer, in this instance a Commanding Officer of a local unit, helped a young man navigate his unnamed disability with dignity and discretion. Here it seemed was the sole adult this former cadet trusted at that time in his life.

The encouragement and guidance offered by adult volunteers had a marked and beneficial influence on the personal development of many former cadets. Participants spoke with unbounded appreciation of the ways in which adult volunteers unselfconsciously became role models who by example taught the young cadets how to navigate, not merely the transition to adulthood, but how to steer a steady course in later years. As the account below illustrates the strength of character of one adult volunteer, who overcame a serious speech impediment, made a lasting impression on this former cadet.

'Our commanding officer was an amazing man; he'd been in the Navy and I think he was a seaman or a "writer" rather than an officer, but he became a Lieutenant Commander in Sea Cadets. He had a slight speech impediment and it wasn't easy for him to give orders, particularly on parade, but he persisted. But nobody laughed, everyone respected him. He was a wonderful role model. Fortunately, even though I don't live anywhere near south Wales now, I was able to go and see him on several occasions before he died. And he hadn't changed a bit. He must have been nearly 90 when he died but he was a man whom I admired greatly and was instrumental in helping me to develop as a person.'

David, 75 – Rhondda West Sea Cadets

Indeed, certain adult volunteers were responsible for instigating life-long choices for which the former cadet was eternally grateful.

'I think the biggest thing that Sea Cadets did for me growing up... is that it introduced me to the person that I most passionately want to be like now, the member of staff in Sea Cadets who really looked after me and showed me what it meant to try and make the world a better place – Lieutenant Commander Alex White, who ran the junior section at our unit. I now basically go out and about and try and act the way that he would have done when faced with difficult situations or when faced with any decision or choice, to try and do it the way that he would have done it, had he been faced with the same choice. That is the biggest legacy that Sea Cadets has had for me and on what I do now and that's probably led to me doing a lot of things that if I'd had said "No", when my friend asked me if I wanted to come to Sea Cadets with him, I would be sat in a completely different environment doing completely different things. But Alex had other ideas ((laughs)) and now I do too because that's who I want to be like.'

Oliver, 29 – Stevenage Sea Cadets

Many adult volunteers were inspirational role models. It is remarkable how frequently those interviewed and surveyed recalled how an adult volunteer demonstrated characteristics, outlooks and behaviours that helped the young cadet construct a model of what they hoped they would in turn become in adulthood.

'So, what drove me to move on to where I am now in my lifespan is that it gave me the building blocks to build on. I'm getting emotional, but there's people out there that believe in you, that's what it's all about... there's people that believe in you and give you the chances in life, and you take it and move on. And those chances all started with the cadet corps.'

Tony, 73 – Tooting and Balham Sea Cadets

'It was Kelvin and George who really started it off for me. I just really, really appreciate what they did for me because if they hadn't, I wouldn't be where I am now. I really don't think he knows, Kelvin especially, the impact that he's had on my life. He's been like a second dad to me. I know he's always looked out for me. When I was at school my class teacher wouldn't write me a reference to go to university and I was like absolutely devastated because I could see all my friends were going to university and I thought it was really unfair that my teacher wouldn't write me a reference and Kelvin wrote me that reference. I was very young, I was a September birthday and I'd gone up a year early but Kelvin could see that I was as good as anybody else and he believed in me.'

Jenny, 43 – Aberystwyth Sea Cadets

A significant percentage of the respondents chose to discuss how adult volunteers in words and deeds displayed a belief in their potential as well as in the inherent goodness of the young cadets they worked alongside. This was especially important with regards to participants who tended to be overlooked or sidelined in school or other settings. For those who were less likely to be labelled as a high-flyer, the ongoing relationship they had with the adult volunteers and their peers was often crucial. Sea Cadets was where their potential was acknowledged, where talents that might have remained dormant were stirred and where they were encouraged to flourish.

Participants spoke of the steady dependable presence of adult volunteers in their lives, sometimes across decades. For example, a former GNTC member, now volunteering as a uniformed instructor to help manage a local unit located in Yorkshire, remembered how over the past 40 years she supported countless young people during their time in the cadets and beyond. Former Sea Cadets across the world remain in contact because of the influential role she came to play in their lives. One former cadet recently visited the unit two decades after they left to ask for a job reference after leaving the armed forces. The reason being that, as they explained to the volunteer, she was the person who knew him better than anyone else.

'When I was in the cadets, I didn't realise what an impact it was having until I left and became an adult. Now when I look back and I think all the things I learned, I really wish I'd had a chance to say "thank you" because [Lieutenant Ward] really was an incredible man and without knowing it, literally changed the course of my life. It's really funny, when I was a cadet I was absolutely terrified of him! And, if you got called to the ward room it was like super scary! But actually I think he was just a big teddy bear, he was a brilliant leader and did an amazing job of keeping everybody in line, but behind it just had the biggest heart to make a difference for the kids because he didn't need to do what he did, he went above and beyond to give us as many experiences as possible.'

Carol, 44 – Kendal Sea Cadets

In many instances an awareness for the valuable role adult volunteers played in their lives grew in magnitude over time. Many recounted how the enduring impact key individuals made lingered and even intensified across the years. With respect to the overwhelming majority of former cadets, contacted by the researcher, they recalled the adult volunteers attached to their local unit with fondness and gratitude. Unavoidably given the number of respondents, a few evoked memories of an adult volunteer who had an adverse impact on them and their fellow cadets. Individuals who may well have had other talents, but were unsuited for the role of adult volunteer. Mention was made of a tiny minority who were primarily concerned in flaunting their status and exercising authority. In extremis this was translated into bullying behaviour. So rarely was such behaviour cited that it is self-evidently something that seldom arises. But the fact that it was mentioned serves as a reminder that care and attention must always be paid to the recruitment and training of adult volunteers and the effective safeguarding of the young people whilst in the care of the organisation.

FRIENDSHIP/ TEAMWORK

The *My LegaSea* research revealed how Sea Cadets had an astonishing capacity to nurture the formation of strong enduring friendships amongst members. Time and again participants referred in their responses to life-long pals who they first met during their time as cadets. One example of such friendships forged in Sea Cadets is that of the 'three musketeers' from Kings Lynn. Jack, Ray and John were all cadets together who crewed the *Peg and Bet*. The youngest of the 'three musketeers' turned 90 in February 2020 and the trio have now been close friends for over 75 years. Nowadays they catch up every other Wednesday. Ray and John who live close by to each other meet up and then call Jack who now resides in Australia. A similar story of unwavering friendship fashioned in Sea Cadets is the Hebburn Veterans' Band. Established by the late Davey Hanson, a former band master and Commanding Officer of Hebburn Sea Cadets, the band is comprised entirely of former members of the unit who reunited to celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2014. Since that original reunion, the band has gathered every month to keep in touch and practice for their annual performance at the local Remembrance Day Parade.

There is a special quality to the friendships formed through Sea Cadets. Respondents reiterated how the shared adventures, particularly those which occurred at sea, brought them closer to others and cultivated a rare depth of mutual understanding.

'Sea Cadets gives you resilience and it teaches you to just muck in and get on really more than anything and to get on with folk because if you're living on a vessel with people for a couple of weeks at sea, you've got to get on with 'em whether you like 'em or not because you're stuck with 'em and they're stuck with you. So, all those things around conflict resolution and you're a teenager and you're all over the place but you're kind of thrust together and you know you've got to work together, so I think that's a really good lesson to take in to the workplace.'

Female, 50s – South West Area

The distinctive way Sea Cadets draws young people together in the context of crewing a vessel is pivotal. Cadets must operate as a team, learning to be responsible for each other's well-being and to place their faith in the wisdom of their peers. Participants reported that the experience of being surrounded by water removed any possibility of quitting and leaving it all to the rest. Here was an environment where a young person is obliged to transcend any relational barriers that might exist and build deeper connections. Not surprisingly it is in this setting that respondents recalled that firm and often lasting friendships were initially fashioned.

'When you become a sea cadet, you join a family, you become part of that family and I still keep in touch with people that I was a sea cadet with, to this day, going back what, 45 years ago? I still see them regularly up and down the river here, we still have a chat about the good old days, so you're always part of that family and I think that was important. Whereas, I can't remember anybody from my last school. You know when I left school at 16, ask me who was in my class, I couldn't remember, and yet I still remember names from Sea Cadets. So, I think being a sea cadet, you have a sense of belonging, whereas on the outside... you're just another face in the crowd where I don't think that's the case in Sea Cadets.'

George, 58 – Gateshead Sea Cadets





Forming friendships is yet another way Sea Cadets mirrors the adult experiences of the Royal Navy. Respondents recounted the extraordinary sense of camaraderie they enjoyed during their time in Sea Cadets. The distinctive sense of belonging and inter-dependence proved for many to be a memory that stayed with them across the decades. This former cadet, who was not unusual in many respects, could recall the names of his peers but, as he admitted, was unable to remember those of his classmates from school. The remarkable sense of connection fostered in Sea Cadets which flows from being a part of something special, seems for many to result in the friendships forged within the cadets standing apart from other adolescent attachments.

A willingness to ask for help and work alongside others was a singular attribute cultivated during their time in Sea Cadets. Having learnt how to collaborate in the cadets, respondents believed this trait served them well in their working lives.

R: *You sometimes find it, particularly even in work here, you can tell people who were used to that structure and that pull together attitude, because sometimes you can sit there thinking, "I can't be the only person wanting to do this", and sometimes going yourselves, saying, "I need help", then that's fine, you can sometimes go to other people and they don't understand why you can't just do it on your own, and they don't appreciate that sometimes a little bit of sharing the load means that you get it done a lot faster.*

H: *I would agree, because I ask you for help all the time (laughs).*

Ruth, 30 and Heather, 34 – various Scottish units

ONGOING CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

Sea Cadets as an educational organisation places great store upon the importance of fostering amongst members a deep sense of social responsibility and willingness to contribute to the well-being of their neighbours and fellow citizens. Strong levels of community involvement became apparent from the accounts supplied by respondents who narrated how, in a variety of ways, they contributed to the welfare of their local communities. Many continue to volunteer and make a positive input to wider society because they feel a debt of gratitude for the ways in which Sea Cadets gave an added dimension to their lives.

Participants spoke about their desire to give something back to society because of the extent to which they profited from the support and investment of the adult volunteers during their time as Sea Cadets.

'Service, that's important because once I felt part of it, I felt obligated to be part of it but not in a bad way, I felt part of a team which was quite important and when you're growing up and you feel part of something, I think kids need that sense of stability. Sea Cadets definitely offered me the stability, but in turn, I served them well.'

Camron, 52 – Reigate Sea Cadets

Rarely did participants perceive their contribution to the community to be virtuous or overly altruistic, rather they simply saw it as a natural, intuitive and logical response to the needs of others. Like Jock (88) from Glasgow Howe Sea Cadets, who each week attends a local primary school to read with pupils who are struggling with their literacy. He talked of his working life as a police officer and how he appreciated the opportunity this had given him to help and support others. Which was why he consciously chose to stay on the 'beat' rather than progress to a desk based role. Although long retired, he retained his enthusiasm, originally nurtured as a cadet, for being active in the life of his local community.



CAPABILITY

In the context of this research capabilities refers to the tangible and practical ways the skills and attributes Sea Cadets teach equip cadets for their future lives.

SKILLS FOR LIFE

Participants testified to the plentiful array of skills and talents they acquired during their time in Sea Cadets which subsequently served them well in adult life. Respondents often reported that whilst they were cadets they did not always appreciate the sheer volume of what they were taught. Only as the years passed did they come to realise the full extent of the worth of the skills, social and technical, that they learnt as cadets.

'You don't know what skills you pick up until you've left, you don't know what a fantastic time you've had until you walk away from it, and those are the things, "Oh Christ, where did I get that from? I did that in cadets many years ago".'

Nigel, 56 – Weston-Super-Mare Sea Cadets

'[Sea Cadets] helps people to become a well-rounded individual through life, learning from the very basic things at 10/11 years old, all the way up to being an adult, and then a young adult growing up yourself.'

Martin, 31 – Rugby Sea Cadets and Fishguard Sea Cadets

Research participants recorded their gratitude for the ways in which Sea Cadets prepared them for the rigours of adult life. Male and female respondents in equal measure reported that Sea Cadets taught them invaluable domestic skills – how to cook, clean, iron and take good care of oneself and others. Alongside this special mention was made of a compilation of applied skills from rope work and knots through to boat handling and maintenance that gave them in later life the confidence and wherewithal to disentangle everyday tribulations at home and at work. Crucially, Sea Cadets primed participants as to how best adapt to the expectations of the adult world – such as how to ascertain the appropriate behaviour in contrasting social settings and how to connect with the diverse personalities one invariably comes across over time.

Finally, many detailed how Sea Cadets gave young people the self-assurance to undertake independent travel by teaching them how to plan, navigate and embark alone on journeys to courses, meetings and activity venues.

PROBLEM SOLVING

One notable competence often mentioned was the extent to which former members developed whilst at Sea Cadets the capacity to assess and respond to unfamiliar situations, especially those which were taxing or unforeseen. In part this flowed from an amalgamation of specific first aid skills and emergency response training, linked to partaking in frequent exercises that taught cadets how to problem solve under pressure, frequently in unfamiliar scenarios. The art of rapidly assessing and assimilating information about a given set of circumstances and knowing how to react appropriately is an aptitude that remains of exceptional value at any age. One example of this was provided by Laura (34) from Middleton and Chadderton Sea Cadets. Recently she witnessed a driver lose control and crash their car in the middle of a busy motorway. No one was seriously injured but there was debris and possessions strewn across the carriageways, yet traffic continued trying to by-pass the scene of the incident. Laura recalls how her cadet training kicked-in and she was able to assess the circumstances, ensure the safety of the driver and others, whilst overseeing the scene of the accident until the emergency services arrived. Laura attributed her capacity to manage this incident to the competences she came by during her time in Sea Cadets.

LEADERSHIP

Research participants recalled the opportunities Sea Cadets gave them to develop their capacity for leadership, frequently as a consequence of having to take responsibility for the well-being and learning of their peers.

'In the cadets of course you get put in a leadership position. As you start to work your way up the ranks, you're then teaching classes, you're in charge of other cadets and I think it really taught me a lot about how to be an inspiring leader, not just telling people what to do and that's again translated into my business. So, I run my own company now, I have a team of about 1,100 people that I mentor and teach and it's very much like the cadets; you've got your team that you're wanting to get the best out of and for them to excel and do well, so I really enjoyed the leadership part of it.'

Carol, 44 – Kendal Sea Cadets

Leadership was not solely about managing and directing others; for it also entailed introducing colleagues and peers to new ideas and skills. Essentially it necessitated for some adopting the role of a pioneer. For example, a former GNTC member now in her 60s recollected how a high proportion of her peers subsequently went on to become the first females to achieve various roles. This encompassed former cadets going on to be the first female Sea Cadets Commanding Officer in her district; the first woman to be taken on by the Gas Board for a non-clerical post; and the first female fire fighter in their county. She described how seeing women in senior positions in Sea Cadets gave young women confidence and emboldened the next generation to emulate those who went before, as well envisage how they might in turn break new ground.

A further instance of the ways in which Sea Cadets cultivates leadership was Caroline (44) from Exeter Sea Cadets. Currently an assistant head at a special needs school, Caroline has a creative and entrepreneurial approach to her job that has led to her securing for her school several funding grants which have enabled it to launch innovative programmes designed to prepare pupils with learning disabilities for independent living. Caroline has in addition embraced a proactive stance to creating social enterprise opportunities designed to cultivate employability skills. She also established the first accredited dog handling qualification in response to the expressed needs and interests of her pupils. All these ventures resulted from her ability to identify opportunities and 'make things happen' for the benefit of the students. Attributes she acknowledged were initially fostered during her time in Sea Cadets.



COPING WITH CHALLENGES

Sea Cadets are not consciously taught how best to avoid becoming involved in 'risky/problem behaviour' but the experience has given many the resilience to cope with adversity and make positive choices.

Whereas the research participants failed to engage with the interpretation of risk as a 'problem', for them it had a stronger resonance that correlated to an affirmative competence to cope with challenges rather than the negative stress upon keeping out of trouble with the law and authority. This divergence placed a spotlight on how notions of risk, challenge and positive life choices have been reworked during the last six decades. Yet irrespective of their stance *apropos* notions of risk and positive life choices, participants from each and every generation unambiguously saw the beneficial role of Sea Cadets in presenting to them a vision of what life had to offer. Former cadets who came from poorer or less stable backgrounds in particular often credited the organisation with furnishing them with a set of values that ensured they 'stayed out of trouble' and made prudent choices with regards to education, employment and the friends they made.

'If I hadn't had Sea Cadets I would definitely have lost my way, personally, so without that guide and discipline I would have been probably walking the streets and getting involved with just the wrong kind of people which is unfortunately what my brothers did and my family did, so for me [Sea Cadets] definitely kept me off the streets. It allowed me a structured, disciplined environment to have fun and to learn new skills and new disciplines and for me that is the most beneficial part of why I was in the cadets [otherwise] I would have been lost and those risky behaviours would have been carried on in childhood and potentially who knows?'

Camron, 52 – Reigate Sea Cadets

'If I hadn't of been in cadets I'd have probably been in prison. Without a shadow of a doubt... I mean I was starting to get into trouble at school... but I went down the line of going into cadets and I joined the Navy because of cadets. When I left the Navy and I started working at the local prison, my first week in uniform as I was walking down one of the landings unlocking for prisoners... As I opened the door, who was there? One of my old school friends who I used to hang around with. Five years for heroin dealing. I went a bit further down, another school friend. And this was in my first month of being on the landings and these are two people who I used to hang around with as a kid, quite regular.'

Male, 50s – Eastern Area

These comments highlight the positive impact Sea Cadets had on those who might be judged to be 'at risk'. However, this is only one facet of the contribution Sea Cadets made in this respect. There is certainly a need to reframe risk and challenge as an opportunity rather than as something that is customarily problematic in the light of the fact many recalled their appreciation and gratitude for the ways in which Sea Cadets had enhanced their ability to navigate adversity, risk and confront hardship.

'Certainly for me as a young 20 year old, being put in charge of other people and being responsible for other people, you grow up very quickly and also, being pushed to your limits, whether you're out adventure training or you're at sea, it's actually good to be pushed to your limits and be pushed over what you think you're capable of, because again that gives you the resilience to cope with it later on in life.'

Female, 50s – South West Area

The adventures and activities participants engaged in during their time in Sea Cadets contained elements of risk and challenge which taught them how to work with others and when required to be self-reliant. The opportunity to negotiate their way through difficult practical and physical situations fostered a capacity to be unfazed by the challenges – practical, emotional and social – they encountered in later life.



CONFIDENCE

In contrast to capabilities, confidence in this context refers to the social and emotional capacity acquired by cadets to apply the skills and abilities that have been assimilated whilst they were members.

COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE

Courage is a core value of Sea Cadets. Although prized by all respondents it is to a degree, like risk, interpreted in disparate ways by the different generations. Some placed the emphasis on 'courage under fire' and viewed it as synonymous with military valour. A second cluster put heightened stress upon the capacity to stand firm in defence of one's convictions first and foremost, associating courage with a resolve to uphold a moral standpoint against the odds. Among the research participants it was the older segment who struggled to associate themselves with the concept of courageous moral behaviour, as they conceptualised the phrase in terms of the forms of heroism that they

had not been called upon to display in their own lifetime. Younger participants perceived courage as a fundamental value or virtue linked to a readiness to defend what is ethically right. This notion of moral courage was often articulated in a way that might be comprehended as possessing a belief in the rightness of your own convictions. Although competing interpretations were encountered, nevertheless, all concurred that courage was rightly viewed as a core Sea Cadets value.

There was also perceived to be a correlation between courage, reassurance and motivation. Participants often stressed they assimilated courage as a cadet with being emboldened and motivated by adult volunteers to tackle things that were unfamiliar and untried. The support of trusted adults instilled in them the composure to embark upon activities and tasks they initially found to be intimidating or even frightening.

'Courage is one I would say really stands out for me from Sea Cadets, because I was quite a shy young boy, and joining Sea Cadets was a great thing for me because it brought me out my shell a little bit. You weren't forced to do things, but you were made to do things outside your comfort zone, so I think that's a great life skill. Especially being a young islander in Orkney, having the courage to go and meet new people and all the rest of it. So yeah, I would say that's really the one that stands out for me would be courage.'

Alan, 37 – Orkney Sea Cadets

The research unearthed myriad accounts of cadets who when they first joined viewed themselves as shy and lacking in confidence, but who overcame their fears and anxieties during their time as members. For some this was because Sea Cadets accorded them the courage to face unfamiliar situations and hardships with confidence. A number linked this to being the sole representative of their unit on a national or international training programme. Sea Cadets is unusual in designing much of its training offer at district, area, national and international level to be available for cadets to attend without their local unit volunteers and cadets or perhaps with only one or two other cadets from their unit on a course, event or competition involving many cadets. This means that cadets become very practiced and confident in meeting new people within the safety of the same organisation, leading to high levels of social mixing amongst cadets from all backgrounds and, as a result, often forging friendships with Sea Cadets remote from their unit or social background.

'It filled me with a lot of confidence which in turn gave me confidence to move away for university. I could jump in with a crowd of new people and be able to be a bit sociable with them. Obviously, you move away to uni and you're in a house full of people you've never met before which is like when you're with the cadets and you go away to a competition and you're just meeting 20 new people and then you all click really well and you're friends, so it's definitely helped me with that, I would say.'

Megan, 25 – Lincoln Sea Cadets

The research found that frequently the courage and resolve which Sea Cadets imparted had a positive effect on participants' ability in later life to navigate problematic social and professional situations.

'Courage is a really important value that I think is one of the most important things. Especially being a youngster I was working in an industry where there's a lot of people with more experience, they're a lot older, and obviously they know a lot more than you. But being able to speak up in front of someone, challenging their ideas, takes a lot of courage... And I struggled with that a lot when I was younger. But now there's no point keeping quiet, you should speak up... I think it's what I learnt in Sea Cadets because I did the same thing. As a senior sea cadet... we did certain competitions... We were practising and doing something a certain way, and I thought there could be other ways of doing things, so I stepped up and said, "Let's try this way. Let's do a different approach", and that was probably the first time I've been able to get out my shell and say, "Let's try this way", and that took a lot of courage.'

Adam, 22 – Merton Sea Cadets



COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

The grit, self-confidence and poise acquired during their time as Sea Cadets helped many respondents obtain the capacity to engage with strangers and, when called upon to do so, address an audience.

'I think also the ability to actually just talk to people who you don't know, have a bit of worldly experience.'

Heather, 34 – Helensburgh Sea Cadets

As noted earlier, Sea Cadets gave young people the opportunity to mix with other cadets from elsewhere in the country. Similarly, many attended high profile events, met prominent personages and visited settings few might access. Besides being memorable episodes they were of great educational value, teaching those involved conversational proficiency and social etiquette that made talking to and meeting unfamiliar individuals and groups in the future far less daunting.

'I never spoke at school, I didn't do presentations. For my GCSEs we had to do a presentation in English, and I opted to do it privately with the teacher. But then in the same year I [spoke at] cadets in front of complete strangers, so I think it's just, it's the environment that it puts you in. It's like a different mindset. But then that set me up since going into work, interviews, presentations, anything like that, it doesn't bother me anymore, because you just get on with it.'

Holly, 26 – Wakefield Sea Cadets

The experience of parade and drill which entailed having to project their voice, take control and issue orders also internalised a set of competences familiar to few who were not themselves cadets.

RECOGNITION, ACHIEVEMENT AND PRIDE

'And I had some very good role models as a cadet, saying things like "Don't meet the standard, set the standard, and if you stand in front of a mirror in your uniform and say 'Oh that'll do', it won't do, so make an effort and people will start looking up to you", and that's what I took away and still have in my mind today and find myself repeating to others.'

Ruth, 52 – Biggleswade Girls' Nautical Training Corps

Sundry participants recalled how Sea Cadets enthused them to take a pride in their appearance and achievements. Sea Cadets also created various ways to celebrate their hard work and effort not least via accredited outcomes, awards and the chance to expand their learning by attending courses and taking part in earmarked activities. All this fostered loyalty to the organisation as well as a wish to acquire knowledge and expertise, as well as reap the rewards to be gained from putting in the extra effort.

'I learnt quite early on in cadets... if you showed loyalty to the organisation they were quite loyal to you and if you invested in going twice a week it was you that was picked to go when there were only two places on a course or on a competition or in a camp. That stuck with me all the way through... I was quite fortunate that I was [working on a project] with the local authority [in my job]. I turned up every day. I didn't have to turn up. I was sent on courses that they were only paying their staff to go on and so, loyalty works both ways.'

Lyam, 26 – Christchurch Sea Cadets

Many who were contacted were keen to furnish examples of how the recognition and support they obtained during their time as a cadet instilled a desire to take responsibility upon themselves. In later life many found this mindset was reflected in a disposition to work hard, commit to the job and fit in, characteristics which many believed helped them navigate future hierarchies and secure promotion in their working lives.

'I think in terms of my work life, the promotion there, has never daunted me, because in Sea Cadets, you want to get promoted, you want to get to that high level, and I've done that... as a civil servant with the Ministry of Defence, I have done what they call three operational tours. So I've spent six months in a tent in Kosovo, and I've done Bosnia and Iraq. I think the confidence that Sea Cadets has given me and empowered me has certainly helped, you know, when you get an air ticket to go to RAF Brize Norton and it's one way, because you're not used to that, because you usually get a return flight on holiday. And you go out on a flight and there's perhaps 200 military and two civilians and they look at you trying to work out who you are, and so that confidence is really key there. Leading on from that, my current work, I'm a senior civil servant responsible for a huge team and I got an MBE, I'd never have got that, and also a deputy Lord Lieutenant for Bedfordshire. So, all starting from that 12 and ¾ girl that wouldn't say boo to a goose, so there's a lot to be thankful to Sea Cadets for.'

Ruth, 52 – Biggleswade Girls' Nautical Training Corps

MATURITY AND INDEPENDENCE

'I learned to be independent, to know how to make decisions.'

Gerry, 87 – Romford Sea Cadets and Purfleet Sea Cadets

Across the age bands respondents narrated how the sense of autonomy and the expectation that they must give a good account of themselves as Sea Cadets, proved beneficial in later life. Notably, the younger generational groupings spoke approvingly of the emotional maturity Sea Cadets gave them. One outcome was the acquisition of confidence to venture out into the world.

'But all of those things are really popular now, about instilling resilience. We were already doing these things, so I grew up into an adult knowing I was resilient, knowing I could endure, that I could have discipline, that I could read boundaries and still have fun at the same time, and all of those things were really important.'

Kathrine, 44 – Kingston and District Girls' Nautical Training Corps

'I am sure that belonging to Sea Cadets (GNTC) gave me the confidence to go to completely strange places by myself. Also if I got the chance, to be going by sea. The more I read, the more I wished to travel. At first I did try getting work at sea. At that time girls were kept in their place, the Fifties and Sixties. Then I travelled, and lived in other countries.'

Rita, 85 – St Albans Girls' Nautical Training Corps

'I wouldn't have gone to America without cadets, 100 per cent no way!'

Megan, 25 – Lincoln Sea Cadets

WELLBEING

Long-term wellbeing is one of Sea Cadets pre-set outcomes itemised in its framework. A somewhat nebulous term in this context, it refers in this context to an individual's overall emotional, social and physical needs. There were many examples cited by participants of the ways in which their previous involvement in Sea Cadets improved their mental and physical resilience.

'Definitely Sea Cadets, the GNTC that has helped me, given me the skills and the knowledge for me to change my life, otherwise perhaps I still would have been stuck in a rundown council estate and not knowing what to do but just accepting that I'm not going to go any further than that. And, unfortunately, some of my friends are still there and it's a life that they've accepted but it wasn't something that I thought that I would really fit in and if it wasn't for Sea Cadets, I probably would be quite unhappy and not fulfilling my life.'

Linda, 64 – Wood Green Girls' Nautical Training Corps

Across all age groups Sea Cadets was perceived to have promoted wholesome relationships, an awareness of the importance of belonging and a sense of direction and purpose. As such it was viewed, almost universally, as having enriched the lives of respondents and improved their well-being.



Image provided by Jan Marrone

CATALYST

Almost all former cadets described how in different ways Sea Cadets played a pivotal and formative role in their life trajectories. For a portion it led to fulfilling careers, for others it generated interests and hobbies that enriched their adult lives. In many cases it helped fashion a network of friends and affiliations which supported their personal development. The research provided plentiful examples of how for an assortment of reasons Sea Cadets continues to exercise a powerful beneficial and enriching impact on the lives of many respondents.

SHAPE LIFE DIRECTION

Sea Cadets launched many into life by inspiring them to make difficult but necessary decisions. One such example is Ramón (41) from Malta Sea Cadets who was selected, along with three others, by his unit to go on an exchange to Scunthorpe, Grimsby and Lincoln. During the exchange he visited Lieutenant Commander Woodcock's home and became firm friends with his son. Over the years they remained in close contact. Fifteen years after that first visit Ramón and his wife decided to move to England and for the first 18 months the couple lived with his friend, who he had first met during the exchange. It was the positive experience Ramón had as a cadet that resulted in him making the decision to emigrate and settle in Grimsby.

PREPARE FOR WORKING LIFE

Sea Cadets prepared scores of respondents for their subsequent careers. In some instances Sea Cadets helped them to choose a specific vocation or pathway. For others it gave them the aptitude, skills and confidence to successfully transition from school into employment. To navigate the world of work with less fear and trepidation than many of their peers who had not benefited from the Sea Cadets experience.

'But you've got to remember where people were in those days... there were no [job] opportunities. But the cadets gave me two opportunities. I could have been a musician in the Royal Marine Bands, but I joined the Royal Navy as an engineer, and ended up as an engine room artificer. So, it started me off on my education for engineering and it's been a long haul. So, yeah, it was there for me...'

Tony, 73 – Tooting and Balham Sea Cadets

'All of the jobs that I ever had were because someone from Sea Cadets recommended me for them, apart from one, the ambulance service which was advertised in the job centre. And I went for it, and for whatever reason, I don't know why, but I wore a TS Royalist tie, because I'd been on Royalist. And one of the guys doing the interview, "Oh Sea Cadets?" "Yeah." And so was he, and I got the job yeah, so any job I've had is because of something to do with Sea Cadets.'

Ray, 62 – Guildford Sea Cadets

Respondents repeatedly said how Sea Cadets had played a valued role in ensuring they were better prepared for transition into the world of work. It was not merely that adult volunteers provided support and advice, but that being a sea cadet helped many stand-out from the crowd as potential and actual employees. Being a cadet meant they had desirable competences and the personal attributes employers were seeking.

WIDE RANGE OF LIFE COURSES POST-SEA CADETS

Sea Cadets mentored and motivated many to pursue a career in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines as well as the broader maritime sector²³. Growing the 'maritime workforce and transforming their diversity enhancing our reputation as the world leader in the provision of maritime education and training' (Department for Transport, 2019: 6) is a UK government priority and it is a role Sea Cadets has long played. For a significant proportion of the respondents Sea Cadets spelt out the career openings that awaited them in the maritime sector and forces.

The research unearthed copious examples of former cadets who went on to join the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Merchant Navy and the broader maritime sector. Amongst the roles mentioned were: naval officer; submariner; deck officer; engineer; Master Mariner; anti-piracy and maritime security; and serving on ferries, cruise ships, search and rescue vessels, fishing boats and luxury yachts. Mention was also made of employment in areas such as commercial diving; offshore renewable energy; and offshore oil and gas facilities.

Whereas maritime pathways were significant, many others chose a wide array of other careers. A considerable number of Sea Cadets entered at some point in their life-time public service; this included the civil service, police, ambulance, postal service, railways, education (formal and informal) and the prison service.

Others worked in creative roles in dance, music, photography, film and art. There were quite a few working in engineering, manufacturing and mechanics. Logistics, haulage and estates featured as did accountancy, the law, HR and health and safety roles. Others chose a trade such as electrician and plumber. Some worked in sales, administration or PR, leisure and hospitality and communications. The extensive array of career destinations questions any misplaced assertion that Sea Cadets is only germane to those who intend joining the Royal Navy or Royal Marines. Rather it has evidently helped many young people for the world of work, whatever their chosen path.

²³ 'Estimated 22,440 UK seafarers were active at sea (84 per cent male) (National Statistics, 2019). In 2015, the UK maritime sector directly contributed 186,000 jobs (Department for Transport, 2019: 9) and the sector directly supports 220,100 UK jobs (Maritime UK, 2019).



RESILIENCE IN WORK

Sea Cadets offers members the chance to progress through the ranks. A number of respondents recalled that procuring greater responsibility as they rose up the hierarchy within Sea Cadets had a tangible benefit in relation to their working lives. They believed the Sea Cadets experience had fostered in them a realistic determination to succeed and a resilience which served them well in the workplace environment.

'When I started out working I never knew what I wanted to do. I wasn't really a career minded person, so I started at the bottom. I got an office job and I started at the bottom and I slowly worked my way up, so even my job, I suppose what I did with Sea Cadets in progressing through the ranks, I also did in my career as well. So, whilst I've not got some super-duper high paid job, I've comfortably, slowly but surely, progressed through the ranks.'

Laura, 34 – Middleton and Chadderton Sea Cadets

'So, in later life when I was in my late teens and I went on and did, shall we say more exciting and more challenging things, I took that acceptance with me, so I was able to accept discipline and routine that others fell by the wayside and it allowed me to progress through an organisation to the highest level and I think I've taken that with me.'

Pat, 64 – Shirley Sea Cadets

'I started right at the bottom and worked my way up because that's what I like to do to suss the job out and suss the role out; learn the job from people that knew and I guess that goes back to the cadets again is starting at the bottom, looking around and learning from people with a bit more experience and then deciding what you want to do rather than just jumping in... I don't think I'd ever have had the opportunity to do [my current job] if I hadn't had those early on experiences.'

Female, 50s – South West Area

The research collated plentiful examples of the pivotal role Sea Cadets played in shaping and supporting former cadets during their working and adult lives, however there were a small minority who did not consider their membership had a discernible impact. Although they had enjoyed their time in Sea Cadets it was merely viewed as a pleasurable adolescent interlude which had minimal bearing on what came after.

SUMMARY

The evidence discussed in the preceding section draws upon the qualitative research and relates to the five key data themes drawn from the Sea Cadets' impact journey [see *Figure 14*].

DATA THEMES

Context outlines the significant attributes and inputs of Sea Cadets highlighted by the research. Amongst these are components one would expect to encounter in nearly all youth work programmes, such as an enabling environment, positive experiences and various modes of learning – formal, informal and experiential. But there were also elements that underline the unique offer of Sea Cadets, which embodies an extraordinary combination of naval traditions, maritime adventure, consistent structure and the invitation to confront adversity.

Community and connection refers to the depth of the relationships that participants enjoyed during their time in Sea Cadets. The accounts collected by the research included many transformative stories of how the social environment, which brought together trusted adult volunteers and likeminded peers, opened up an entirely new life courses for many cadets.

Capabilities speaks of the practical skills and approach to life and learning fostered by Sea Cadets. The tangible and transferable skills acquired during their time in the cadets for many retained their usefulness into adult life.

Confidence is not only about emotional resilience, but also about the ability to apply and employ the practical skills participants developed. Personified by the self-awareness and independence that has enabled so many former cadets to appreciate and seize opportunities as and when they arise.

Catalyst is the outcome and end result of all of the above. Participants in this research described in various ways how Sea Cadets opened up pathways in their personal and professional lives. This applied equally across the wide range of careers pursued by former cadets, including those who embarked on careers in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines or maritime sector.

Across these various stages of the Sea Cadets voyage there were a number of outstanding areas of impact:

- An enduring positive impact.
- The enabling environment, making ready for employment.
- The empowering educational approaches.
- The value of challenging experiences safely supervised.
- The long-term sense of belonging and community.
- The development of courage and confidence.
- The value of progressing through the ranks.
- The range of physical and social skills acquired for life.

These eight areas of impact are discussed further in Section 6.

SURVEY FREE TEXT QUESTIONS

Readers may recall that within the survey there were two free text questions that followed the multiple-choice section. These invited individuals to recount information and experiences regarding the impact of Sea Cadets on their lives. The replies to these two questions were analysed, thematically mapped and used to triangulate the research findings accumulated from the interviews and focus groups.

The main themes from qualitative data generated by the survey were around being set up for life with skills – technical and soft, embarking on fresh pathways relating to employment and their overall life experiences. Respondents also foregrounded how identity formation, developing a sense of self and the gift of long-term friendships, acquired initially through Sea Cadets, beneficially impacted on their wellbeing. These benefits gained through the experiences and opportunities respondents had with Sea Cadets afforded a unique environment and a distinctive mode of education not encountered in mainstream schooling. Respondents emphasised that Sea Cadets had given them the opportunity to procure an array of transferrable life-skills such as confidence, self-discipline, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, and the ability to cope with challenges and the unexpected.

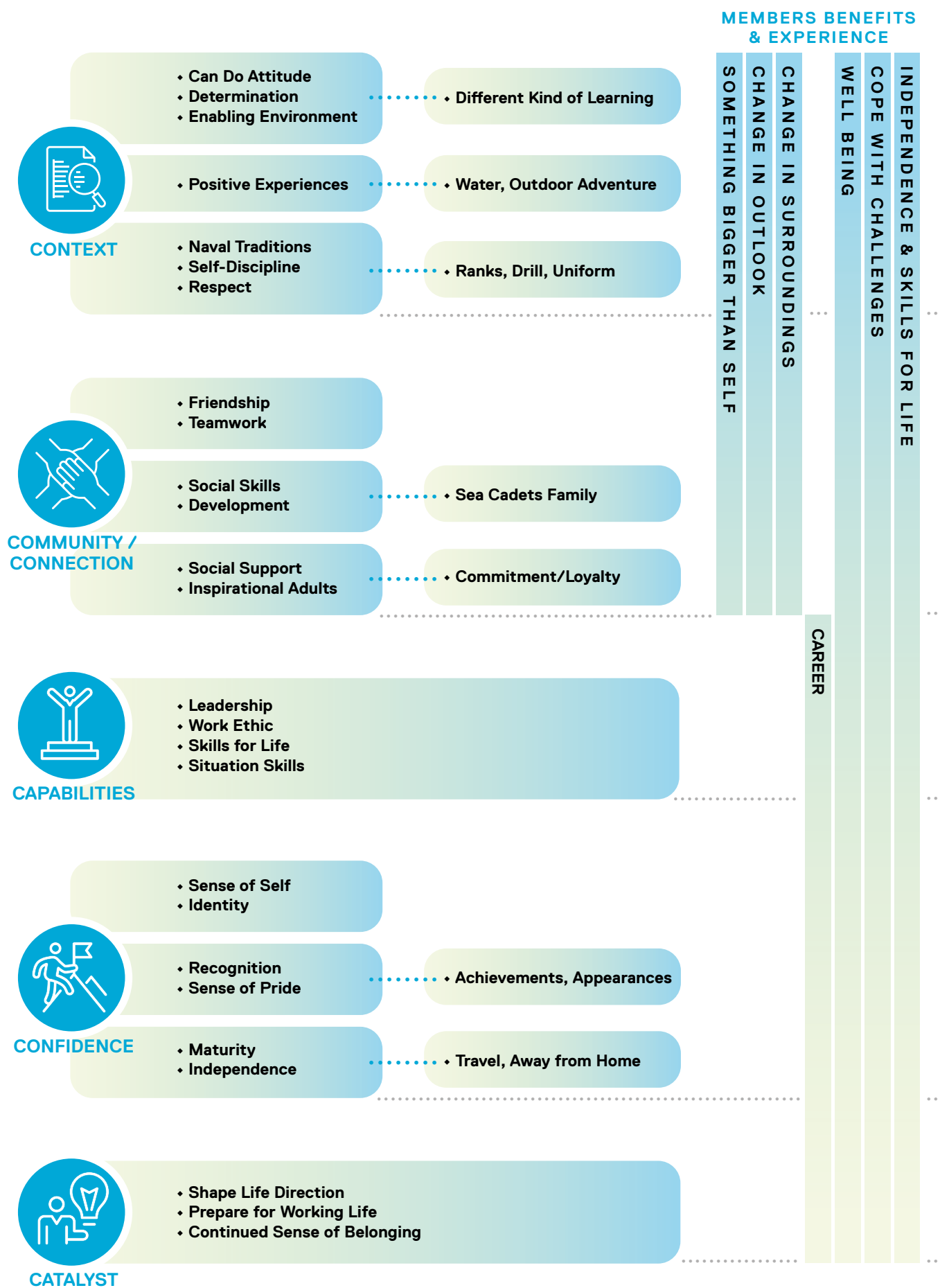


Figure 15: Overarching Thematic Map

There are other areas shown in the survey themes that confirm the findings of the interview and focus group analysis. The development of skills and qualities that aid career progression are logged in the survey which correlates with *capabilities* and *confidence*, leading to Sea Cadets being a *catalyst* in participants' lives. Similarly, the survey emphasis on the enabling environment mirrors the importance of both *context* and *community/connection* found in the interviews.

The qualitative data drawn from the interviews, focus groups and survey, were translated into an overarching thematic map to enable the author to draw out all important elements and their connections [see *Figure 15*]. This diagram also incorporates the four areas of positive impact that were most strongly represented in the quantitative data. They are shown to the right of the diagram to highlight where they overlap with the qualitative themes. Together, this represents a comprehensive overview of the areas of long-term impact achieved by Sea Cadets as evidenced through the research participants' responses.

Three of Sea Cadets' long-term benefits from the outcomes framework are explicitly represented in the three vertical quantitative themes to the right of the diagram – *career* (post-16 destinations), *coping with challenges* (reduced problem behaviour) and, *wellbeing*. The fourth quantitative theme *independence*

and *skills* correlates with the intermediate skills identified in Sea Cadets outcomes framework [see *Table 1*]. The remaining two long-term benefits are represented under different sub-themes. *Participation in community* is represented in the diagram by a *continued sense of belonging* and being part of *something bigger than self*.

This is because the contributions to society made by the research participants are not limited to the local context that the community indicator implies. *Attendance and engagement in school* is represented by a *different kind of learning*, because Sea Cadets made an invaluable contribution to the educational journeys of many of the research participants. For some Sea Cadets in particular proved to be a lifeline, especially for a number who were either disinterested in mainstream schooling or poorly served by it.

The thematic map explicitly incorporates key elements of the values and mindsets that strongly resonated with participants. These choices were based on both their prevalence in the data, and interconnection with other elements. The values of *self-discipline* and *respect*, together with the mindset of the *can-do attitude* and *determination* are present in the context section of the thematic map, those of *commitment* and *loyalty* are included in the *community/connection* section.



Of the nine generations of former cadets who participated in the **My LegaSea** survey:-

61%
credited
Sea Cadets
with inspiring
them to
seriously
consider a
Royal Navy
or maritime
career



6. DISCUSSION

A DIFFERENT KIND OF IMPACT

My LegaSea validates the value of under-taking an ongoing assessment of impact. First it supplements existing evaluations based on the measurement of short-term outcomes recorded during a period of affiliation. Second it documents the extent to which certain forms of impact are concealed from the researcher until long after engagement with a given youth activity, project or organisation has ended. This was illustrated by a plethora of responses from former cadets who recounted how it was only as adults that they came to appreciate just how profound an impact Sea Cadets had upon them. Self-evidently only a protracted perspective will allow one to gauge the impact an agency has had on the employment, relationships and well-being of those who were once affiliates.

6. Discussion



The quantitative analysis compared responses from former cadets participating in the *My LegaSea* survey with those gathered from the 2017 Annual Sea Cadets survey of current cadets. Both cohorts were asked to respond to a similar suite of pre-defined outcome indicators. It is important to note that the percentages of *expected* impacts reported by young people during their time as cadets consistently outweighed those of *perceived actual* impact evidenced by former cadets. Notably the percentages given by young people at the time of involvement were higher in two key areas: getting a job revealed a 26 per cent difference – with 80 per cent of existing cadets expecting impact compared to 54 per cent of former cadets evidencing it; and keeping out of trouble had a 21 per cent variation – with 54 per cent of cadets predicting impact compared to 33 per cent of former cadets perceiving that to be the case. There was however one notable exception, where 88 per cent of former cadets attributed Sea Cadets with providing them with a sense of independence and skills, compared to 87 per cent of existing cadets. Overall however, comparisons such as these draw attention not only to the inherent

weaknesses of most short-term outcome measures currently in use across the board but to the benefits that arise from spreading the net in relation to what are, and are not, substantive impacts.

The interviews and focus groups similarly raised serious doubts as to the worth of short-term outcome measurement as a tool for the assessment of impact in relation to youth work and youth development. Both confirmed that the majority of participants were aware that it was not until after they left Sea Cadets that they fully comprehended the extent to which it had been a force for good in their lives. Participants commented on how with hindsight they could now appreciate the ways in which skills, knowledge and character traits developed in Sea Cadets had a beneficial influence on their personal and professional development.

What is clear is that when viewed over the long-term, former members are aware that the impact of Sea Cadets on their lives has been palpable, overwhelmingly positive and enduring. This is consistently evidenced across the generations.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

This research found the enabling environment nurtured by Sea Cadets had a transformative effect on the lives of the lion's share of participants throughout adulthood. Helping many to surmount socio-economic or gender-based constraints. The 'can-do attitude' and 'yes atmosphere' was for many a revelation, a new way of interpreting the world and their role within it that was markedly at odds with the negativity they repeatedly ran into elsewhere. Once again this highlighted the crucial role an organisation working with young people can play when it offers an alternative ethos based on creating and fostering opportunities for personal growth.

Research participants repeatedly referred to the gateways to uncharted experiences and perspectives Sea Cadets provided, such as adventure, international travel, the chance to meet new people and attend prestigious events, all of which they would not have otherwise been able to access. This enabling environment, so appreciated by respondents, was crafted for them by teams of adults who believed in their potential and ability to succeed and on that basis invested time in them. Adults trained and equipped to imaginatively build upon the interests and enthusiasms of the young cadets they worked alongside. The enabling environment flows from an organisational structure and culture that gives precedence to education, and from the collective vision of adult volunteers committed to fostering the social, physical and intellectual development of the cadets they supervise.

Previous research into the social impact of the cadets refers to this 'can-do attitude' as a tool for improving self-efficacy (Bajwa-Patel et al., 2018: 2). Self-efficacy being defined as 'an individual's belief in their ability to complete a specific task' (ibid.: 11). The same research also drew attention to the beneficial impact of self-efficacy on social mobility, work-related performance and motivation, especially for those who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. Sea Cadets, as this subsequent study found, similarly had a tangible impact on the personal and professional wellbeing of former members as a result of nurturing their capacity for self-efficacy.

EMPOWERING EDUCATION

Research participants appreciated the educational benefits that emanated from their membership of Sea Cadets, in particular the practical, hands on learning techniques. Most felt that the adult volunteers identified their learning needs, recognised their potential and viewed them as individuals with latent talents. Often this was in stark contrast to their negative experiences of formal schooling. Yet unlike many youth work organisations Sea Cadets does provide elements of structured teaching linked to discrete specialisms. Research participants clearly valued not only what they learned during their time with Sea Cadets, but the ways in which they were taught, which for many translated into a life-long enthusiasm for education in its broadest sense.

Uniformed youth organisations such as Sea Cadets have long provided alternative educational pathways. Recent research into the impact of the Scouts and Guides in relation to mental health in later life noted the beneficial role of 'progressive self-education taking place in the context of small peer groups with adults guiding the process' (Dibben et al., 2017: 279). The offer of uniformed youth organisations that focus on assisted and experiential rather than non-directive learning and who go beyond the 'purely recreational and unstructured' (Dibben et al., 2017: 279) encountered in many youth clubs and projects, is self-evidently advantageous. Within Sea Cadets we encounter a model that delivers not only education via outdoor adventure and physical activity, but also a set of 'capabilities' which provide a foundation for continued self-education. Something that has clear-cut benefits in terms of future well-being.

REFRAMING RISK

Participants described the extraordinary opportunities Sea Cadets gave them to confront and surmount physical and mental challenges. Recalling how they learnt how to assess and navigate risk and assimilate competencies that later in life were utilised to solve practical and emotional problems. Sea Cadets taught them an affirmative relationship to risk. One that in some measure jarred with the current ambition of Sea

Cadets outlined in the outcomes framework to reduce 'risky/problem behaviours'. A goal widely encountered amongst youth work organisations, this stance reflects a negative interpretation of 'risk' and 'risky behaviour'. This perspective was not shared by many survey participants. Risk in the formal and informal educational sectors has predominantly become synonymous with problematised notions of young people which endorse the youth development model of intervention which focuses on diversion. Appreciating the affirmative role of risk when navigated in a supportive and safe environment akin to the real-world adventures of Sea Cadets, creates a helpful counterbalance. One that promotes an ability to cope with the hazards, moral and physical, that arise in everyday life. This sentiment is rarely encountered in mainstream policy or rhetoric relating to the youth sector and youth work. The comments made by the participants encourages us to seek a more nuanced interpretation of risk within youth work, one that embraces the educative function it can perform and the benefits that come from managing and countering risk at an earlier age.

LONG-TERM BELONGING AND COMMUNITY

Relating to others and social inclusion are two widely adopted impact criteria within youth work. Yet the associational and relational nature of work with young people is undermined by the individualistic and bureaucratic tendencies of mainstream youth policy. Authentic protracted relationships between peers and between adult volunteers and young people are unlikely to be nurtured within the context of fragmented short-term individualised programmes (Jefferies, 2001). One of the most consistent impacts of Sea Cadets recorded by research participants was the acquisition of treasured friends. A mounting body of research speaks of increased levels of loneliness and isolation amongst young people and adults (Hertz, 2020). Partly this reflects young people's inability, even refusal, to assemble tangible social networks (Twenge, 2017). But equally it emanates from deeper societal causes including the changing structure of schooling, an exaggeration of the dangers posed by the world beyond the home and the rise of social media.

Encouragingly, recent studies tell us cadet organisations have a successful track record when it comes to furthering community cohesion (Bajwa-Patel et al., 2018: 4). Uniformed youth programmes improve people's ability over time 'to engage with "local sociability" and "community organisation" through activity in their local area which builds social capital (Dibben et al., 2017: 279). The *My LegaSea* research findings reinforce those conclusions. Former Sea Cadets regularly recounted how the close friends they made in Sea Cadets played a vital role in their lives. They also spoke about feeling part of a wider network, of having a sense of belonging to something with links across the UK and beyond, and how the shared Sea Cadets experience brought them closer to others, many of whom came from differing backgrounds who they would not have encountered but for Sea Cadets.

Recent research by The Prince's Trust points to the lack of supportive networks around young people:

One in three young people (34 per cent) believes that people in their community do not care about them, with this rising to 41 per cent among the subset of 21 to 25 year-olds. While 35 per cent of 11 to 15 year-olds do not feel they have role models within their community, this rises to more than half (51 per cent) of 21 to 25 year olds. (2018: 3).

In contrast to The Prince's Trust findings, *My LegaSea* respondents spoke of the enduring impact of adult volunteers on their lives. Participants acquired from them a strong sense of community and an awareness of the important function affirmative adult role models can play in the lives of young people. This research confirmed that Sea Cadets fostered friendship and associational life over many generations. Participants recounted how their time in Sea Cadets instilled the confidence to rely on others, ask for help and go beyond highly individualised ways of living. Some discovered that the Sea Cadets community orientated mindset acquired in their youth was something not always fathomed or appreciated by others in their workplace and neighbourhood. Many firmly believed it was Sea Cadets that nurtured within them a commitment to others, gave them social confidence and engendered a desire to be an active citizen.

COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE

Giving young people the chance to discover a sense of self has long been viewed as a key function of youth work and youth development, as has the nurturing of wellbeing, confidence and resilience and an array of similar social and emotional skills. All these attributes are perceived to be the foundation to positive outcomes in relation to education, employment, health and relationships. Within the *My LegaSea* research there were myriad accounts of how Sea Cadets helped members to find their voice and identity. Participants detailed how the organisation provided them with the safe space to overcome shyness and acquire the self-confidence to become part of the unit and when required adopt a leadership role. Nearly all cited qualities and talents that Sea Cadets encouraged which served to enhance their personal and professional life. Within the research sample there was evidence that introverted young people found Sea Cadets gave them greater self-confidence than formal schooling or other youth activities because of the supportive and cohesive nature of the local unit and the opportunities they were given to succeed.

Another way Sea Cadets positively impacted on identity formation was the structured environment, symbolised by the uniform, rank structure, routine, high expectations and rich traditions bequeathed by the Royal Navy. Sea Cadets offered stability and a sense of certainty for many who were obliged to navigate chaotic and challenging home and school experiences. The sense of discipline was for some a welcome relief from the uncertainty and chaos elsewhere in their lives. The uniform and structure was however also paradoxically a leveller for many young people. Research participants spoke of how the hierarchical structure created a sense of equality through the known conventions of the naval way of life. Whilst the opportunities for outdoor adventure, physical and mental challenge cultivated courage, a capacity to trust others, and self-confidence from which they acquired emotional and social resilience.

PROGRESSING THROUGH THE RANKS

Finding and retaining employment is not a novel predicament for those leaving full-time education. Encouragement and guidance from adults already in work can play a decisive role in ensuring a successful transition. A substantial number of research participants recalled the supportive role adult volunteers played in abetting their transfer into further education or employment. Some went so far as to say their life courses were shaped for the better by adults they met through Sea Cadets.

An additional facet was the constructive way the experience of starting at the bottom and progressing through the naval inspired rank structure prepared respondents for building a career. Sea Cadets instilled not merely a sense of humility with regards to the point of commencement but an awareness that a prerequisite for advancement was commitment, strength of character and resilience. Setting aside a perception of entitlement was a valuable lesson for many which primed them for the realities of working life, just as it taught the need for self-motivation as a key ingredient for professional development.



SKILLS FOR LIFE

One recent survey found that almost half of 16-25 year olds 'worried that they won't have the skills they need for the future' (The Prince's Trust, 2018). The extent of such fears was not mirrored amongst Sea Cadets. Across the generations there emerged a uniform belief that being a sea cadet meant you assimilated and cultivated skills – practical and social alike - that would enable you to successfully navigate life. Indeed, this was adjudged the most stable area of impact across all generations.

There were extensive examples supplied of the concrete and emotional competences that participants developed as a cadet. Participants depicted Sea Cadets as a foundation and grounding for their lives – something they could metaphorically return to and rely on for guidance. Sea Cadets furnished the chance to learn life skills in action rather than in theory. The transformative experiences on water, at sea and elsewhere, allied to the support of adult volunteers, they enjoyed as cadets meant they felt better equipped to face the trials and traumas of adulthood.

Both current and former cadets reflecting on their experiences persuasively identified *independence and skills* as the most significant impact during and after their time in Sea Cadets. This unbroken presence over nine decades demonstrated the enduring consistency of Sea Cadets' ability to impart transferable life skills. Repeatedly former cadets expressed their appreciation at being given responsibility, openings for the exercise of leadership, the chance to self-manage and to travel independently. Sea Cadets seemed to put old heads on young bodies and this was something many were grateful for. Much as they were thankful for the ways in which Sea Cadets equipped them to navigate the adult world with élan and heightened confidence.



Of the nine generations of former cadets who participated in the **My LegaSea** survey:-

55%
deemed Sea
Cadets to have
helped them gain
qualifications
during their time
as members

7. CONCLUSION



Image provided by Ray Bullock

7. CONCLUSION

The body of evidence with regards to long-term impact accumulated by *My LegaSea* exposes the limitations of speculative methods of calculating the social impact of youth work and youth development interventions. This research confirms there is an alternative to merely guessing whether or not the social and informal education undertaken by a youth organisation achieves impact over time. *My LegaSea* draws our attention to the tangible benefits emanating from systematic qualitative evaluation, designed to capture the value of the educational programmes undertaken by agencies such as Sea Cadets. In accomplishing this, the study also spells out the defects inherent in the current preoccupation with short-term outcome measurement, that communicates only a partial and often prejudicial picture of impact. Importantly this study of long-term impact identifies that the contribution Sea Cadets has made in terms of helping former cadets enjoy a fulfilling life, confirms that this form of intervention is both

valuable and worthwhile, not only for the participants themselves, but also for wider society. The findings summarised in this document convey the extent to which Sea Cadets has made a sustained contribution towards creating more rounded, better balanced individuals and socially responsible citizens.

The research of long-term impact provides an assortment of messages that are surely worth future consideration by practitioners and those responsible for policy.

First, it stresses that, although activities play an important role and must be given due attention, organisations such as Sea Cadets are first and foremost educational bodies founded on a progressive, consistent and practical training programme. Day in and day out they teach young people vital lessons relating to such matters as how to: live a more fulfilling life; nurture their own talents; build and sustain relationships; collaborate and work in



partnership with others; communicate more effectively with adults and those from different backgrounds; the value of community and to embark with more confidence and resilience on the voyage to adulthood. Those and similar learning experiences cannot be dismissed as add-ons and icing on the educational cake. Each are crucial elements that combine to make a contribution towards the nurturing of more capable, resilient and self-assured citizens, employees and individuals.

Second, it reminds us that rich and profound educational experiences require time and dedication to develop the sort of enabling environments Sea Cadets consistently creates. Rarely can the vital lessons the research respondents told us they learnt during their time in Sea Cadets be taught over a weekend or during a few weeks of contact-time. The sustained commitment of the young people and adult volunteers which extended over months and years meant the trust upon which education is based can be nurtured. This leads to a long-term sense of belonging and community like the one many former and current Sea Cadets describe. Usually we learn best from those we have faith in, people who have by word and deed demonstrated to us that they have something profound and worthwhile to teach.

Third, Sea Cadets adult volunteers we learnt from the feedback are never merely instructors, supervisors, administrators or programme providers. Each and every one of them is in the best sense of the words a teacher, an educator. Often unbeknown to themselves they have a profound impact for the good on the future development of the young people they are working with by delivering empowering education. The research participants repeatedly return to the way special individuals changed the way they thought, behaved and viewed the world. Training will not manufacture those 'special individuals', but it can serve to prepare and remind adult volunteers that they are performing an extraordinarily valuable role. This research may help many amongst them realise that they will, for good or ill, probably have a far greater impact than they realise on the young people they teach by word and deed.

Fourth, the importance of a positive attitude to risk that many respondents underscored within their comments. There is perhaps a need to reframe notions of risk both as to how young people are perceived and portrayed in policy and also to value the role practical challenges in the context of safe and supportive environments like Sea Cadets play in fostering the ability to navigate risk and challenge in later life. Whilst whole swathes of the youth work sector are predicated on the notion of protecting

young people from 'risk', 'danger' and 'challenge', it should be acknowledged that a significant proportion of young women and men are seeking opportunities to embark on testing and even risky pursuits. Individuals who are enticed away from the option of a static isolated life tied to a computer screen by adventurous and testing activity. Sea Cadets is one of only a handful of agencies that have the potential to cater for this sizeable but almost totally ignored cohort. By embracing a positive concept of risk Sea Cadets are able to offer ultimately secure opportunities that stretch and excite, and which the research suggests, a discrete but important sub-cultural cluster of young people find attractive and fulfilling.

Fifth, the research spoke positively of the value of the Royal Navy customs and traditions that permeate the Sea Cadets' 'offer' enabling young people to build their courage and confidence. The overarching message suggests that ways need to be found to build upon this at every opportunity. Sea Cadets, unlike so many forms of youth work provision, via its in-built progression through the ranks, is not a dead end leading merely to a departure date, a drifting away into whatever is to hand. The unambiguous linkage to an adult infused agency, namely the Royal Navy and the wider maritime sector, means Sea Cadets, like faith-based youth projects coupled to a place of worship, possesses a permanently available adult aspirational model. A future to aim for, a grown-up world to transition to when it becomes time to depart Sea Cadets.

Sixth, the *My LegaSea* project has attested to the benefits of self-generated research. It is no accident that it is Sea Cadets, an independent agency with a history stretching back for more than a century and an assured future, which has opted to break free from the existing infatuation with short-term models of evaluation primarily tied to funding. By doing so it has been able to deliver an example of a distinctive and future orientated means of computing impact. Research of this nature requires a measure of confidence in the longevity of the organisation and a conviction that the 'offer' has the potential to flourish for the foreseeable future. Few youth projects have that self-belief and few survive for any substantive length of time as discrete entities. Hence research of this nature is not high on their agenda, nor is it feasible because they lack a 'past' which can be utilised as a research base. Sea Cadets now possess a research resource of immense potential for future development.

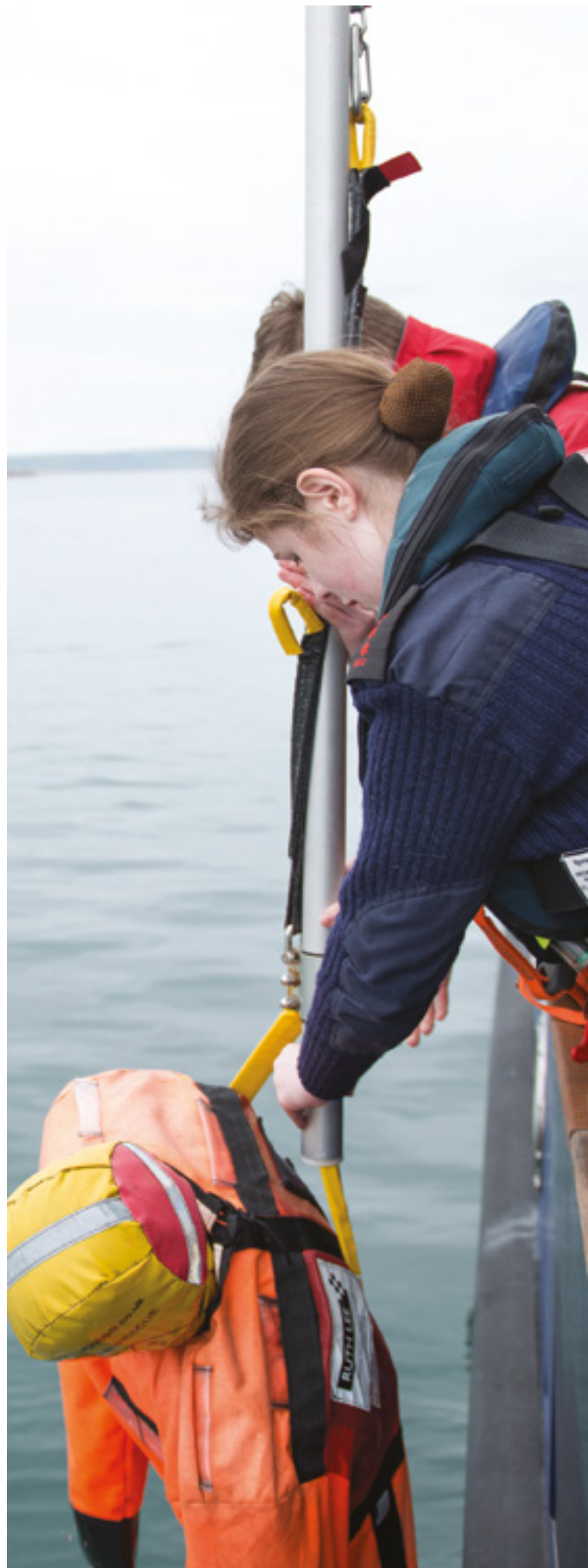
Set besides their Annual Survey it becomes possible to replicate this exercise at regular intervals and fine tune it in order to focus on specific issues or clusters.

Seventh, the attention paid to the multigenerational analysis meant comparative analysis in relation to other areas of interest such as gender, class, and ethnicity may warrant future exploration. Another important topic for potential research building on this resource is to consider why Sea Cadets are so successful when it comes to the recruitment of adult volunteers. What reasons account for this is a question surely worthy of attention.

Eighth, the research purveys a message that speaks of sustained success. Possibly the most prized outcome is that it confirms that the Sea Cadets 'offer' is not merely meeting the needs of those who voluntarily affiliate but that it is viewed as something to be esteemed by former cadets drawn from across the generations. Therefore, it validates the work of adult volunteers and full-time staff. Providing them with a confirmation that what they are doing is worthwhile and valued. The research could, if so desired, be employed to encourage more adults to volunteer as well as used to shape elements of the training offered to staff and volunteers.

Finally, there are a number of avenues for further analysis of the *My LegaSea* data. These include reviewing it to ascertain more in-depth ways of understanding why the Sea Cadets 'offer' appeals to some young people more than others. More specifically, there is an opportunity to review the specific role of Sea Cadets on women's life courses through the legacy of the Girls' Nautical Training Corps; as well as securing a heightened understanding the impact of maritime adventure in relation to young women over different generations. There is also the opportunity to contribute to the Maritime 2050 debate by using the *My LegaSea* data to review the role of Sea Cadets in maritime futures and how their ongoing work with young people contributes to this national strategy. In conclusion another area for consideration is using the *My LegaSea* resource to expand our understanding of the ways in which Sea Cadets influences the employment trajectories of former members.

No research is watertight, neither is it ever beyond critique. More resources and a longer timeframe would have enabled certain gaps to be filled and topics to be expanded. However, the research remains a remarkable achievement which serves to re-affirm the magnitude of the achievements of Sea Cadets and GNTC over the last 80 years of the equally impressive 135 year history of the movement and 235 year legacy of the Marine Society, which started out by training boys to go to sea. Moreover, it also tells us a great deal about what ingredients are required for successful youth work.



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Of the nine generations of former cadets who participated in the **My LegaSea** survey:-

54%
said Sea
Cadets helped
them with their
careers in the
longer term

This appendix contains the full set of graphs for two key questions from the My LegaSea survey. The first question concerns the impact of Sea Cadets on former cadets during their involvement (question 16). The second question concerns the impact of Sea Cadets on former cadets after they left and in their adult lives (question 17). Each set of graphs has an overview of the total responses across all survey participants followed by a generational breakdown of responses for each indicator based on the decades when former cadets joined Sea Cadets.

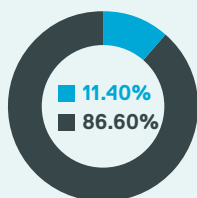
A. APPENDIX

A. APPENDIX

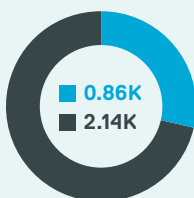
1. DURING TIME AT THE SEA CADETS

Q16. Comparative graph of overall % for all 10 Qs ■ No ■ Yes

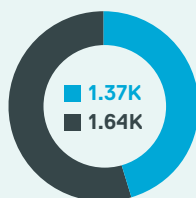
Q16a – Independence



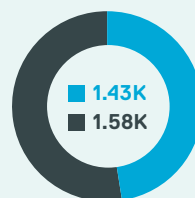
Q16b – Wellbeing



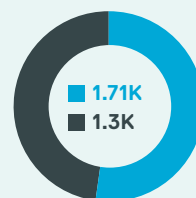
Q16c – Qualifications



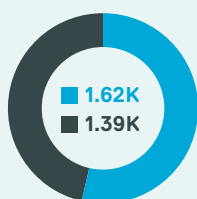
Q16d – Community



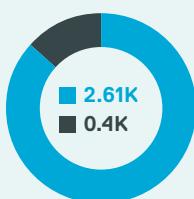
Q16e – Trouble



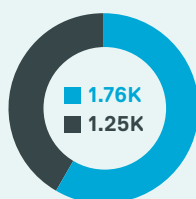
Q16f – Job



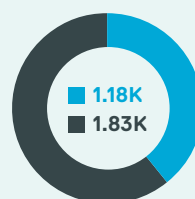
Q16g – School



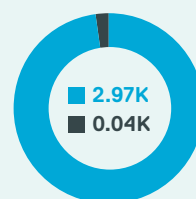
Q16h – Healthier



Q16i – Career RN



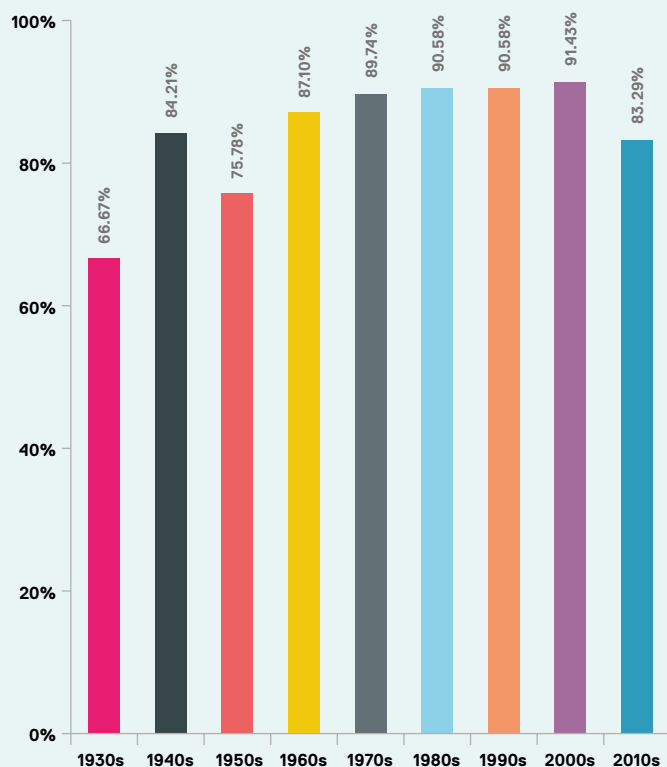
Q16j – None



Q16 INDIVIDUAL GRAPH SHOWING BREAKDOWN BY DECADE COHORTS

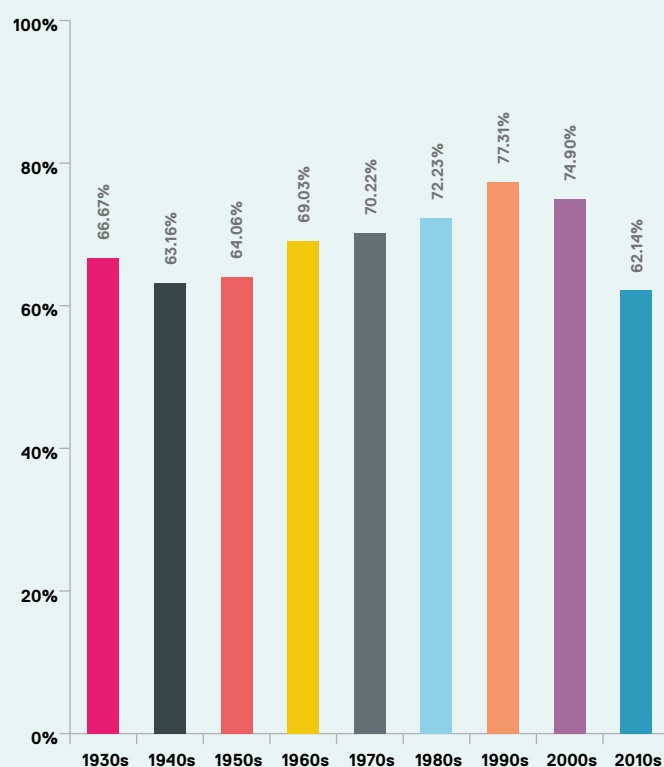
2. INDEPENDENCE

Q16a - Provided me with independence and skills I could use



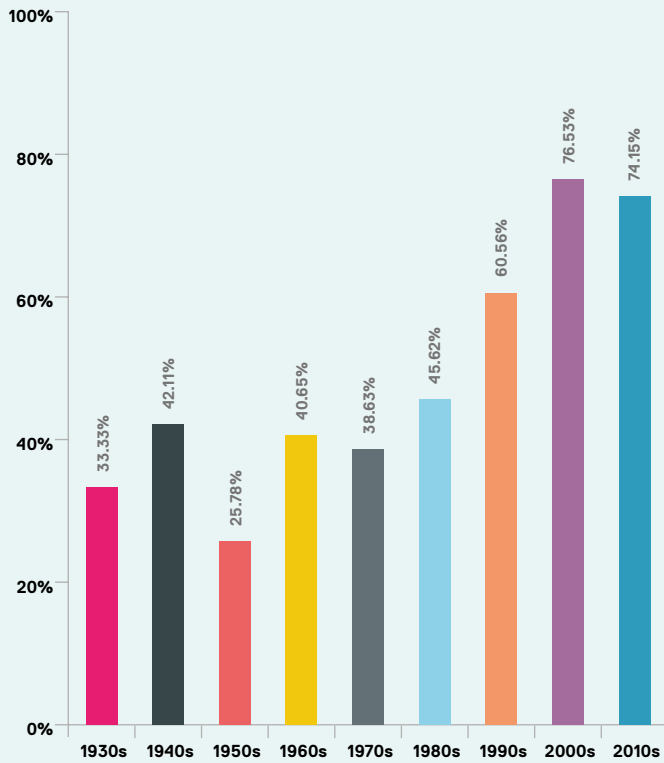
3. WELLBEING

Q16b - Improved my happiness and wellbeing



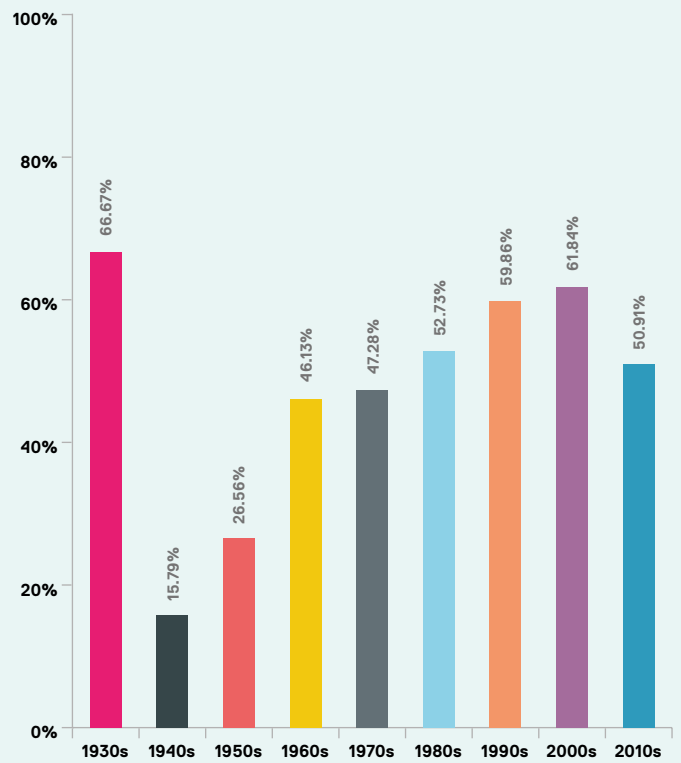
4. QUALIFICATIONS

Q16c - Helped me gain qualifications



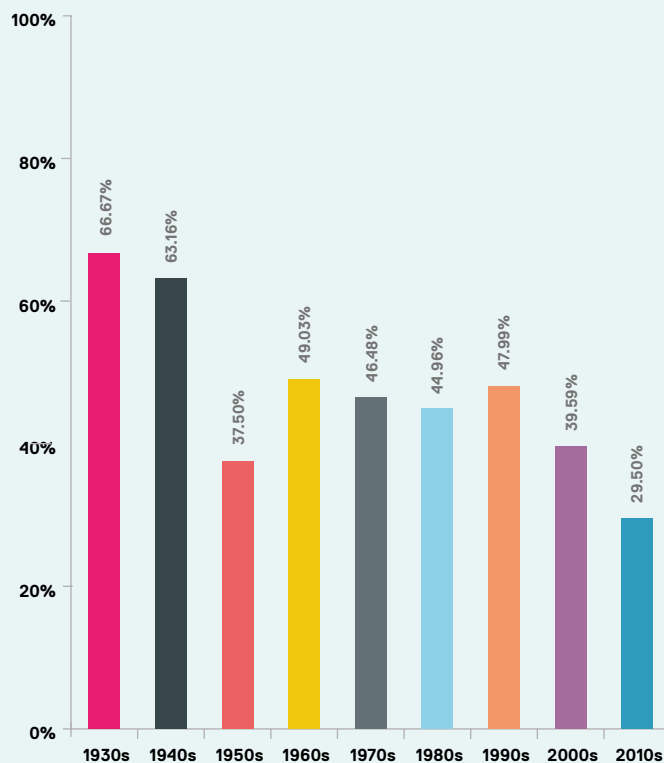
5. LOCAL COMMUNITY

Q16d - Increased my participation in my local community



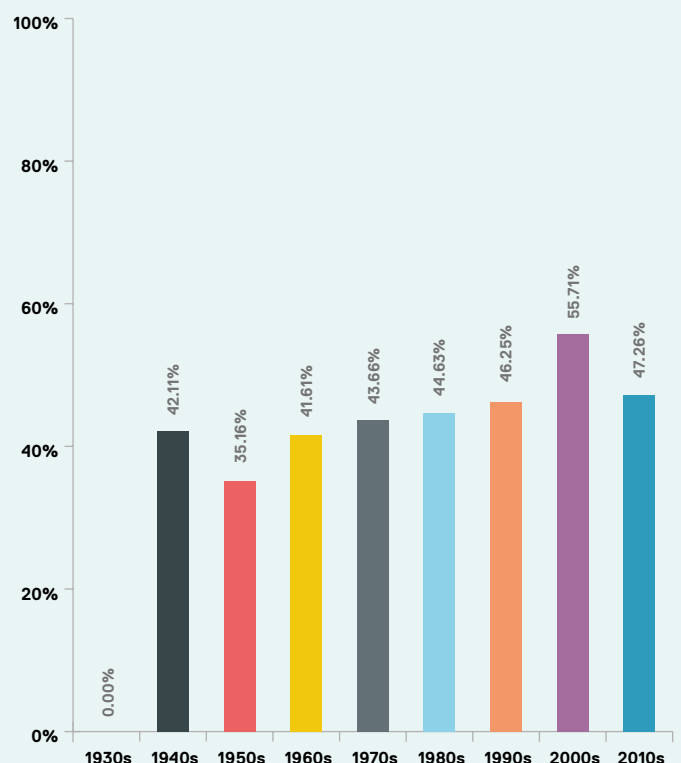
6. STAY OUT OF TROUBLE

Q16e - Helped keep me out of trouble



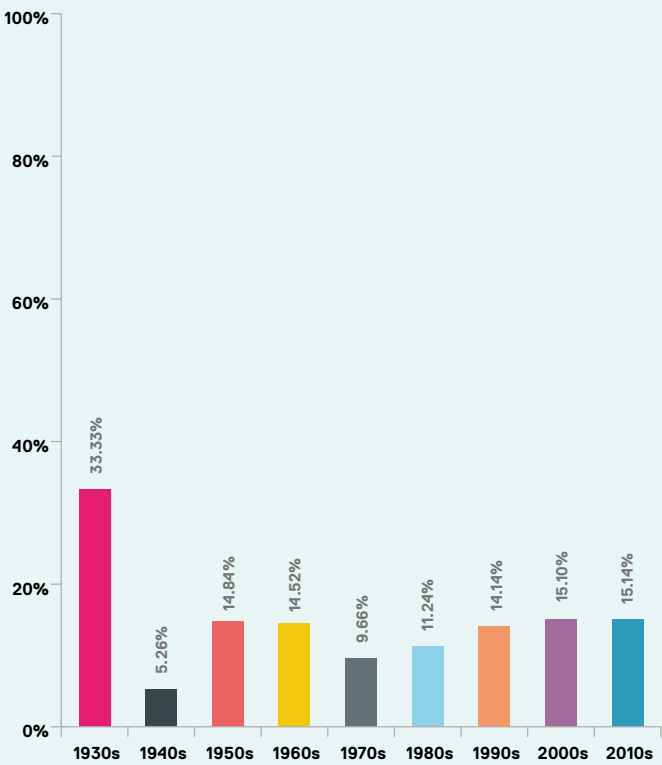
7. JOB

Q16f - Helped me get a job



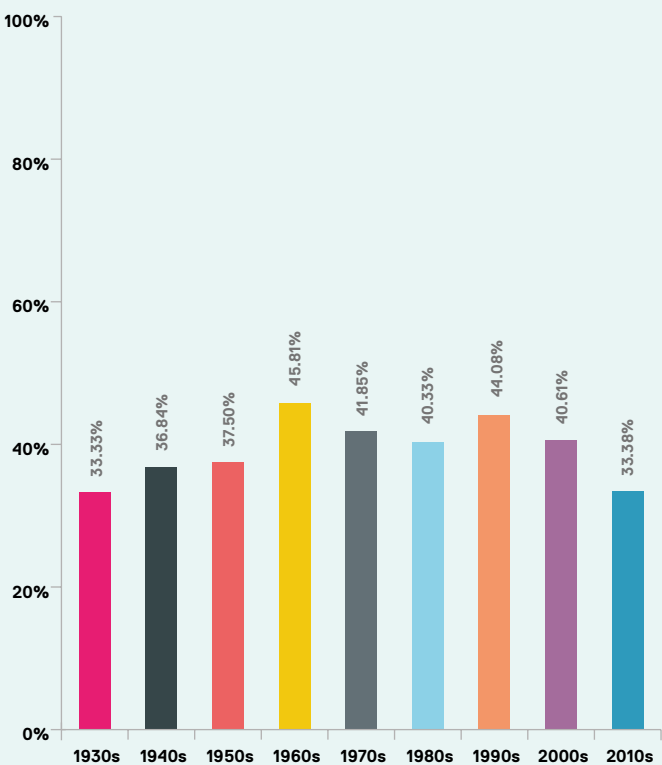
8. SCHOOLS

Q16g - Supported my attendance in school



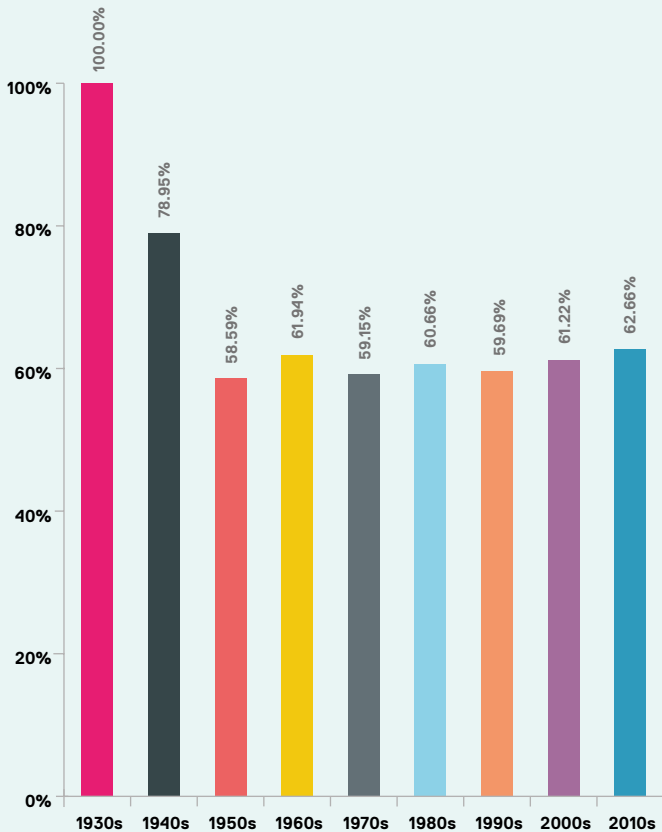
9. HEALTH

Q16h - Made me healthier



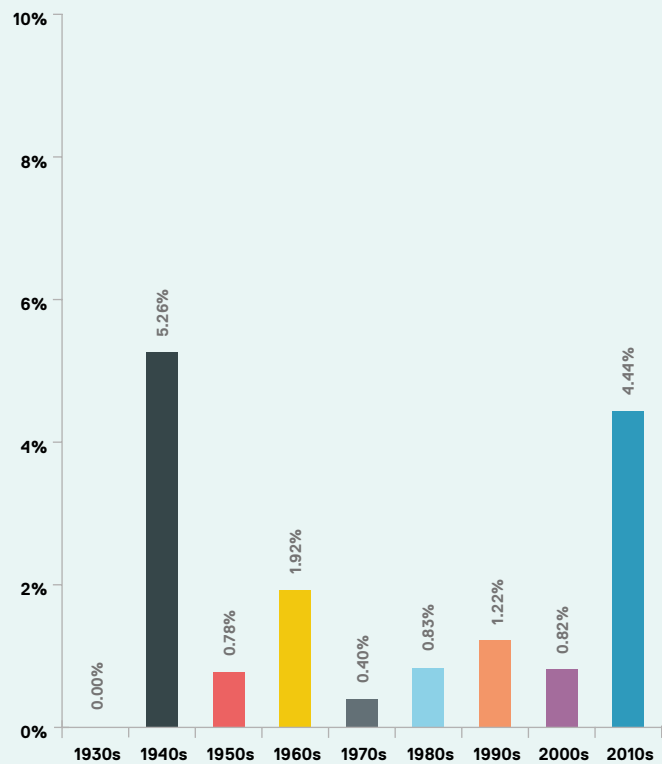
10. ROYAL NAVY & MARITIME

Q16i - Inspired me to consider a career in the Royal Navy or Maritime sector



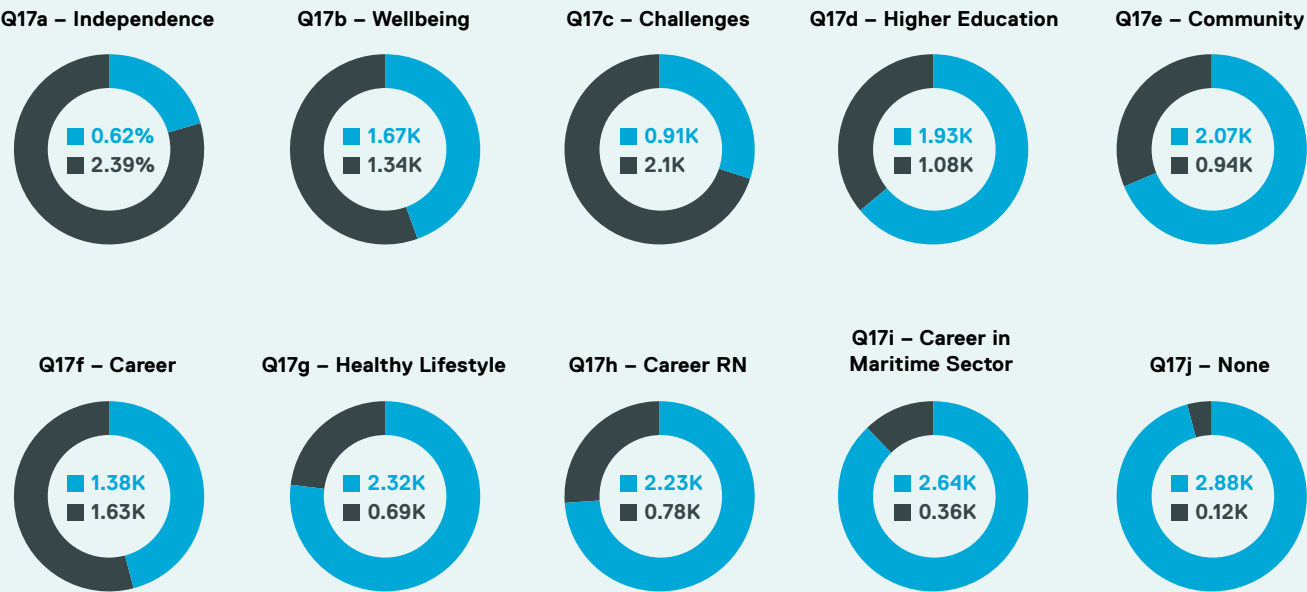
11. NONE OF THE ABOVE

Q16j - None of the above



12. AFTER LEAVING THE SEA CADETS

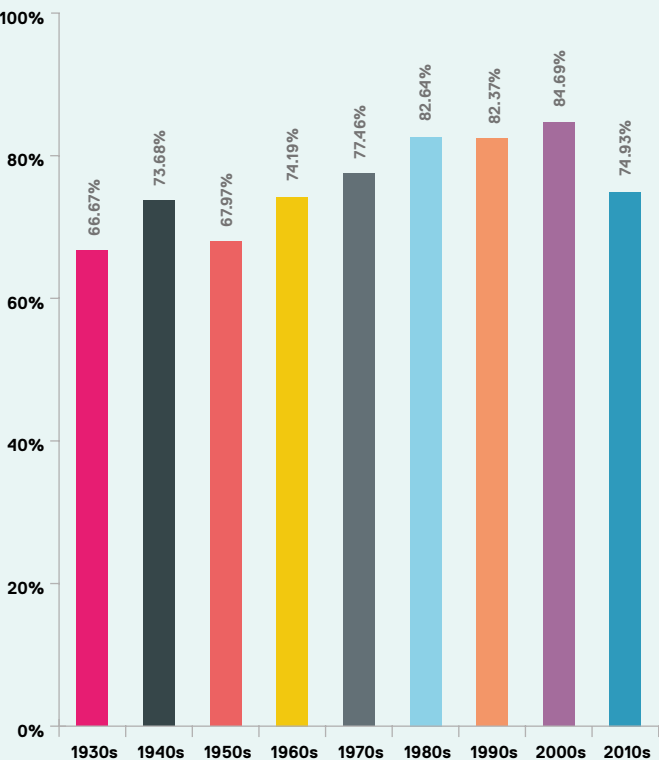
Q17. Comparative graph of overall % for all 10 Qs No Yes



Q17 INDIVIDUAL GRAPH SHOWING BREAKDOWN BY DECADES

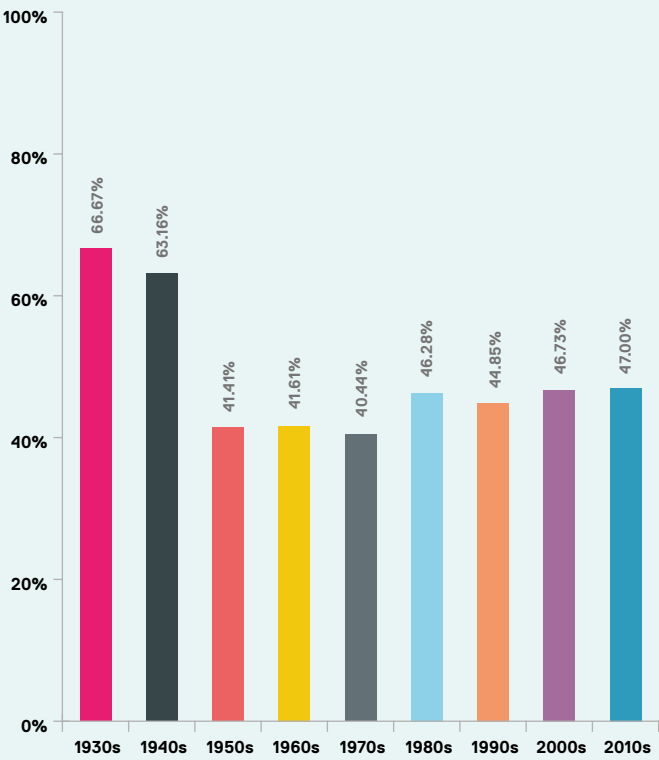
13. INDEPENDENCE

Q17a - Provided me with independence and equipped me with skills for life



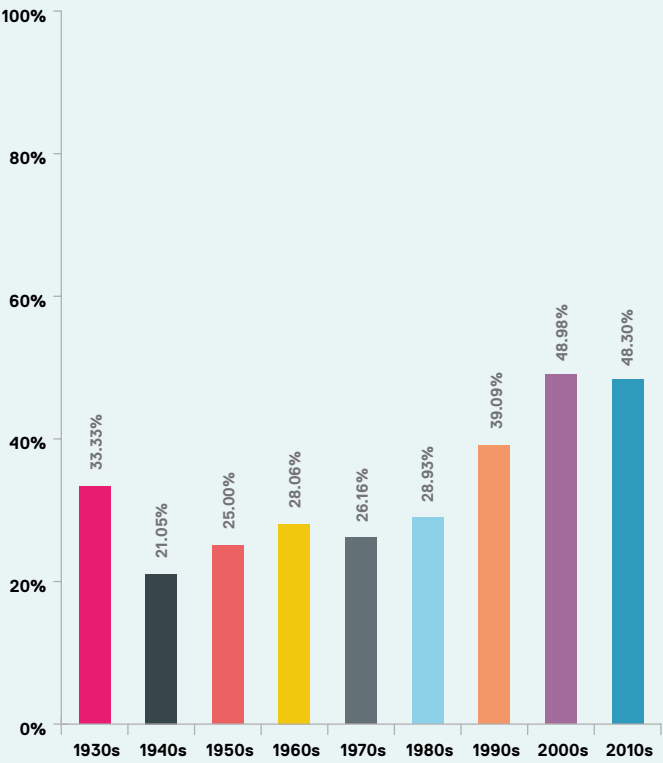
14. WELLBEING

Q17b - Improved my long-term happiness and wellbeing



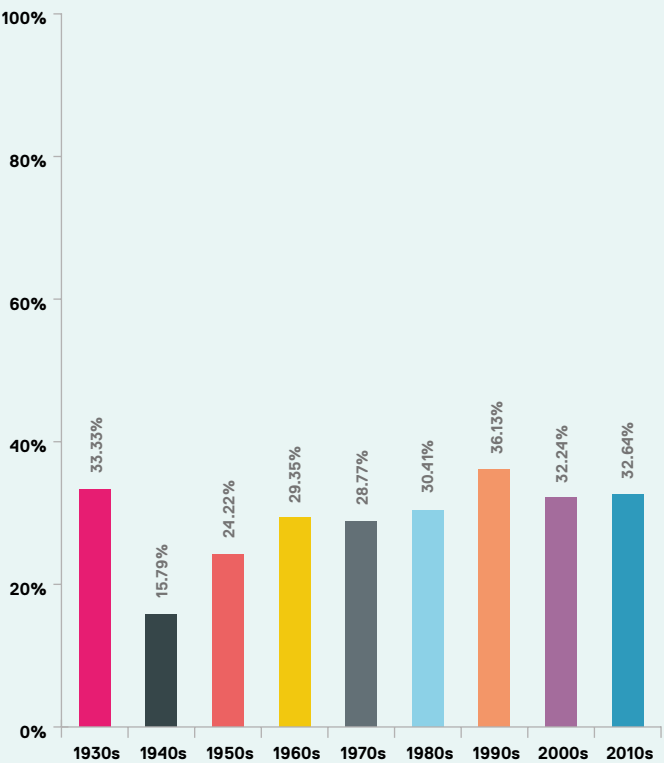
15. HIGHER EDUCATION

Q17c - Helped me engaged with and succeed in further/higher education



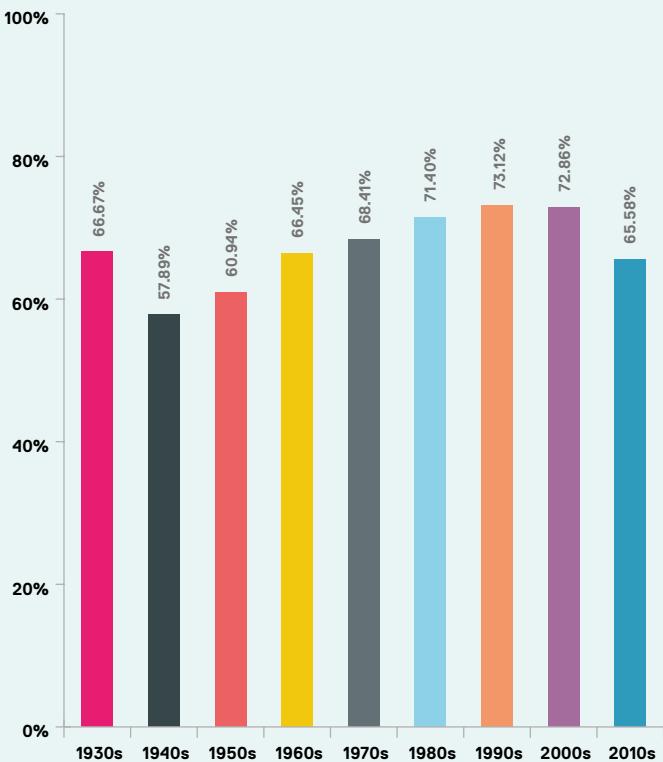
16. LOCAL COMMUNITY

Q17d - Increased participation in my local community



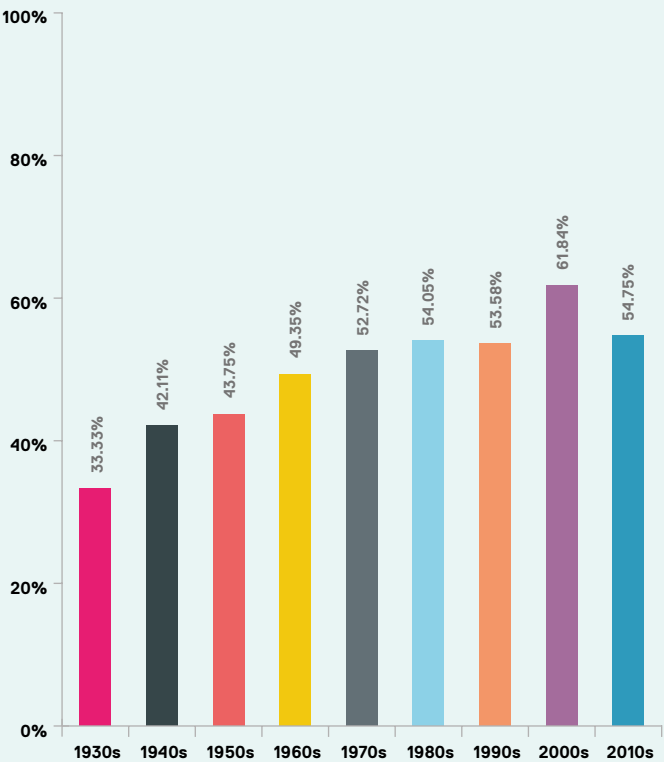
17. COPE WITH CHALLENGES

Q17e - Helped me cope with challenges I have faced in my life



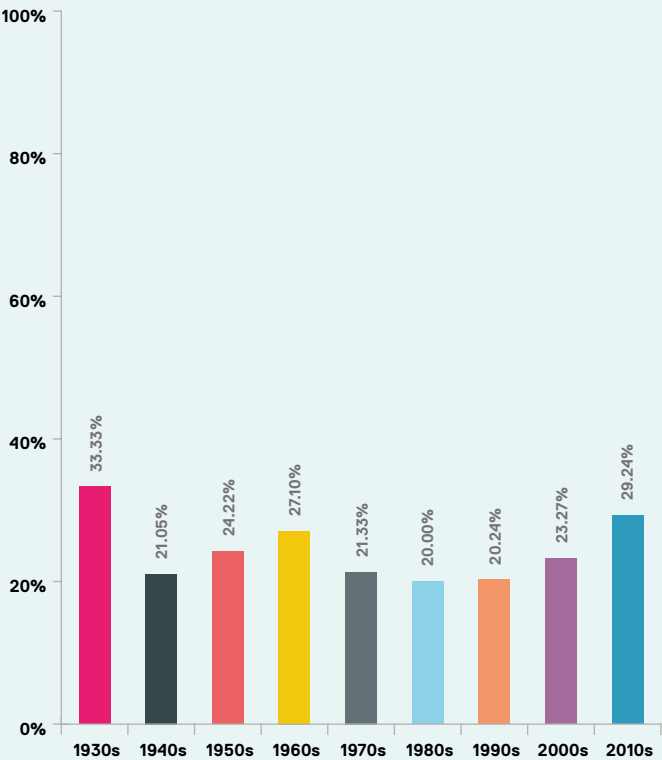
18. CAREER

Q17f - Helped me with my career



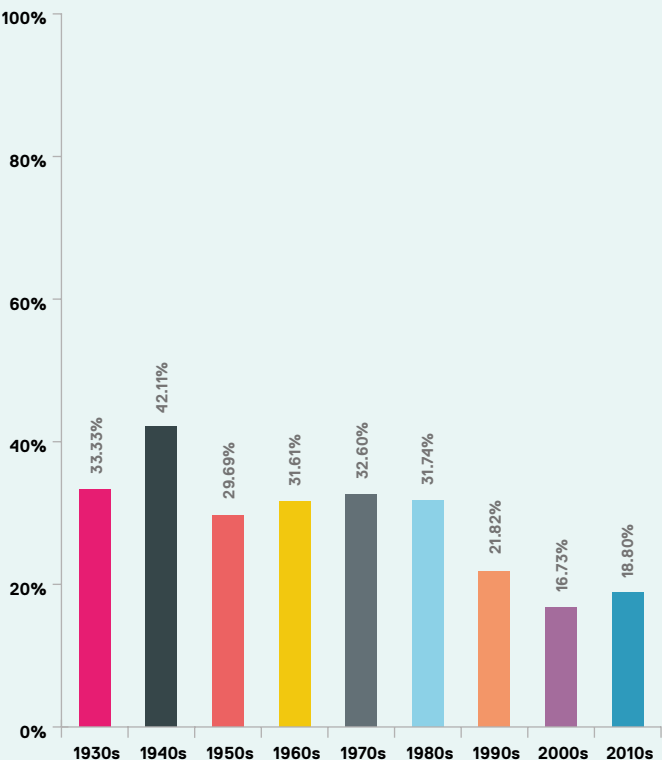
19. HEALTH

Q17g - Helped me establish a long-term healthy lifestyle



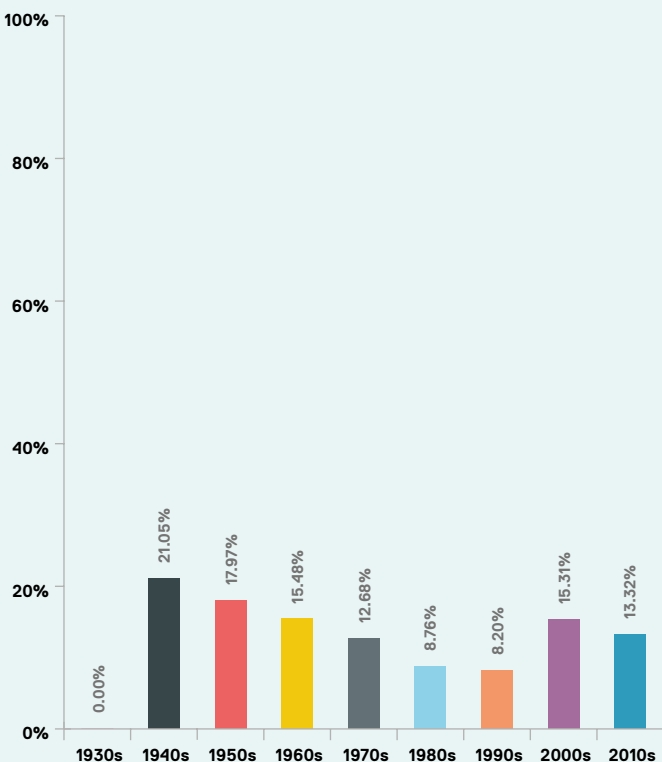
20. ROYAL NAVY

Q17h - Led to a career in the Royal Navy



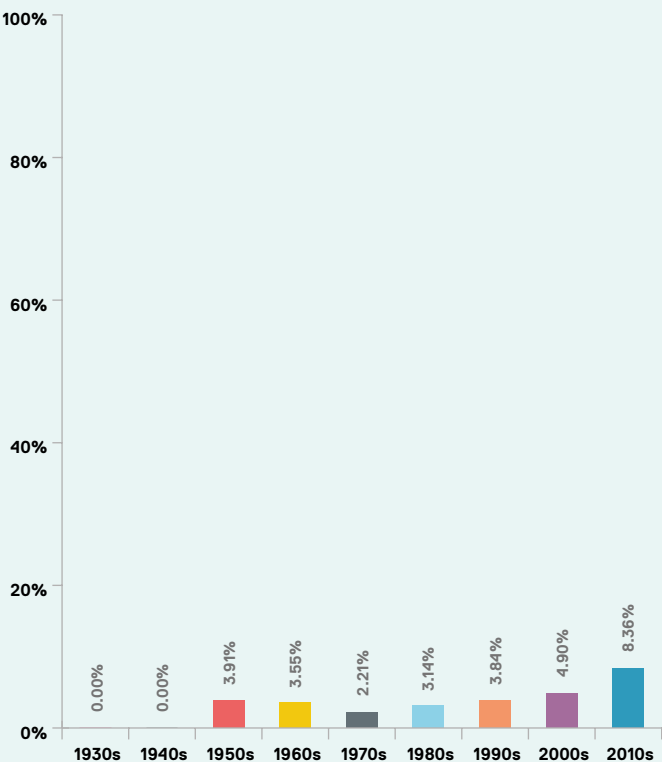
21. WIDER MARITIME

Q17i - Led to a career in the wider Maritime sector



22. NONE OF THE ABOVE

Q17j - None of the above





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