Marine Management Organisation

Baseline Social Information for Marine Planning: Health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation and barriers to access (MMO1132)

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1. Introduction

ICF with Collingwood Environmental Planning (CEP) and ABPmer were contracted by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to undertake a study (MMO1132) to support social baselining for England's marine plans, by identifying and improving the existing evidence base and updating understanding around social issues that are relevant to marine planning.

The first deliverable from the study, a 'social evidence review' identified the social evidence priorities for marine planning. A second set of deliverables undertook research to improve understanding of three issues of relevance to marine planning for which the social evidence review identified evidence gaps. This document presents one of the research deliverables: 'Health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation and barriers to access'. Two other research papers are published separately, one on the impacts of emergent marine sectors on deprived communities, and the other on seascape quality and value.

CEP in association with ICF have been commissioned by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to undertake research on the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation and barriers to access.

The research aim is to provide further evidence to address the current research gap on access to health and wellbeing benefits from coastal recreation. In particular, the MMO is interested in equity of access to the coastal environment for recreational purposes and is seeking evidence about the extent to which and how reasons for not accessing the coast for recreation vary across different socio-demographic groups[1].

This research builds on earlier work, for example, Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) Survey report on Visits to Coastal England (2016), by looking in greater depth at the access issues identified, how they are experienced by different social groups and people accessing the coast for different reasons (e.g. walking/dog walking, swimming, kayaking/canoeing, etc.), exploring additional barriers and ways barriers are being, or might in the future be, overcome.

The primary objective of the research is to identify the reasons why people do not access the coast for recreation, and whether these are common across different social groups.

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[1] Boyd et al. (2018) note that the terms 'barriers' and 'constraints' on visiting natural environments imply a latent desire to be in these environments. However this is not always the case and some individuals have no desire to be in these spaces. Boyd et al. (2018) choose to adopt more a neutral term 'reasons' to explore why people do not visit natural environments. In this report, the term 'reasons' is used to cover barriers and constraints, except where factors limiting people's access are described as barriers by those affected.

There are three secondary objectives of the research:

1. understand how people access the coastal environment and what they access it for
2. explore experiences and perceptions of quality and equity of this access
3. further describe the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation to people who currently visit infrequently

Research objectives were addressed through a three-stage process. Each of these stages have been reported on and form the Annexes of this report. The aim of this report therefore to provide a synthesis across the outputs of these stages to deliver the primary objective of identifying the reasons why people do not access the coast for recreation, and whether these are common across different social groups. The three stages were:

- A brief review of recent relevant literature (Annex 1: Literature Review)
- Focus groups with members of the public in three locations (Annex 2: Focus group report)
- National interviews with key stakeholders (Annex 3: Interviews with National and Regional Stakeholders).

This report is organised as follows:

- section 2 describes Approach and Method
- section 3 covers Key Findings organised by theme/research question
- section 4 sets out Conclusions and Implications including the points where MMO could focus action for improving access to the coast, research gaps/limitations, and areas for future research.

It is intended that this report may be read independently. If further detail is required, readers can refer to the separate Annexes which are cross-referenced throughout.

- Annex 1: Literature Review
- Annex 2: Focus group report
- Annex 3: Interviews with National and Regional Stakeholders contain further details on the literature review, focus groups and interviews with national and regional stakeholders, respectively.
- Annex 4: Using Customer Journey Mapping.

1.1. Definitions and use

For the purposes of this study,

Coastal environments is used to refer to coastal *and* marine environments including the sea and land coast (i.e. beaches, cliffs, etc).

Access is used in terms of citizen access to coastal environments for recreation; issues related to accommodation for visitors at the coast are not considered as an aspect of access.

Recreation is defined as *'(a way of) enjoying yourself when you are not working'* (Cambridge English Dictionary). As well as enjoyment, the concept of recreation is associated with leisure, relaxation and refreshment. Games and sports are typical recreational activities. Recreation may be seen as an outlet for excess energy, channelling it into socially acceptable activities that fulfil individual as well as societal needs and provide satisfaction and pleasure for the participant (Yukic, 1970).

Health and wellbeing has many different definitions. The definition used here is from Defra (2009) which describes wellbeing as "… *a positive physical, social and mental state; it is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose, that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by conditions that include supportive personal relationships, strong and inclusive communities, good health, financial and personal security, rewarding employment, and a healthy and attractive environment.*" (p119).

This study includes both physical and mental health and covers the aspects of wellbeing mentioned above, excluding the socio-economic elements such as financial and personal security and rewarding employment.

2. Approach and Method

2.1. Stage 1: Review of recent evidence

The first stage of the research involved a short focussed search for recent relevant literature. The project team drew on information from recent relevant social research published between January 2012 - March 2019, including publications that analyse Natural England's MENE data.

In order to focus the literature review, a refined set of research questions and sub-questions were agreed with MMO. The research questions and sub-questions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Literature review research questions and sub-questions

Research question	Sub-question
1) Understand how people access the coastal environment and what they access it for	a) How do people access the coastal environment? This covers the steps they take, from finding out about the location and making a decision to visit, to interactions with the physical environment and people during a visit. b) What recreational activities do people undertake during visits at the coast? c) How do these vary according to different social groups and people? And those living close to the coast and those living inland?
2) Identify the barriers to accessing the coastal environment for recreation, and whether these are common across different social groups	a) What are the key barriers to accessing the coastal environment for recreation? b) How are these barriers experienced by different social groups and people? c) How do these barriers relate to different types of coastal recreational activity? d) How do barriers relate to different types of coastal environment?
3) Explore experiences and perceptions of quality and equity of this access	a) What do people think about the quality and equity of access to coastal recreation? b) How do perceptions vary according to different recreational activities? c) How do perceptions vary according to different social groups and people? d) How do perceptions vary between those living close to the coast and those living inland?
4) Further describe the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation to people *who currently visit infrequently.*	a) What are the main health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation? How are they defined and measured? b) How do perceptions vary according to different recreational activities?

Research question	Sub-question
	c) How do perceptions towards benefits vary according to different social groups and people? And between those living close to the coast and those living inland?
5) Methodological: what are meaningful questions about access to health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation?	a) What questions/approaches have been used? b) What (if any) key methodological limitations/issues were noted that are relevant to the current research?

A search of peer-reviewed literature was conducted using the Scopus database. This involved the development of search strings, filtering and the agreement of a shortlist of documents for detailed review, based on relevance and robustness criteria as described in Annex 1: Literature Review. Some 'grey' (not peer-reviewed) literature was also considered, specifically reports based on Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) Survey.

During the project scoping stage it was agreed with MMO that the research should focus on one socio-demographic group that was known to visit coastal areas for recreation less frequently. This was intended to ensure sufficient depth of understanding could be attained within project timeframes. Natural England's report on visits to coastal areas found that people who visited the coast less frequently (based on number of visitors surveyed who reported that they had made fewer than two visits to the coast in the previous 12 months) were more likely to be: women (73% compared to 68% of men), people in the lowest socio-economic group[2] (75% of C2DEs compared to 66% of ABC1s), people with children in their household (74% compared to 70% of people without children) and members of the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population (90%) (Natural England, 2016).

After the results of the literature review, it was agreed to focus on people with children in their household. The main motivation for looking further at this group were the particular benefits for children of coastal visits, for example the immediate health benefits such as reducing obesity as well as longer term benefits in terms of establishing practices of exercise in both boys and girls and strengthening bonds between family members.

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[2] MENE respondents are classified by socio-economic group. In summary the classification is based on the chief-income earner's occupation as follows: A – Higher managerial, administrative or professional; B – Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional; C1 – Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional; C2 – Skilled manual workers; D – Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers; E - Casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners, and others who depend on the welfare state for their income.

The results of the literature review were used to design the field research. This consisted of:

- Three focus groups in one marine plan area (south east marine plan area[3]) involving people with children under 18 years old who visit the coast less frequently than the majority of the population or (in places on the coast) do not visit the coast for recreation as often as they would like;
- Eight interviews with representatives of organisations and institutions that have responsibility for things that influence visitors' access to and experience of the coast; for example through providing infrastructure, facilities and services or through the promotion or provision of events and education. The types of organisations approached included national public bodies, local authorities (for example local district and county councils), coastal charities or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), organisations working with parents and children (for example local and national family charities and organisations) and academic researchers.

2.2. Stage 2: Focus groups

Three focus groups were held in the south east marine plan area, involving a total of 29 participants. Two groups were held in inland locations (Braintree and Colchester, which are 36 and 19 miles from the coast at Clacton-on-Sea, respectively) and one was held in a coastal location (Clacton-on-Sea). These locations are shown in Figure 1.

Participants were recruited by a professional market research company, based on pre-established criteria designed to firstly, ensure that all participants belonged to the target population, i.e. people with children who visit the coast less frequently or would like to visit more often; and secondly, to reflect a range of characteristics of this population group, in terms of gender balance, age and employment. The recruitment criteria were:

- All participants had at least one child under 16 years old;
- None of the inland participants had visited the coast for recreation more than once every two to three months in the past year[4]; all coastal participants said they would like to visit the coast for recreation more frequently;
- Balance of men and women[5]
- Mix of ages (using the standard age cohorts used in the MENE survey), with the majority being in the age ranges (: 25 – 34, 35 – 44 and 45 – 54;
- Mix of employment situations: including full-time work, part-time work, unemployed (seeking work), not in employment (not seeking work).

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[3] The south east marine plan area was selected mainly because of its density of population and the proximity of coastal destinations which meant that all three focus groups had similar reference points when talking about days out at the coast.

[4] Natural England's report (2016) *MENE survey: Visits to coastal England* classifies this as visiting infrequently.

[5] Note that this criterion was only partially met as fewer men were recruited (12 men / 17 women).

Figure 1. Locations of three project focus groups in the south east inshore marine plan area.

Key: ▲ focus group location

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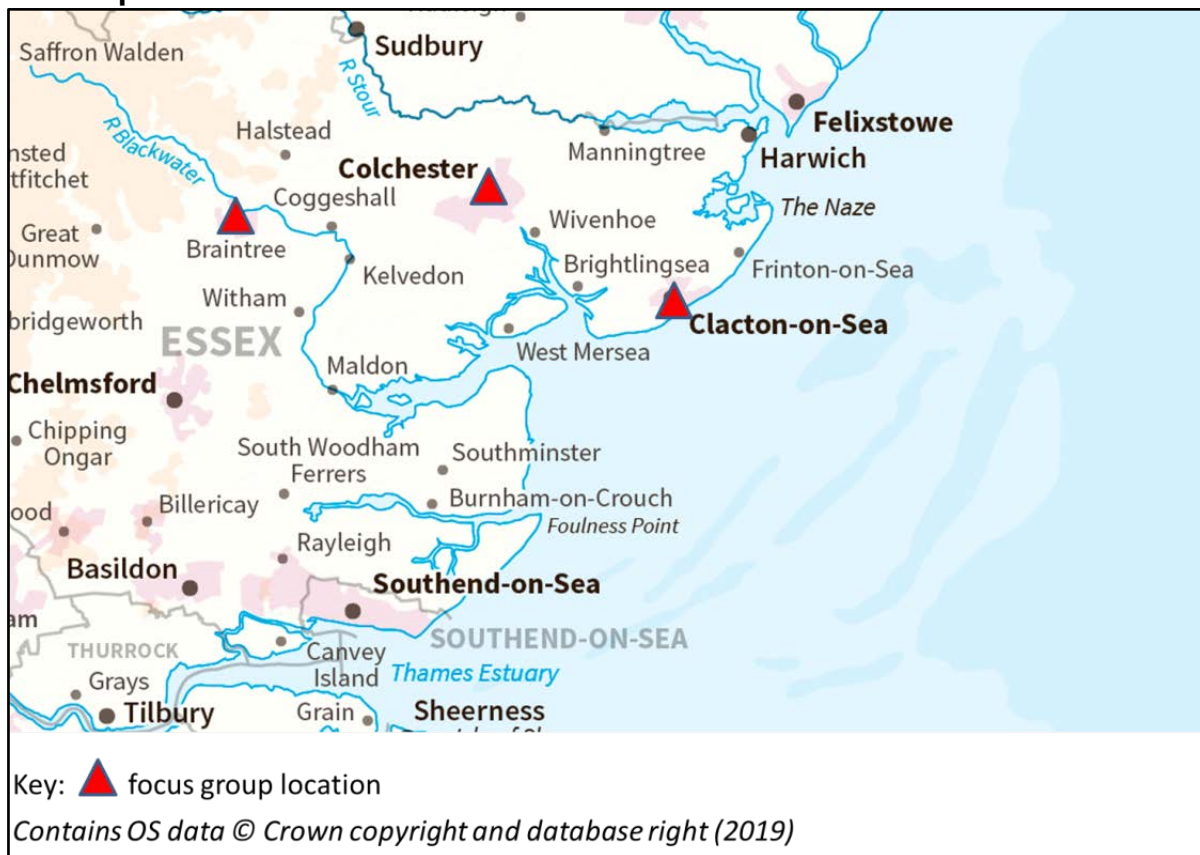
As part of the focus group schedule of questions, the team trialled an experimental application of the 'Customer Journey Mapping' technique. The technique is commonly used by commercial organisations to tell a story of the experience customers have with their brand by identifying the 'touch points' at which the customer interacts with the brand or company and describing how these interactions shape the journey, positively or negatively.

One important element of the approach is that it charts the emotional journey made by the customer, based on information provided by customers themselves. A second notable element is the use of service mapping to understand how the organisation and delivery of services affects customers' experience and satisfaction. By providing a visual description of these interactions, the technique encourages rationalisation and improvement of services with the explicit aim of improving the experience of customers. This approach has been adapted for use in UK public services (e.g. in the Home Office and the Cabinet Office) where the aim of the journey is not a purchase but the achievement of a desired goal. Full details of the Customer Journey Mapping technique are included in Annex 4.

2.3. Stage 3: Interviews

The use of the Customer Journey Mapping technique (Annex 4: Using Customer Journey Mapping as a technique for exploring experiences of visiting the coast for recreation) in this context was experimental because visitors to the coast do not interact directly with MMO or indeed with any one institution or service. In mapping

the customer journey and identifying 'touch points' or interactions, the team had to look more widely at interactions with a range of public bodies (both local and national) that provide infrastructure and services. This was done through eight stakeholder interviews which were used to map the complex system of services and infrastructure for visits to the coast.

The types of organisations and institutions approached for interview were those that have responsibility for things that influence peoples' experience of visiting the coast; for example through providing infrastructure, facilities, and services or through promotion and education. The types of organisations approached included national public bodies, local authorities (for example local district and county councils), coastal charities or NGOs and organisations working with parents and children (for example local and national family charities and organisations). We also sought insights from researchers with detailed knowledge of this area.

A total of eight interviews were carried out, of which four were with individuals from national public bodies (MMO, Sport England, two from Natural England), two with individuals from local authorities (Tendring District Council and Swale Borough Council), and one each with an individual from a coastal charity (RNLI) and an academic researcher. The interviews were conducted over a three week period in June 2019.

3. Key Findings

Each of the three strands of research (literature review, focus groups and interviews) was written up immediately after implementation and learning drawn out to inform the next stage of research. At the end of the research, a thematic analysis was conducted by bringing together the findings from the three strands and drawing out conclusions, as well as describing limitations in the methodology and approach and identifying remaining gaps in understanding.

When drawing on the focus group discussions, the number of people expressing particular points is not generally noted. Numbers are generally not used in reporting qualitative research. Here the purpose of the research was to explore and understand a range of views. The number of focus group participants is also too small a sample to be representative of the wider population. Where most participants across the three groups agreed with a statement or opinion, 'majority' or 'most' is used. Where only a few participants expressed a view, 'some' or 'a few' are used.

The customer journey maps and the service mapping produced as part of this research can be used by MMO to understand interactions between one type of visitors to the coast (adults with children) and a range of coastal authorities or delivery bodies and how these interactions affect the experience and satisfaction of visitors. The maps could also be used to monitor change over time in both interactions and the levels of satisfaction of visitors with children.

3.1. Key steps in the process of accessing the coast for recreation (Journey Maps)

The Customer Journey Mapping technique was used to break down the experience of adults making recreational visits to the coast with children into steps that are meaningful for them, so that the field research could explore the things that happen at each step (Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4). These looked at the changes in emotions. It also explored and the extent to which people's emotional responses (happiness, satisfaction, frustration, anger, etc.) were influenced by interaction (or lack of interaction) with authorities or organisations responsible for providing infrastructure or services. The term 'touch point' is used to describe a point where a customer (in this case, a person visiting the coast with a child or children) interacts with an authority or service provider.

In looking at emotional responses, the focus was on the changing emotions of adults, because all the informants were adults. However, it became clear that adults' experience of recreational activities with children is strongly mediated by the experience of the children, i.e. most adults seek to keep the children entertained, or make sure they enjoy themselves. Focus group participants commented that they feel good when they achieve these goals but have more negative emotional responses when they don't.

The Customer Journey was divided into five steps, as shown in Table 2.

At the start of the discussion in each of the focus group, participants were asked whether these steps seemed like the right ones or if anything was missing. All

participants accepted the steps. Their input to the subsequent discussions demonstrated that they could recognise each of the steps as part of their own experience.

In going through the steps, experiences were described in mostly positive terms, but some negative experiences were also mentioned. Many similar issues were raised across the three groups, as shown in Table 2. While the similarities in the description of the steps reflected in Table 2 suggest there is a common overall experience of visiting the coast with children, this is not surprising as many people visited the same places. Participants were drawn from a relatively small area of Essex. All participants came from towns, none were city-dwellers who might have reflected greater cultural divergence. So it would be unwise to generalise from these results to the wider population of England. It would be useful to test the steps with people visiting the coast from city and possibly from rural locations. In terms of testing for relevance to a range of coastal destinations, the five types (resort, urban, village, rural and rural and remote) proposed by Williams (2011) are likely to cover the main variables.

Table 2. What happens at each step in the customer journey? Focus group locations are Braintree (Br), Colchester (Co) and Clacton-on-Sea (Cl)

Steps	What do you think of? / What do you do?	Br	Co	Cl
Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast	**Think about**			
	Weather	✓	✓	✓
	What the kids want	✓	✓	✓
	Traffic	✓	✓	✓
	Events	✓	✓	✓
	Facilities	✓	✓	
	Coastal conditions e.g. tides	✓		✓
	Potential for anti-social behaviour		✓	✓
Step 2: Getting ready to go out	**Think about**			
	Sand – chaotic			✓
	Will home be safe?	✓		
	Do			
	Pack change of clothes, especially for babies	✓	✓	✓
	Pack food and water	✓	✓	✓
	Pack equipment and 'stuff'	✓	✓	
	Check on facilities		✓	✓
	Check public transport or parking	✓	✓	
	Manage kids	✓		✓
Step 3: Find a place on the coast	**Think about**			
	Risks from other people, anti-social behaviour	✓	✓	✓
	Safety in the coastal environment, e.g. tides, drowning	✓		✓
	Beach and water quality	✓	✓	
	Do			
	Find parking	✓	✓	✓
	Check attractions and events	✓		✓
	Find place with lifeguard/First Aid	✓		✓
	Find a place to sit: avoiding crowds			✓

Steps	What do you think of? / What do you do?	Br	Co	Cl
	Find a place to sit: in a natural location		✓	
Step 4: Spend the day out	**Think about**			
	Concerns about cost	✓		✓
	Got everything you need? Especially with young children	✓		
	Do			
	Mix of activities: sports, heritage, education	✓	✓	✓
	Go to attractions	✓		✓
	Enjoy a different reality – no wifi!	✓	✓	
	Children make friends / behave well / happy			✓
	Emotions			
	Anxious about safety - drowning			✓
Step 5: Go home	**Think about**			
	Kids behaving / misbehaving (mainly behaving well)	✓	✓	✓
	Avoiding traffic / crowds on way home	✓	✓	✓
	Sand in everything		✓	
	Do			
	Get fish and chips		✓	
	Look at sunset	✓		
	Emotions			
	Tired children and parents	✓	✓	✓
	Happy		✓	

Participants' discussions about how they rated their level of satisfaction at each step again showed that while people mainly experienced visiting the coast as positive and enjoyable, there were factors that reduced the satisfaction obtained, such as:

- Conflicts within the family; can't find out about activities; can't do the things had hoped to do (Step 1)
- Anxious about remembering to bring everything (Step 2)
- Dirty places; anti-social behaviour (Step 3)
- Hygiene; rowdy people; issues with food (Step 4)
- Need to leave early to avoid traffic (Step 5)

The discussions across the three groups were synthesised in 'personas' who represent 'ideal types' (reflecting general views and responses, rather than reproducing the specific responses of individual participants). It is important to note that in this exercise, the team chose to focus on responses driven by issues and problems affecting visits to the coast, as this is the focus of the research. In practice, across the groups participants generally assessed their level of satisfaction as positive. This confirms that overall, visits to the coast with children contribute to personal and family well-being.

Figure 2. Customer Journey for Persona 1: Low income single parent living on coast. Heart icon = strong positive emotion influencing feelings about overall visit

'Show stopper'			❤️		
Key journey steps / 'touch points'	Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast	Step 2: Get ready to go out	Step 3: Find a place on the coast	Step 4: Spend the day out	Step 5: Go home
Customer satisfaction					

Customer satisfaction chart (+100 / 0 / -100):
- Decide to go – worry about weather, cost
- Free event – Kids are occupied!
- Kids playing up - low-level anxiety
- Found spot on beach – worry about drowning
- Son makes friends – he's happy
- Hurry to leave to avoid crowds

Figure 3. Customer Journey for Persona 2: Working parent in two-parent family living inland, young children. Heart icon = strong positive emotion influencing feelings about overall visit

'Show stopper'				❤️	❤️
Key journey steps / 'touch points'	Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast	Step 2: Get ready to go out	Step 3: Find a place on the coast	Step 4: Spend the day out	Step 5: Go home
Customer satisfaction					

Customer satisfaction chart (+100 / 0 / -100):
- Everyone happy to go to the coast
- Pack car
- Can't find info on toilets & facilities
- Find clean place to walk – kids get ice-cream
- Beach dirty - leave
- Play games, relax
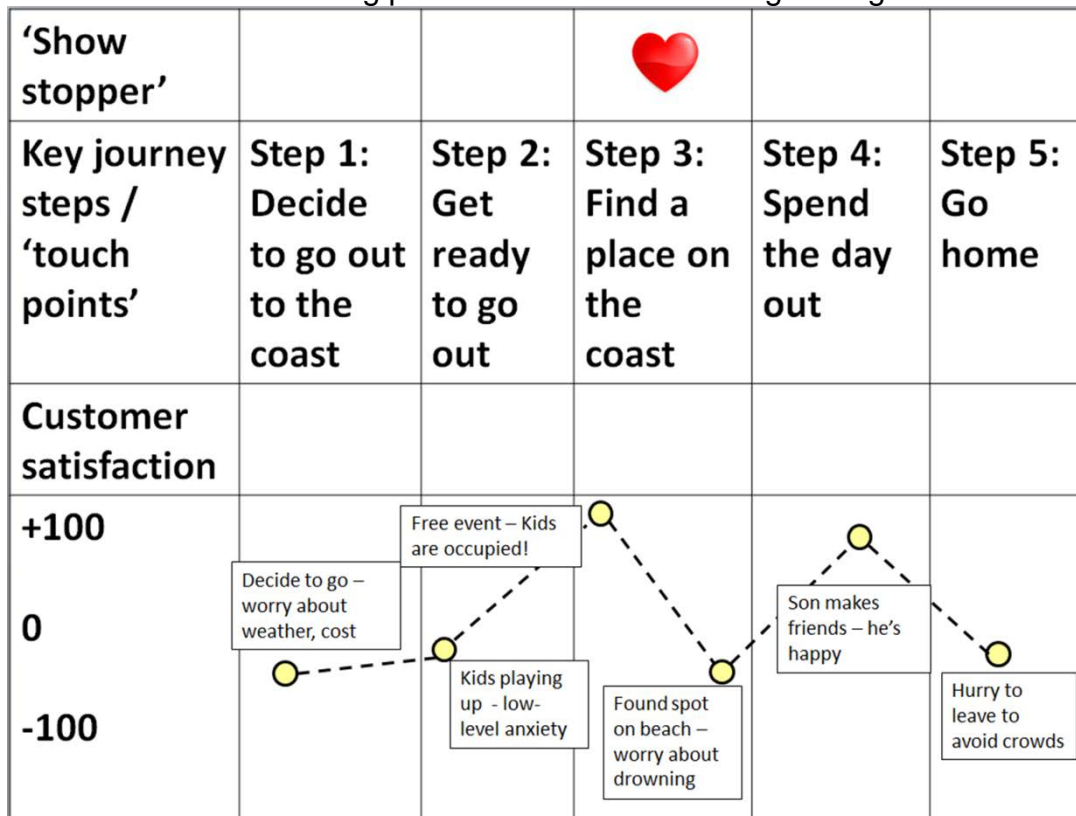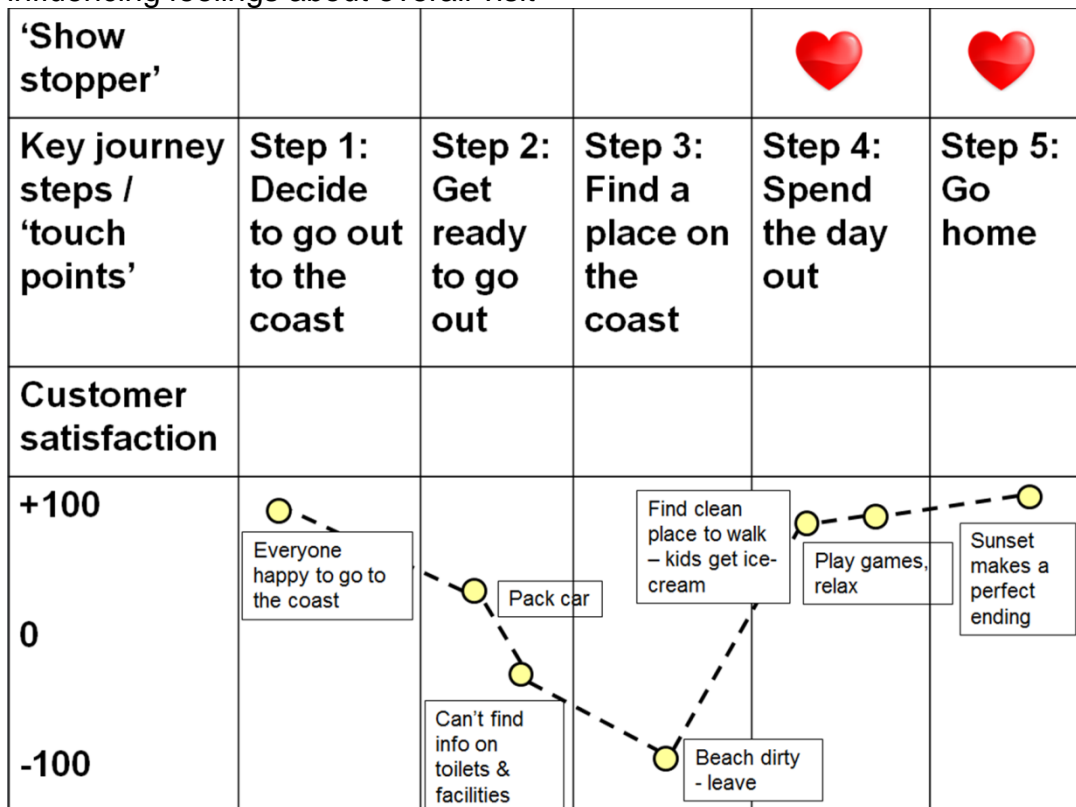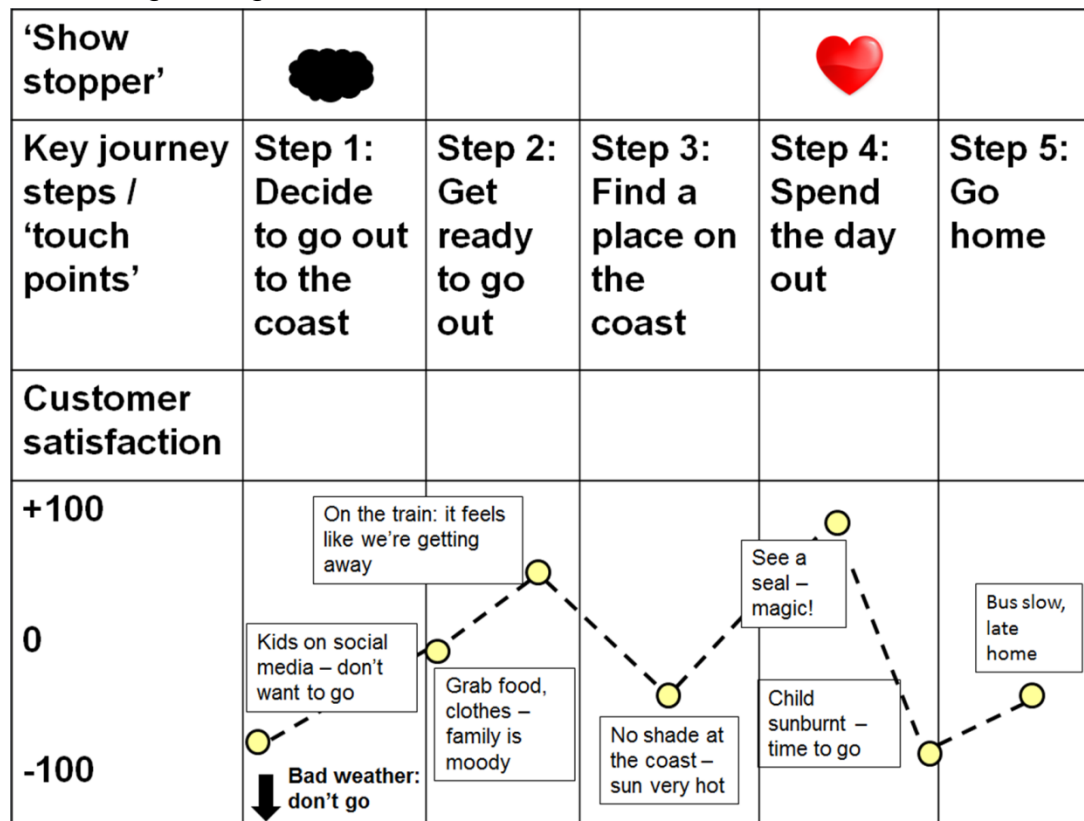- Sunset makes a perfect ending

Figure 4. Customer Journey for Persona 3: Working parent in two-parent family living inland, teenage children. Heart icon = strong positive emotion influencing feelings about overall visit, cloud icon = strong negative emotion influencing feelings about overall visit

'Show stopper'	☁			❤	
Key journey steps / 'touch points'	Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast	Step 2: Get ready to go out	Step 3: Find a place on the coast	Step 4: Spend the day out	Step 5: Go home
Customer satisfaction					

The following conclusions can be drawn from the three Customer Journey maps shown:

- coastal areas are attractive environments for recreation, being associated with relaxation, spending time with family and friends, special foods and memorable sights and experiences which parents generally want to share with their children.
- visiting and spending time at coastal locations is also associated with anxieties, for example about children getting lost or drowning. People with children often worry about the provision and quality of facilities on the coast such as toilets, changing rooms and shelter. These concerns and anxieties may be a barrier to visiting the coast and tend to be highest for parents of younger children or children with special needs.
- other reasons for not going to the coast for recreation are dirty and poorly maintained beaches, anti-social behaviour (real or perceived) and inadequate transport provision.
- interactions between people with children visiting coastal and the national or local authorities or institutions responsible for coastal management are infrequent. The main indirect interactions mentioned were public, free events (organised by some local authorities); online visitor information (but focus group participants said they also accessed information from other websites such as news media etc.); toilets and other public facilities; beach cleaning

and waste management. None of the focus group participants reported engaging directly with authorities about these services or facilities.

People with children visiting the coast come into contact with authorities at different points. The main points are in steps 1, 3 and 4, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Potential touch points on the coastal visit journey.

Journey step	Possible MMO touch points	Possible touch points for other authorities
Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast	• Offer of attractions - planning function	*Local Authority (District/County Council)* • Offer of attractions (economic development authorities; planning authorities) • Offer of attractions and private services, e.g. restaurants, water sports, etc. (Local authority – Licensing of business activities) • Provision of infrastructure, e.g. parking, toilets, coastal path, cycle paths
Step 3: Find a place on the coast	• Zoning activities – avoiding activities that block views or access to valued areas of coast	*Local Authorities* • Provision of signage for beach safety • Zoning activities - recognising different needs e.g. dog walking, beach games, quiet areas • Provision of infrastructure e.g. changing and showering facilities *Environment Agency* • Provision of bathing water quality information at beaches
Step 4: Spend the day out	• Promoting economic development that benefits local residents and visitors, e.g. water sports facilities. • Provision for the protection of heritage and cultural assets like piers.	*Local Authorities* • Permitting and licensing events and commercial activities – e.g. air show. • Life guard station (for safety) • Maintenance of infrastructure e.g. paths • Provision of services e.g. refuse and cleaning services • Accessibility of services: provision of baby changing facilities in female and male toilets Environment Agency • Assessing water quality and providing information about hazards. • Influence on access to fishing through rod licensing

The use of Customer Journey Mapping has been a valuable way of revealing these interactions and suggesting ways forward. However, visits to the coast for recreation are not simple interactions. They have significance that goes well beyond the activities that take place during the journey. This was reflected in focus group discussions of the creation of memories.

They are also important for mental and physical health and wellbeing, for socialising and sociability. They shape people's attitudes to their community and environment. These aspects have been captured in the wider research but don't fit easily with the Customer Journey Mapping approach. The following sections consider these broader aspects of access to the coast for recreation.

3.2. How people with children access the coastal environment for recreation and what they access it for

The focus of this research was on day trips to the coast, rather than longer visits, as these are the 'trips' included in the MENE survey[6]. This may skew results as people are likely to access a wider range of activities if they are staying on the coast. It may also have resulted in a greater emphasis on visits to coastal resorts and towns which are more easily accessible by public transport. The focus group discussions all concentrated on visits to urban beaches and piers/seafronts as this matched participants' experiences. A minority of participants mentioned visits to other coastal locations, for example in Norfolk and South West England.

Analysis of MENE survey data from 2009-2015 found that only 10% of visits to natural environments were made to seaside resorts or towns or other coastal locations; while a total of 90% of visits were made to countryside locations (42%) or to natural environments in towns or cities (48%) (Natural England, 2016). The field research undertaken as part of the current project provides evidence of the issues encountered by people with children when preparing for or visiting the coast, which include concerns about safety in the coastal environment, poor transport and infrastructure and lack of information about options for activities.

There is greater seasonal variation in the number of visits to the coast compared to visits to other natural environments, with more visits being made in summer months.

- Weather is a key deciding factor in visiting the coast; the majority of participants said they would only visit the coast if it is nice weather.
- Several focus group participants said that they only visit the coast in summer.

The majority of participants said they travel to the coast by car, while some said they travelled by public transport.

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[6] '*The main focus of the survey is on leisure visits to the outdoors in the natural environment, away from home and private gardens. This could be anything from a few minutes to all day.*' Natural England 2016:9.

The field research also confirmed that most people visiting the coast with children are motivated by leisure and wellbeing interests such as playing with children, bonding and family relations, rather than sporting or health-oriented activities.

3.3. Experiences and perceptions of quality and equity of access

Data from the MENE survey shows that more affluent people visit the coast for recreation more frequently than those who are less affluent[7]. The AB group represents 32% of coastal visitors but only 27% of the English adult population, while only 19% of visits were made by members of the least affluent D and E groups who make up 26% of the adult population (Natural England, 2016).

Despite this difference in rates of access, the literature review found little evidence about perceptions of the quality and equity or inequity of access specifically in relation to the coast. This was surprising given the considerable body of literature about perceptions of inequality of access to the countryside.

To examine reasons why people don't access non-coastal urban bluespaces (e.g. waterways) Pitt (2019) explored perceptions of the quality of these environments. Reasons for not visiting were largely focused on negative symbolic and social characteristics such as associations with illegal activity, crime and dirtiness. The most prominent reasons for not visiting waterways were perceptions that these places are 'dodgy, risky, and dirty', while there were also concerns about water safety (Pitt, 2019).

Pitt (2019) suggests there may be a spectrum of feelings and perceptions about access to urban waterways, ranging from 'nuisances' to 'absolute deterrents to use': litter or dirtiness is a nuisance that may spoil a visit rather than prevent it, whereas perceptions such as 'fear of intimidating people' would be an absolute deterrent. In comparing this to people's perceptions of visiting coastal environments in this study, both litter (littered or dirty beaches) and antisocial behaviour (e.g. people drinking, hostile behaviour) were mentioned by focus group participants as deterrents to visiting a coastal location.

One interviewee suggested that perceptions of quality of access depend on whether the place or environment is fit for purpose, for example does it allow for what the person wants to do there? While this suggests that perceptions of quality of access may vary considerably between people, depending on their expectations or what they want to do (watching wildlife or playing beach volleyball, for example), Pitt's work and the focus group discussions demonstrate that some perceived characteristics are absolute deterrents. This is a challenge for coastal locations or

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[7] MENE respondents are classified by socio-economic group. In summary the classification is based on the chief-income earner's occupation as follows:
A – Higher managerial, administrative or professional
B – Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1 – Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2 – Skilled manual workers
D – Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers
E - Casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners, and others who depend on the welfare state for their income (Source: Natural England, 2016: page 50.

areas which have become associated with crime and anti-social behaviour, as these perceptions make people unwilling to visit even after efforts to improve local conditions.

Some issues affecting the quality of access to the coast, could be described as 'nuisances'. These included: accessibility of parking, the availability and condition of facilities such as toilets, perceptions of child safety and the cleanliness of coasts/beaches.

Equity of access refers to differences in individuals' ability to access the coast because of socio-economic or demographic characteristics, such as income, gender, race or mobility. In general, focus groups participants raised few equity issues although a few examples were mentioned (see below: *Experience and perceptions of equity of access*). Some focus group participants in Clacton also mentioned worries about the cost of visiting the coast with children, although none went so far as to say that these would stop them.

Organisations like Sport England have done a great deal of work to identify, monitor and address problems affecting equity in relation to physical activity, for example in terms of gender, race, mobility and age but have no studies looking specifically at physical activity in coastal environments. Further analysis of data from Sport England's ongoing Active Lives survey might provide new insights on equity of access to physical activity on the coast.

3.3.1. Experiences and perceptions of quality of access

Several interviewees recognised that there are parts of the coast that are less accessible for people with children, for example because they have less parking and fewer facilities such as toilets. All focus group participants associated visits to the coast with visiting the beach which supports the idea that beaches are seen as appropriate places for recreation with children. However, many beaches and coastal locations are accessed by very narrow paths or steep steps that are more difficult for people with young children, the elderly or disabled people to manage. While some places are inherently difficult to access, poor maintenance, for example paths that are uneven or covered by sand, exacerbate the problems.

Some of the stakeholders interviewed suggested that people with children would prefer to visit coastal locations that they perceive to be safer. Safety concerns were indeed mentioned in the focus groups as a factor influencing decisions about where to go at the coast. Several participants said that they felt more comfortable visiting beaches that are lifeguard supervised.

There were also perceptions among focus group participants that coastal destinations in other areas such as Cornwall or Norfolk are nicer or better quality than those in the south east marine plan area.

3.3.2. Experiences and perceptions of equity of access

One equity of access issue that came out of discussions with the focus groups and stakeholders was the provision of baby changing facilities only in female toilets. This presents a barrier for men taking young children to the coast, particularly if they are visiting on their own.

Overall perceptions of the cost of visiting the coast varied among focus group participants: some viewed visiting the coast as a cheap day out, whereas others felt that having to pay for things like parking, visiting the pier and amusement arcades and eating out made visits quite expensive. Stakeholders generally considered visits to the beach to be a cheap day out for people with children, when compared to other options such as theme parks.

An equity issue that has been identified through analysis of data about visits to the coast and that was also raised by local authority interviewees is the limited access to the coast by low income families resident in coastal areas. Further evidence of this issue was given by focus group participants in Clacton, some of whom said they had visited the coast very rarely in the last year, despite living nearby. Local authority interviewees highlighted that many coastal towns are in deprived areas and are sometimes neglected in terms of infrastructure and services. If the local coastline is poorly maintained and there is little on offer for children (such as opportunities to see wildlife or do activities such as rockpooling), parents have little incentive to make the effort to go.

Local authority interviewees expressed concerns that investment and development in some coastal locations could be perceived as being focused on the interests of more affluent residents and visitors, contributing to what was referred to as the 'gentrification' of seaside resorts, such as Brighton and Margate. Where this happens, less affluent local populations are seen as being excluded from the new recreational opportunities, either because they can't afford to use the restaurants, cafes, shops and other commercial facilities on offer or because they feel that they no longer belong. This project did not find any studies on this phenomenon in relation to coastal access nor was this raised in the focus groups.

The investment in the England Coastal Path is intended to enable access by all to the whole of the coast. However, considerations of enabling access by people who are less mobile (wheelchair users or people with children in pushchairs, for example) have to be weighed against the importance to maintaining the naturalness of the environment and habitats for wildlife. An interviewee involved in the development of the Coastal Path said that it's important not to make all parts of the coast the same; instead it's about enabling people to choose where to go by providing information about what is available in different places. For example, not all parts of the Coastal Path will be accessible for disabled people but instead of pre-defining people's limitations and telling them where they should go, it is better to provide information about what they will find when they get to any particular part of the path and allow them to make their own decisions.

3.4. Reasons for not accessing the coast for recreation, and whether these are common across different social groups

The key reasons for not visiting the coast perceived by focus group participants were identified as 'showstopper' issues, or things that would be likely to deter them from making future visits. These included: weather, hygiene and cleanliness of the beach, concerns about safety, anti-social behaviour, traffic and lack of child-friendly facilities. Stakeholder interviewees also felt that fears about child safety, poor quality

facilities, and travel and transport barriers would be reasons for people with children to visit the coast less often. Both focus group participants and interviewees mentioned lack of information and not knowing what to expect at the coast as another problem for people with children, who need to be able to plan for specific needs in terms of eating, using toilets, etc.

Throughout the literature, weather is reported as one of the key reasons deterring people from visiting the coast (Natural England, 2016; Ashbulby et al., 2013). Weather was a showstopper for focus group participants, not only if it was raining but also if it was too hot as this raised concerns about children's health, for example about getting sunburnt.

3.4.1. Time pressure and cost

According to MENE survey data, lack of time is the key barrier to people visiting the coast; 31% of MENE survey (2009-2015) participants identified being too busy at work or home as a key reason for not visiting the coast more often (Natural England, 2016). Interviewees also recognised time pressure to be a significant barrier for people with children visiting the coast and highlighted that this can disproportionately affect people from lower socio-economic groups, for example, due to shift working patterns and longer travel time on public transport. Among focus group participants, some participants mentioned time pressures relating to work but this was not raised as a main reason why people chose not to visit the coast. In this aspect the field research does not strongly support the MENE findings: this might be worth teasing out in future research, for example to look at whether time pressures relating to work are perceived as a barrier by people in particular types of work or when these pressures combine with time pressures at home, for example for single parents or people with younger children.

There is evidence in the literature that cost is also a reason why some people don't visit the coast more often. There were mixed views about the costs associated with visiting the coast among focus group participants, with some emphasising the range of things that must be paid for, from ice-cream to attractions, while for others, going to the beach is a good option because it is free. The problem of not being able to meet children's demands for special food or access to attractions was an anxiety mentioned several times.

3.4.2. Fears about safety at the coast

Safety concerns about children being at the coast were important factors in deciding where to go, for example fears about children in the water, steep cliffs, losing children at the beach and 'stranger danger'. Stakeholder interviewees also felt that safety of children in coastal locations is a key issue for people accessing the coast for recreation. Those who are uninformed about coastal environments and safety at the coast are considered to be at greater risk. Some risky behaviours mentioned were going into the sea where there are strong currents or using inappropriate equipment like inflatables. Stakeholders reported that it is often people from inland locations who get into trouble.

Focus group participants pointed out that there is often little information about safety at the coast and a lack of first aid points and lifeguard stations. While some

participants said they looked out for warning flags and signs, others were not aware of the presence of these or did not know what they mean.

Safety concerns related to crime, for example concerns about theft of valuables on the beach were also raised by focus group participants. Antisocial behaviour and people drinking alcohol were also mentioned as factors that would affect participants' decision to go to the coast, where to go when they reached the coast and also deciding what time to go home as it was felt there was more risks of crime in the early evening. Crime and antisocial behaviour were as much concerns for coastal residents as those visiting from further away, with coastal residents highlighting the increase of behaviours like day-time drinking during holiday periods. This is mainly an issue for local authorities to manage, for example through zoning of activities.

3.4.3. Barriers relating to hygiene and cleanliness

Hygiene and cleanliness of beaches was a very significant issue for many focus group participants, particularly in Braintree and Colchester groups; dirty or unhygienic beaches resulted in people leaving a location, changing plans, or deterred them from going back to places.

The presence of litter was particularly an issue, which has also been reported previously in the literature (Natural England, 2016; Wyles et al., 2014). One local authority interviewee suggested that litter was inevitable in coastal areas where there are large numbers of day visitors and that people's level of concern depended on their expectations. Some focus group participants expressed a similar view that local councils were doing their best to manage litter but were not helped by the behaviour of visitors. The local authority interviewees also mentioned pollution of both sand and water as a problem. Some focus group participants talked about water quality issues but none mentioned beach pollution, for example the contamination of the sand at beaches.

Concerns about beach cleanliness and the physical appearance of bathing water affected some participants' decisions about where to go on the coast and whether to go into the water. There was a general perception in the Colchester group and on the part of some participants in the Braintree group that beaches 'here' were of poorer quality than for example, in Norfolk or Cornwall. These perceptions tended to be based on factors such as the colour of the water or degree of transparency and there was limited awareness of how bathing water quality is measured or where to get information about this.

3.4.4. Issues for access related to facilities and infrastructure

Focus group participants indicated that not knowing what facilities were available in at a coastal location might put them off going. People with children need to be sure that they will be able to find toilets and changing facilities, including baby changing facilities that can be used by both men and women. A lack of these basic facilities was said to limit the amount of time people with children would spend at the coast.

Transport problems, including parking, traffic and lack of public transport are highlighted as problems typically encountered on visits to the coast. Focus group participants highlighted that long car journeys and traffic are particularly problematic for people with young children as they get restless in the car. Stakeholders felt that

limited and inefficient public transport infrastructure in many coastal areas means that some locations are only accessible by car, which reduces the options for coastal recreation for families who rely on public transport.

3.5. Addressing factors that deter people from visiting the coast for recreation

The focus group and interview discussions highlighted a number of practical opportunities for encouraging people with children to visit the coast more frequently. From these, it is clear that there are potential touch points where organisations and institutions responsible for managing the use of the coast can take action.

Suggestions were made for changes in a number of areas that would facilitate access by families for recreation:

- Improved safety
- Cleanliness and environmental quality
- Facilities and services
- Infrastructure

3.5.1. Safety on the coast

Improving the safety of the coast was a key issue for both interviewees and focus group participants. Educating people about the coastal environment can reduce the fear of the unknown and improve perceptions of safety that affect people's willingness to go to the coast. The discussion at the Colchester focus group suggested that less is known about appropriate behaviour at the coast compared to other environments. One participant talked about the countryside code which tells visitors where they can walk, what to do with their rubbish, and so on. No-one knew how the code is relevant to coastal areas.

According to interviewees, some organisations already do talks and assemblies in schools teaching children about water safety and the natural environment. One stakeholder made the point that the more children learn, the safer they'll be in the future and they will also feel more comfortable coming back to the coast as adults. Interviewees felt that this kind of training should be available to all schools not just schools near the coast. Many interviewees mentioned the RNLI's swim safe scheme; however this scheme is not available in all coastal locations and is not currently available for inland locations.

Ads on TV about safety and water safety were suggested in the focus group discussions as a good way to educate people about the risks.

Better zoning at beaches, for example by providing designated safe swimming areas was suggested by focus group participants as a way to overcome safety-related problems during a beach visit. Focus group participants also wanted to see more beach patrols, life rings on beaches and better signage about hazards what to do in an emergency. One focus group participant mentioned that Brightlingsea, a beach near Colchester, has designated swimming zones. For safety on the beach, Clacton has a wristband scheme, where children wear coloured wristbands indicating the

area of the beach where their parents are. These were both seen as positive mechanisms which reduce parents' anxiety.

Coloured flags on beaches denote whether it is safe for swimming, surfing, bodyboarding etc. Not all focus group participants were aware of these flag systems or of what they mean. Both focus group participants and interviewees agreed that better promotion and education about such warning signs/flags is needed.

3.5.2. Cleanliness and environmental quality

Improving cleanliness and educating people about how to look after the coast was suggested as a way to overcome problems of cleanliness and hygiene on the coast. Focus group participants suggested more litter pickers, involving more people in ensuring beaches are clean, and setting up schemes like 'spring beach' to involve school children so that younger people think more about keeping the beach clean.

Providing information about the quality of the environment was suggested by stakeholders as a way to encourage more decisions to visit the coast and to go into the water; for example, by providing information about bathing water quality. According to interviewees some work has already been done by Surfers Against Sewage to improve access to information about bathing water quality through their 'Safer Seas' app. Interviewees also spoke about research that is currently being undertaken in Europe into the impact of providing information on bathing water quality on people's decision to visit coastal locations and their behaviours when they're there.

Focus group participants suggested that additional signage at the coast could provide information about safety and environmental quality. However some institutions such as the National Trust are not keen on increasing signage as this impacts on the beauty of natural areas.

3.5.3. Facilities, services and promotion

A stakeholder from a local authority said that facilities such as toilets and changing facilities need to be updated to support modern families and not just cater for the 'traditional two parent, two children', for example by providing baby changing facilities in both male and female toilets. Local authority stakeholders raised the issue of limited resources and investments in coastal towns that currently restricts the upgrade or creation of new facilities, and in some places has caused facilities and services to be closed down. Focus group participants also raised concerns about facilities getting vandalised, especially during quieter seasons.

Focus group participants felt there were things that could be learnt from beaches abroad, such as providing showers or hoses to wash off sand and salt water, and providing what they called a '*beach butler'*. Shops were also seen as an attraction in the Colchester group, especially for teenagers. However, some people recognised the need for balance with maintaining natural element of coastal visits.

Stakeholders and focus group participants felt that more can and should be done to provide information about what's available at the coast as this is a key barrier to people deciding to go to the coast in the first place, as well as when they get to the coast. According to the focus group discussions, special events can be a big draw

when deciding whether to visit the coast as they can help keep children occupied. For others this is something to be avoided because of the crowds. Either way, better information about when and what events are happening at the coast can help people make a decision to visit. Stakeholders from local authorities said that they use their website and social media sites to promote information about what is available at the coast, however none of the participants in the focus groups mentioned using such information. This suggests that more can be done to promote the coast through different media streams.

Promoting the coast for recreation, for example by developing year-round activities at the coast such as wildlife watching and watching the waves, was agreed by Colchester participants as a really positive option that may help to ensure cleaner beaches, less vandalism and keep more people employed. Providing more affordable and educational events and activities, such as nature trips, was also suggested by stakeholders as a way to encourage more people with children to visit. Initiatives that encourage children to engage with the natural environment, such as Kent Wildlife Trust's Guardians of the Deep project, MMO and Natural England's Snail and the Whale, and the National Trust's 50 things to do before you're 11¾ were viewed by stakeholders as being positive ways to encourage people with children to visit the coast more often.

3.5.4. Infrastructure

Investment and improvements in public transport infrastructure, as well as accessible and cheaper parking were seen as ways to facilitate access to the coast. Although travel to and from the coast was beyond the scope of this research, it is noted that it significantly contributes to peoples' experiences of visiting the coast and so should not be overlooked in policy decisions. Stakeholders believe that investing in better and more affordable public transport infrastructure is particularly important for addressing equity of access issues for lower socio-economic groups.

It was noted by stakeholder interviewees that the development of significant coastal access infrastructure, like the England Coastal Path doesn't specifically take into account the interests of people with children or other sectors that access the coast less frequently. Those responsible for the development of the coastal path argue that giving people choices about where to go and information about what they will find in each part of the Coastal Path could improve equity of access to different types of coastal location. For example, providing information at seaside resorts about what people can reach by walking a short distance along the coastal path, will encourage more people to try this and experience a completely different coastal environment. Several focus group participants were aware of the Coastal Path and had used parts of it themselves.

Natural England has the statutory responsibility for developing the England Coastal Path, usually working with local contractors who get the job done on the ground. While many sections have been completed, there is still a lot to do. The main priority for Natural England is to get the path open rather than thinking about how it will be used by different types of people.

3.6. Perceived health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation

3.6.1. Health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation perceived by people who visit less frequently (people with children)

The literature review found that there is considerable research on the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing the coast for recreation. Focus group participants associated visits to the coast for recreation with a range of health and wellbeing benefits including emotionally, physically and in relation to being with others including children and families.

Emotional wellbeing benefits reported by focus group participants included feeling happy, personal satisfaction or achievement in terms of having a day out at the coast and from seeing children enjoying themselves. Reported physical benefits included feeling more in touch with the natural environment ('*weathered*') and benefits for children. Focus group discussions supported findings by Elliot et al. (2018) and Ashbulby et al. (2013) that people do not visit the coast primarily for physical health motivations and instead the physical fitness benefits associated with coastal recreation are seen as subsidiary or incidental. It was felt among focus group participants that visits to the coast are very important for parent-child bonding and for creating unique family memories. Visits to the coast are an opportunity for parents to spend time with children, to have fun together, as well as for parents and children to socialise with others. This supports research by Ashbulby et al (2013) that suggests the beach as a special environment for encouraging adults and children to be active together.

Participants also felt that the coast is a place which allows parents to enjoy down time while children are occupied in activities. One participant noted that the coast is one of the few places where boys and girls are happy to do things together. Although the activity that the children did together was not reported, this finding may support previous findings by Ashbulby et al (2013) that found girls and boys had similar levels of activity during beach visits, whereas generally boys have higher activity levels than girls in other environments.

3.6.2. Potential dis-benefits of coastal recreation for people with children

Some health problems associated with visiting the coast were mentioned in both the literature and the focus groups. The main issues are associated with going into the water at places where water quality is poor, often as a result of contamination of water streams from sewage system overflows or playing on polluted sand. Vulnerable groups such as children were likely to be the most at risk. This has not been an issue at English beaches although it has caused concerns in Portugal. Some stakeholders considered that it might emerge as an issue in England in the future. This might discourage people with young children from visiting beaches.

Another health dis-benefit associated with visiting the coast, which was identified during interviews with stakeholders as well as in the literature review, is the tendency for people to consume unhealthy food and drink during recreational visits to the coast. This was also highlighted in the literature review that the positive health impacts of coastal visits should be balanced with other recreational activities shown to be popular during coastal visits such as eating out or picnicking, which may have adverse impacts on physical health. Interviewees advise that more needs to be done

to promote healthy eating at the coast, for example by encouraging food vendors to sell healthier foods.

It is worth remembering that coastal locations are generally exposed to winds and sun as well as rain and this can be a harsh environment especially for young children. Focus group participants and interviewees both mentioned sunburn as a dis-benefit of coastal recreation.

3.6.3. Promoting the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation

Stakeholder interviewees felt that not everyone is aware of the benefits of visiting the coast and that educating people about the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation would encourage more people to visit. One interviewee mentioned ongoing (unpublished) research on the health and wellbeing impacts of the England Coastal Path.

Research has suggested that efforts to increase children's physical activity levels may be more successful if promoted in terms of enjoyment or play (Ashbulby et al., 2013). Focus group participants reported engaging in active play with children at the beach. Sport England's Family Fund supports projects that encourage families to get active and do sport together, based on evidence that the benefits to a child's development are different when they are active with adult family members or care givers, compared to when they are active with their peers (Sport England, 2017).

4. Conclusions and Implications

The research took a broad approach to the topic of access to the coast for recreation. The decision to focus on the experience of people with children, as one of the groups that appears to visit the coast for recreation less frequently that the average for the population as a whole, allowed a deeper exploration of the characteristics of this group, the reasons why they visit or don't visit the coast for recreation and what they do when they are there. An important element of the research was to understand how people with children perceive their visits to the coast, particularly in terms of the quality of access, issues of equity (perceived differences in ability to access coastal recreation based on socio-economic or demographic characteristics) and the benefits of their visits.

This has been a fairly quick and limited exploration of the topic of access to the coast for recreation, but has allowed the following initial conclusions to be drawn:

- **Visiting the coast for recreation with children is widely seen to be a desirable activity and one that is associated with positive memories and values**. This came across strongly from the focus group participants: despite being recruited as people who go less frequently to the coast for recreation, all the participants had strong memories of visiting the seaside and saw this as something that children should also experience.
- **The main motivations for visiting the coast with children are described in terms of individual and family wellbeing** (relaxation, play, spending time together) rather than health benefits. There is a strong emphasis on children's enjoyment.
- **The main reason people with children give for not visiting the coast are that they are too busy**, either with work or at home. These pressures of modern life are difficult for institutions like MMO to address and the research did not attempt to explore these issues. Other reasons for not visiting the coast that were identified in the literature and during the field research were transport, inadequate services and infrastructure and risks to safety at the coast.
- In terms of **transport problems**, several different problems were mentioned. People with cars experienced problems with traffic and parking when visiting the coast which affected their enjoyment of the visit. People without cars were unable to reach coastal destinations that are not served by public transport, which limited their options for coastal recreation. For people without cars, day trips to the coast are likely to be limited to resorts and coastal towns, with less access to more natural environments and the experiences these afford. These issues were also recognised by the local authority stakeholders.
- People with babies and young children tend to be more reliant on **infrastructure and services** such as baby-changing facilities, toilets and pathways for pushchairs. Lack of facilities or lack of information about where they are located, are likely to deter many people with young children from visiting the coast.
- As children get older, **concerns about safety on the coast** come to the fore, with many parents feeling anxious and unable to relax. Safety concerns are related to the physical characteristics of the coastal environment (cliffs, steep paths, rocky shores, changing tides and the risks of drowning). Another

concern is about children getting lost in an unfamiliar environment, for example on crowded beaches or during events.

Concerns about risks in the coastal environment are considered well-founded by organisations that are involved in managing coastal areas in different ways. Initiatives such as beach zoning and wrist-banding are evidence of attempts by local authorities to reduce these risks. Another example is the RNLI's training in water safety. The experience of the RNLI in providing lifeguards and coastal rescue on beaches across England suggests that many adults, especially those who live inland, have little understanding of coastal processes and the related risks.

- **Better information** is seen as essential by parents and stakeholders to facilitate the planning of visits and knowing what to do when at the coast. This includes information about facilities, activities and events, to help people to see their options for spending the day out, including options for coping with changes in the weather. Little evidence was found about how parents access information about the coast, apart from mention of internet search engines and social media. As many parents in the focus groups said they were not aware of information from local and national authorities, this seems like a significant gap in evidence.

- There does not appear to be much research on **equity issues** in relation to coastal access, which is surprising given that equity has been the focus of much research on access to greenspace. Focus group participants did not frame their discussions about access in terms of equity, although the lack of baby changing facilities in male toilets was highlighted as something that might prevent single men from taking children to the coast. Local authority stakeholders were concerned that local communities were being excluded from coastal areas by developments that were oriented to the needs and interests of more affluent groups – often visitors to the area rather than residents. Margate and Brighton were mentioned as examples of 'gentrification'. Ensuring that local community interests are central to processes of development and improvement of coastal facilities should result in benefits for people who live in the area year round. It is likely to further build on the sense of pride in and ownership of local places which was reflected in the Clacton focus group.

4.1. Limitations of the research

The breadth of this topic means that the current research has only scratched the surface of a complex and important issue. Proposals for further research to look at emerging issues are proposed in the section below.

The Customer Journey Mapping technique allowed the experience of visiting the coast to be structured in a set of logical and meaningful steps. This helped produce consistent results across the focus groups and make a link between the experience of visitors and the role and functions of stakeholders, especially local and national authorities.

However, the perspective of a single journey limited the analysis and wider relationships were not well developed. For example, systemic issues such as poor transport links, lack of information about free facilities and perceptions of antisocial

behaviour and high crime rates in coastal towns can make these areas less attractive as leisure destinations for both visitors and local communities. They mean that low income residents are less able to access good quality leisure and recreation facilities despite living very near natural coastal environments.

4.2. Gaps in the evidence and areas for future research

The following gaps and suggestions for future research have been identified:

- There is a lack of evidence about the experience of accessing the coast for recreation by other groups that visit less frequently (BAME groups, women and people in lower socio-economic categories). Using a similar methodology (focus groups supplemented by stakeholder interviews) would provide results that could be compared with the findings of this research. This would build up a richer picture of common factors that stop people from visiting the coast for recreation.
- Little evidence on how parents access information about the coast, and ways to communicate, both in terms of understanding of coastal processes and their risks and practical information for planning visits. Further work could be done to assess what messages are most important for ensuring safety in coastal locations and to identify effective channels of communication with parents and other adults visiting coastal locations with children.
- Gaps in evidence about perceptions of quality and equity of access to coast: whereas there is considerable literature available on perceptions of access to other natural areas (e.g. as a result of work by Forestry Commission) there does not appear to be a similar body of literature regarding coastal environments. It is suggested that the MMO could develop a research strategy for filling these gaps. This could look at research projects to be undertaken by the MMO itself as well as suggestions of work that could be undertaken by others. One area that might lend itself to a partnership initiative would be a project to carry out a further analysis of data from Sport England's ongoing Active Lives survey to provide insights into differential involvement in physical activities specific to coastal locations.

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Annex 1: Literature Review

A1.1. Introduction

This literature review was conducted as the first stage of a research project on the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation and barriers to access.

The aim was to provide further evidence to establish the current research gap on access to health and wellbeing benefits from coastal recreation. In particular, the MMO was interested in equity of access to the coastal environment for recreational purposes and the extent to which and how the barriers to accessing the coast for recreation vary across different socio-demographic groups.

The primary objective of the research was to identify the barriers to accessing the coast for recreation, and to assess whether these were common across different social groups.

The research had three secondary objectives:

1. Understand how people access the coastal environment and what they access it for.
2. Explore experiences and perceptions of quality and equity of this access.
3. Further describe the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation to people who currently visit infrequently.

In relation to objective (3), to describe the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation for people who currently visit infrequently, there is considerable evidence about the health and wellbeing benefits of access to the natural environment, including coastal areas. The focus of this work is on individual perceptions of health and wellbeing benefits and the ways in which these are affected by environmental quality and access issues.

The definitions of key terms used in the research are provided in Box A1.1.

This Annex is organised as follows: approach to the literature review including aims, research questions used to scope the review, the search strategy and how the literature was reviewed and analysed; key findings from the review organised by research question; and finally, the conclusions including suggestions on how the findings may be used in the next stage of the research and gaps identified in the literature.

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Box A1.1

Key terms - definitions and use

For the purposes of this study,
Coastal environments is used to refer to coastal *and* marine environments including the sea and land coast (i.e. beaches, cliffs, etc.)

Access is used in terms of citizens' access to coastal environments for recreation; issues related to accommodation for visitors at the coast are not considered as an aspect of access.

Recreation is defined as *'(a way of) enjoying yourself when you are not working'* (Cambridge English Dictionary). As well as enjoyment, the concept of recreation is associated with leisure, relaxation and refreshment. Recreation may be seen as an outlet for excess energy, channelling it into socially acceptable activities that fulfil individual as well as societal needs and provide satisfaction and pleasure for the participant (Yukic, 1970).

Health and wellbeing has many different definitions. The definition used here is from Defra (2009) which describes wellbeing as "… *a positive physical, social and mental state; it is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose, that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by conditions that include supportive personal relationships, strong and inclusive communities, good health, financial and personal security, rewarding employment, and a healthy and attractive environment.*" (p119). This study includes both physical and mental health and covers the aspects of wellbeing mentioned above, excluding the socio-economic elements such as financial and personal security, rewarding employment etc.

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A1.2. Approach to the literature review

A1.2.1. Purpose of the literature review
The main purpose was to undertake a brief review of recent relevant literature to ensure that the field research is building on existing evidence.

A1.2.2. Scoping the review
In order to focus the literature review, a refined set of research questions and sub-questions were agreed with MMO. The research questions and sub-questions are presented in Table A1.1.

Table A1.1. Literature review research questions and sub-questions

Research Question	Sub-question	Notes
1) Understand how people access the coastal environment and what they access it for	a) How do people access the coastal environment? This covers the steps they take, from finding out about the location and making a decision to visit, to interactions with the physical environment and people during a visit. b) What recreational activities do people undertake during visits at the coast? c) How do these vary according to different social groups and people? And those living close to the coast and those living inland?	To be bounded by considering access for residents living fairly locally (i.e. no more than 30-50km from coast). Focus is on what happens once at the coast – so questions like "When I get there can I park? Are there signposts to the part of the coast I want to visit?"
2) Identify the barriers to accessing the coastal environment for recreation, and whether these are common across different social groups	a) What are the key barriers to accessing the coastal environment for recreation? b) How are these barriers experienced by different social groups and people? c) How do these barriers relate to different types of coastal recreational activity? d) How do barriers relate to different types of coastal environment?	Focus on access barriers once arrived at the coast i.e. *within/at the coast* e.g. litter, behaviour of other users, path conditions etc. Not to include touristic views of access (i.e. focus on those people who live close to coast)
3) Explore experiences and perceptions of quality and equity of this access	a) What do people think about the quality and equity of access to coastal recreation? b) How do perceptions vary according to different recreational activities? c) How do perceptions vary according to different social groups and people? d) How do perceptions vary between those living close to the coast and those living inland?	Equity is defined as: "a situation in which everyone is treated fairly and equally " (Cambridge Dictionary)
4) Further describe the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation to people *who currently visit infrequently.*	a) What are the main health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation? How are they defined and measured? b) How do perceptions vary according to different recreational activities? c) How do perceptions towards benefits vary according to different social groups and	The focus will be on individual perceptions of health and wellbeing benefits and the ways in which these are affected by quality and access issues.

Research Question	Sub-question	Notes
	people? And between those living close to the coast and those living inland?	
5) Methodological: what are meaningful questions to ask people when talking about access to health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation?	a) What questions/approaches have been used? b) What (if any) key methodological limitations/issues were noted that are relevant to the current research?	i.e. how has information on barriers been elicited?

A1.2.3. Search strategy

The literature sources included those identified using Scopus, plus other known key and/or seminal papers of relevance to the research questions (e.g. Natural England, 2016 MENE Coastal Report). The Scopus search strategy consisted of a search string (Table A1.2) with date and location filters. Where the search string generated >100 returns, further key work and topic filters were added (Table A1.2, Further Action) before manual filtering of outputs based on title and abstract according to relevance.

Table A1.2. Literature review search string and further filters.

Search string	Further Action
All strings limited by year to "January *2012- March 2019"* and by country/territory for "*United Kingdom"*	**Non-relevant studies and studies not based (at least partly) in the UK were excluded.** **Sources that could not be accessed were excluded unless appearing very relevant.**
TITLE-ABS-KEY ((access* OR visit*) AND (coast* OR seaside* OR beach* OR marine* OR bluespace*) AND (recreation* OR activity*))	Search Returns: 2212 1) filter for key words: 'human' or 'humans' Returns: 616 2) filter for subject areas: 'environmental science' or 'social science' Returns: 58 **Relevant Results: 6**
TITLE-ABS-KEY (("minority group" OR socioeconomic* OR ethnic* OR age* OR gender) AND (access* OR visit*) AND (coast* OR seaside* OR beach* OR marine* OR bluespace*) AND (recreation* OR activity*))	Search Returns: 40 **Relevant Results: 6**
TITLE-ABS-KEY (("minority group" OR socioeconomic* OR ethnic* OR age* OR gender) AND (perception* OR experience*) AND (coast* OR seaside* OR beach* OR bluespace* OR marine*) AND (recreation* OR activit*))	Search Returns: 56 **Relevant Results: 6**
TITLE-ABS-KEY ((barrier* AND recreation* AND (coast* OR seaside OR beach OR marine OR bluespace))	Search Returns: 9 **Relevant Results: 3**
TITLE-ABS-KEY ((equit* OR qualit*) AND access* AND (coast* OR seaside OR beach OR marine OR bluespace))	Search Returns: 140 filter for subject areas: 'environmental science' or 'social science' Returns: 64 **Relevant Results: 4**

A1.3. Review and analysis of literature

A1.3.1. Review process
1) Search string applied to Scopus
2) Outputs filtered based on title and abstract according to relevance (e.g. seascape/coastal or not, sense of place focused, UK etc)
3) Short list identified of 24 papers deemed relevant from the search and other known and/or seminal papers and ordered in terms of relevance. This was shared with MMO.
4) 11 papers from the shortlist were prioritised and reviewed.
5) Evidence was extracted into template, organised in relation to research questions, relevance and robustness.
6) The evidence was analysed and a short write up produced.

A1.3.2. Relevance criteria
- Relevant topic (i.e. first sift): coastal/seaside/marine, recreation, access, UK; paper is accessible
- Relevance to research questions

A1.3.3. Robustness criteria
In reviewing the robustness of each shortlisted paper, issues considered included, for example (drawing on Defra/NERC guidance, see Collins *et al.*, 2015) whether:

- specific questions and hypotheses are addressed
- related existing research or theories are acknowledged
- the methodology used is clearly and transparently presented, and any assumptions listed
- the geography and context of the study is clear, with a discussion of how relevant findings are to other contexts
- conclusions are backed up by well presented data and findings
- limitations and quality have been discussed
- sources of funding and vested interests are declared.

For example, for quantitative studies: is the sample size appropriate? Are the findings/claims appropriate (i.e. not making claims beyond the data)? For qualitative studies: has it been done in sufficient depth? Is it clear where findings have come from? etc. If studies were highly relevant but study robustness was of concern, they were included in the review, but robustness issues were noted.

The final list of literature reviewed in full as part of the research is presented in Table A1.3; additional papers that were drawn on are included in the reference list at the end of this report.

Table A1.3. Final list of literature reviewed.

No.	Author	Title	Year	Publication	Source
1	Natural England	MENE survey: Visits to coastal England.	2016	Natural England published report.	Seminal paper
2	Elliott L *et al*.	Recreational visits to marine and coastal environments in England: Where, what, who, why, and when?	2018	Marine Policy	Scopus
3	Boyd F White M Bell S Burt J	Who doesn't visit natural environments for recreation and why: A population representative analysis of spatial, individual and temporal factors among adults in England.	2018	Landscape and Urban Planning	Scopus
4	Elliott L *et al*.	Energy expenditure on recreational visits to different natural environments.	2015	Social Science & Medicine	Scopus
5	Ashbullby K *et al*.	The beach as a setting for families' health promotion: A qualitative study with parents and children living in coastal regions in Southwest England.	2013	Health & Place	Scopus
6	White M *et al*.	Coastal proximity and physical activity: Is the coast an under-appreciated public health resource?	2014	Preventive Medicine	Scopus
7	Wood S *et al*.	Exploring the relationship between childhood obesity and proximity to the coast: A rural/urban perspective.	2016	Health & Place	Scopus
8	Wheeler B *et al*.	Does living by the coast improve health and wellbeing?	2012	Health & Place	Scopus
9	Pitt H	What prevents people accessing urban bluespaces? A qualitative study.	2019	Urban Forestry & Urban Greening	Scopus
10	Wyles *et al*.	Perceived risks and benefits of recreational visits to the marine environment: Integrating impacts on the environment and impacts on the visitor	2014	Ocean & Coastal Management journal	Known
11	Sport England	Spotlight on Gender: Active Lives Adult Survey November 2015-16	2017	Sport England published report	Known

A1.4. Key findings

The list of literature reviewed consisted of nine empirical academic studies (four of which were based on data from the nationally representative MENE survey) and two grey literature summary reports of national surveys (one of which summarises findings from the MENE survey). The majority of the reviewed documents take a quantitative approach (n=8), with the rest either taking qualitative (n=1) or mixed method approaches (n=2). Three of the reviewed papers (the qualitative and mixed-methodology studies) focused on perceptions of visitors although one of these was not focused specifically on coastal environments. Three of the reviewed studies considered barriers associated with accessing coastal environments, with a further two considering barriers to accessing natural environments more generally.

A1.4.1. Understand how people access the coastal environment and what they access it for

How do people access the coastal environment? From finding out about the location and making a decision to visit, to interactions with the physical environment and people during a visit.
Natural England's MENE survey is a nationally representative survey that monitors how the English adult population engage with the natural environment[8]. It is an on-going cross-sectional survey that started in 2009 and repeats annually. The data from the MENE survey is widely used throughout the literature (for examples included in this review see Natural England, 2016; Elliot *et al.*, 2018; Boyd *et al.*, 2018; Elliot *et al.*, 2015) but few national-level descriptive analyses exist that specifically examine visits of the English population to coastal environments (Elliot *et al.*, 2018).

According to MENE survey data from between 2009-2015, approximately 271 million recreational visits were made to coastal destinations in England each year, and on average, single day visits to the coast lasted around 3 hours, approximately 1 hour longer than the average visit to countryside or urban destinations (Natural England, 2016). 39% of visits to coastal destinations lasted 3 hours or more (Natural England, 2016). However, analysis of MENE survey data from 2009-2012 found that, of the total sample (of adults in England), only 4.1% reported visiting a seaside resort or town, 1.9% reported visiting other seaside coastline (including beaches & cliffs)[9]; and 0.8% reported visiting both (White *et al.*, 2014).

Analysis by Elliot *et al* (2018) of temporal patterns of visits to beaches and other coastline show that people are more likely to visit the coast on weekends and during warmer seasons. Motivations for choosing to visit coastal environments for

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[8]The 'natural environment' refers to all green, blue and open spaces in and around towns and cities as well as the wider countryside and coastline. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results
[9] Note that studies based on the MENE Survey report the use of different terms to describe destinations on the coast other than seaside resorts and towns. Whereas these other coastline destinations generally cover all sorts of more rural coastal landscapes, Elliot et al (2018) report a distinction between 'beach' and 'other coastline. In this review we have used the general categories of 'seaside resort or town' and 'other coastal, except where a different usage is specified.

recreation vary from relaxation and social motivations (including 'to spend time with friends' and 'to spend time with family') to health motivations (Elliot *et al.*, 2018).

Exploring family visits to beaches, Ashbulby *et al.* (2013) notes that parents play a key role in enabling children to visit coastal environments by choosing to share these environments with their children. Ashbulby *et al.* (2013) suggests the beach as a special context for encouraging adults and children to be active together with parents participating in physical activity with their child during these visits. Past research has shown simultaneous physical activity to be rare during family leisure time (Thompson *et al.*, 2009 as citied by Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013), so this highlights a potentially unique wellbeing benefit of family beach visits (see also Section A1.4.4.).

What recreational activities do people undertake during visits at the coast?
Elliot *et al.* (2018) draw on data from 2009-2016 of the Natural England MENE survey, making this the most up to date descriptive analysis of the MENE findings specifically related to coastal visits included in this review. Elliot *et al.* show that the majority of leisure visits to the coast involve sunbathing or paddling, with other key activities including swimming outdoors, water sports and fishing, which demonstrates the importance of coastal environments to support water-based recreational activities in England (Elliot *et al.*, 2018). There is some evidence that different motivations are associated with different recreational activities, for example, all water-based recreational activities were found to be positively associated with relaxation and social motivations and negatively associated with health motivations (except water sports) although the reasons for this are not clear (Elliot *et al.*, 2018).

Wyles *et al.* (2014) explored the perceived psychological effects (for example, changes in mood; calming or exciting) of different recreational activities carried out at rocky shores. Activities analysed included: walking, dog walking, jogging, swimming, snorkelling, crabbing, fishing, playing with family, paddling, sunbathing/relaxing, rock pooling, wildlife watching, picnicking, fossil hunting and cycling (Wyles *et al.*, 2014).

Recreational visits to the coast were generally associated with more energy expenditure than recreational visits to other natural environments e.g. urban greenspaces or countryside (Elliot *et al.*, 2015). Differences in energy expenditure was more noticeable if the visits were made by local visitors. However, people travelling further distances expended more energy in countryside environments than at the coast. Elliot *et al* (2015) suggest that this may be because coastal visits better afford longer bouts of low-intensity activity (such as sub-bathing, for example) for long-distance travellers.

How do these vary according to different social groups and people? And those living close to the coast and those living inland?
Coastal environments attract visitors from all socio-economic groups (2015-16 MENE survey, Natural England, 2016). It is difficult to distinguish clear patterns across socio-economic groups, maybe because the reviewed studies use different categories and data from different time periods. However, coastal visitors are most likely to be from the most affluent AB group (32% of visitors but only 27% of the English adult population), while only 19% of visits were taken by members of the least affluent D and E groups who make up 26% of the adult population (Natural England, 2016). A range of factors beyond proximity to the coast influenced the

frequency of coastal visits (White *et al.* 2014). For example, visits were more likely to be taken by those aged under 35 than those over 65, not in the lowest socio-economic grade (DE), not in full-time employment, who had children in the home, were white British, had no illness or disability, owned a car, and owned a dog. These results are somewhat contradictory to later studies that look at more recent MENE data, specifically with the finding that people with children in their household are less likely to visit the coast (Natural England, 2016). It is unclear from the literature why this might be, but it may be due to the fact White *et al.* (2014) only examine 3 years of MENE survey data from between 2009-2012.

In comparing profiles of visitors to beach environments and visitors to other coastlines (non-beach), distinct demographic patterns have been found (Elliot *et al.*, 2018, Natural England, 2016). Beaches were shown to be: more popular with females while there is no sex differences for other coastal environments; more popular with middle-aged adults (35-64 age bracket), while other coastline environments were more popular with older adults (>65 age bracket)[10].

Beaches were more popular with people in lower socioeconomic groups (SEGs), while the reverse pattern was seen for other coastline environments: other coastlines are visited significantly less frequently by people in the lowest socio-economic (DE) group than the highest socioeconomic (AB) group (Elliot *et al.*, 2018). However, compared to inland natural environments, coastal environments encourage visits from all sectors of society (Elliot *et al.*, 2018; Boyd *et al.*, 2018), and may be helpful in supporting efforts to promote greater social cohesion (Elliot *et al.*, 2018).

As well as demographic differences in the types of coastal locations visited, patterns of demographic variation have also been found between the types of recreational activities undertaken at the coast (Elliot *et al.*, 2018). Fishing appears to be more popular among older men in lower socio-economic groups and water sports more popular among younger men in higher socio-economic groups; swimming outdoors was most likely to be taken up by younger people across all socio-economic groups; sunbathing or paddling was most popular among middle-aged females (Elliot *et al.*, 2018).

The demographic profiles of walkers in coastal environments and the motivations for taking up this activity have been found to be distinct from other inland environments (Elliot *et al.*, 2018). For example, walking in all natural environments was most popular with females; at the coast it was also more popular among older people. Only walking in coastal environments was positively associated with social motivations, whereas in all locations it was positively associated with relaxation motivations (Elliot *et al.*, 2018).

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[10] The literature reviewed used different age ranges and terminology to describe age brackets. The MENE survey often uses three broad age groupings for adults - 18-34, 35-64 and >65 – however other age ranges are also used where relevant, for example to specify a more specific age group. Literature based on different data may use different age ranges: where this is relevant, it is highlighted. Some studies use generic names (e.g. 'middle aged', 'young' without stating the exact age range covered.

Data on children is not routinely collected through MENE survey. Ashbulby *et al.* (2013) found that both boys and girls reported similar levels of activity during beach visits, suggesting there is a potential opportunity for using visits to the beach to reduce observed activity level inequalities between boys and girls. The small sample size of the study by Ashbulby *et al.* (2013) means that further research would be needed to confirm this finding.

There is some evidence of geographical differences in coastal visits with people in the North East and South West visiting coastal environments most often (Elliot *et al* 2018). Coastal visit frequency was greater on the west coast of England relative to the east coast (White *et al.* 2014). It is suggested that the higher levels of open shoreline found on the western than eastern coast, both in terms of total amount of land cover and land cover per capita, provide more opportunity for coastal visits (White *et al.*, 2014).

Table A1.4. and Table A1.5. outline key variations in visitor profiles depending on the type of coastal environment visited and visitors' place of residence respectively (Natural England, 2016). The complex variations outlined in the tables highlight the challenges of unpacking quantitative data when so many interacting factors are in play. Some key points from the tables that are relevant to this research include the differences between type of environment most likely to be visited by the different socio-economic groups and also the finding that 'entertaining children' and 'playing with children' are more likely to happen at coastal towns and resorts than other coastlines (Natural England, 2016).

Table A1.4. Key visitor profile variations identified from the 2013-2015 MENE survey data by the type of place visited (Natural England, 2016).

Visitors to coastal towns & resorts are more likely to be:	Visitors to other coasts are more likely to be:
C2,D,E socio-economic groups.	A,B,C1 socio-economic groups.
Non-locals (live in different local authority).	Locals (live in same local authority)
Travelling on longer journeys to reach coast.	Taking visits for health & exercise, peace & quiet.
Visiting to relax & unwind or to entertain children.	Taking part in dog walking, wildlife watching, appreciating scenery.
Taking part in beach activities, eating out, playing with children.	Feeling close to nature.
Spending more money than average for all coastal visits.	

Table A1.5. Key visitor profile variations identified from the 2013-2015 MENE survey data by place of residence (Natural England, 2016)

Non-local visitors (live in different local authority) are more likely to be:	Local visitors (live in same local authority) are more likely to be:
Travelling on longer journeys to reach coast, taken by car.	Empty nesters (over 55).
Visiting at weekends.	Travelling on foot.
Talking visits for health & exercise.	Visiting on weekdays.
Taking part in eating out, picnics, playing with children, sightseeing by car, beach activities.	Spending time with family, relax & unwind.
Feeling enjoyment, refreshed & revitalised, appreciative of surroundings, close to nature.	Taking part in dog walking.

A1.4.2. Identify the reasons that stop people from accessing the coastal environment for recreation, and whether these are common across different social groups

What are the key reasons for not accessing the coastal environment for recreation?

Lack of time is one of the most frequently mentioned reasons for not visiting to coast (Natural England, 2016; Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013), as well as the natural environment more generally (Boyd *et al.*, 2018, Pitt, 2019). 31% of participants in the MENE survey (2009-2015) identified being too busy at work or home as a key reason for not visiting the coast (Natural England, 2016). Boyd *et al.* (2018) suggest that this demonstrates a need to understand how people prioritise their time, noting the potential role of a culture that prioritises speed and productivity over slowness and relaxation (previously acknowledged by Bell, Wheeler and Phoenix (2017)).

Physical barriers and access issues such as bad weather (Natural England, 2016; Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013), distance (Boyd *et al.*, 2018; Wood *et al.*, 2016), limited paths or challenging topography (Boyd *et al.*, 2018) and the presence of litter (Natural England, 2016; Wyles *et al.*, 2014) were also reported as reasons for not accessing coastal environments, by limiting either people's ability or willingness to visit such environments (Boyd *et al*, 2018).

Other reported barriers include poor health or physical disability (Natural England, 2016; Boyd *et al.*, 2018), cost e.g. the expense of car parking (Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013; Natural England, 2016) and having young children (Natural England, 2016). Families mentioned specific reasons for not visiting beaches including the effort of packing for the beach, perceived distance to the beach and car availability (see Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013 and also the following sub-section).

Figure A1.1. shows reported barriers to visiting the coast as identified from 2013 and 2015 MENE survey data but does not provide information about underlying reasons for these barriers. This demonstrates the difficulty in understanding barriers on the

basis of quantitative evidence and why further qualitative research is needed to unpack what is meant by these quantitative findings.

Figure A1.1. Barriers to visiting the English coast more often as identified from the MENE survey, compared across two waves of the survey (2013 and 2015). Reported barriers were in answer to the question: "*What, if anything, has stopped you from visiting the coast more often during the last 12 months?*" (Natural England, 2016)
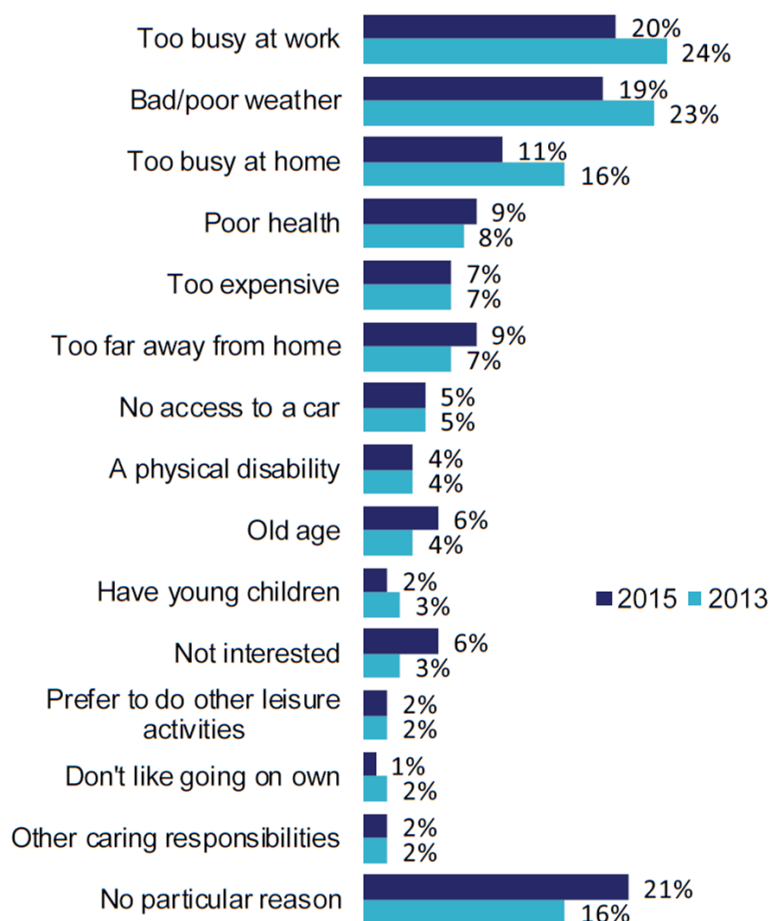
How are these problems experienced by different social groups and people? Significant variation exists in how often different demographic groups visit coastal environments for recreation (MENE survey data, Natural England, 2016). Visitors undertaking fewer than two visits to the coast in the previous 12 months (i.e. those who visited coasts the least) were more likely to be; women (73% compared to 68% of men), people in the lowest socio-economic group (75% of C2DEs compared to 66% of ABC1s), people with children in their household (74% compared to 70% of people without children) and members of the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population (90%) (Natural England, 2016). These findings suggest that efforts to improve access to coastal environments might usefully focus on these groups.

Other demographic variations were found in the reported reasons for not accessing the coast. For example, being too busy at work was more commonly reported by

men, people aged between 24-44, and people with children, whereas being too busy at home was more commonly reported by women, the 35-54 age group, and people with children (Natural England, 2016).

Issues influencing how frequently people visit the coast also vary by region. For example, residents of South East England were more likely to report litter, vandalism or graffiti as factors that put them off visiting, whereas residents of South West England were more likely to report that the path they used was in poor condition. Younger people were more likely than older people to report litter, vandalism, or graffiti (Natural England, 2016).

Physical barriers such as poor path conditions are more likely to impact access by certain groups, for example older adults with limited mobility or fear of falling (Boyd *et al.*, 2018). Boyd *et al.* (2018) also found that poor health as a reason for not visiting natural environments was more prevalent in coastal communities, reflecting previous reports that English coastal populations are generally older and less healthy (Depledge *et al.*, 2017 as cited by Boyd *et al.*, 2018).

Ashbulby *et al.* (2013), who focused on families' activities at the beach, found that barriers perceived by one family did not necessarily discourage other families from making beach visits. This suggests there could be an opportunity to encourage more families to make trips to the beach by sharing stories of how similar families include beach visits in the family lives (Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013).

How do these barriers relate to different types of coastal recreational activity? e.g. are there common barriers, and/or different barriers associated with specific activities?
Elliot *et al.* (2015) explored energy expenditure during recreational visits to different natural environments. They found that although visits to coasts were associated with higher overall energy expenditure, this was explained by longer duration of low-intensity activity, as urban greenspaces and countryside environments were associated with more high-intensity activities. This may be caused by different perceptions about certain high-intensity activities being more suited to non-coastal environments. For example, running may be more suited to countryside/urban greenspace where circular routes are more easily defined than at the coast (Elliot *et al.*, 2015).

The more intense activities available at the coast such as water sports and swimming only attracted 0.7% of the study sample (2009-2014 MENE survey data, sample size 71,603). Elliot *et al.* (2015) suggest that this may be due to higher fitness or greater experience required for these activities. This supports the notion that although opportunities exist for greater physical activity at the coast, more people perceive barriers to water sports than, for example, running in greenspace, which therefore influences their take up (Elliot *et al.*, 2015).

How do reasons for not visiting relate to different types of coastal environment?
Wood *et al.* (2016) suggest that reasons for not visiting the coast relating to children may be responsible for fewer visits to coastal environments within urban conurbations (compared to rural areas and smaller cities or towns), despite close

proximity. These include perceptions of child safety and independent mobility, as well as the physical characteristics of coastal environments in these settings which are seen as being less amenable to child-friendly activities (Wood *et al.*, 2016). It is important to note however, that due to the aims and the methodological limitations of the study these reasons are hypotheses and are not supported by examples.

A1.4.3. Explore experiences and perceptions of quality and equity of this access

Living near to the coast or visiting the coast has significant health and wellbeing benefits (Wheeler *et al.*, 2012; Wyles *et al.*, 2014; Elliot *et al.*, 2018; Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013). For socioeconomic groups who experience multiple disadvantage, and the resulting negative health impacts, access to 'good quality' coastal environments may play a role in reducing health inequalities (Wheeler *et al.*, 2012).

This section explores people's perceptions of quality and equity issues associated with coastal recreation and how this may affect access.

What do people think about the quality and equity of access to coastal recreation?

The Marine Policy Statement makes one mention of equality:

> *Section 2.5.5 The marine plan authority should ensure, through integration with terrestrial planning, and engagement with coastal communities, that marine planning contributes to securing sustainable economic growth both in regeneration areas and areas that already benefit from strong local economies. Through well placed and well-designed development Marine Plans should promote economic growth and sustain local jobs. Examples of this could include local infrastructure development, or optimising the potential of environmental resources through ecotourism and recreational use. These considerations must be integrated with social considerations on equality, community cohesion, wellbeing and health, as well as implications for the marine environment.*

However, there is little literature looking at the question of equality in relation to access to the coast. This is surprising given the considerable body of literature on equality of access to the countryside. For example, a review by the Forestry Commission (Ambrose-Oji, 2009) examined 34 empirical studies on access to woodlands by one or more groups covered by the Equality Act (groups protected because of characteristics of age, gender, faith, social deprivation, race and/or sexuality). The review identified perceptions of inequality - including feeling unwelcome - and lack of knowledge about 'rights' to access woodland areas. Similarly, other studies have found that cultural factors influence access to certain spaces, which can '*become coded as where some 'do not belong'* (Bell *et al.*, 2018; Byrne and Wolch, 2009)', quoted by Pitt (2019, p90).

One aspect that has been researched in relation to urban blue spaces which are not coastal (such as urban waterways, inland canals, and navigable rivers, engineered rather than natural watercourses) relates to perception of natural areas as being unattractive and even threatening places. Pitt (2019) reports that within these contexts and among groups that are less likely to visit (under 18s, ethnic minorities,

females) or have specific access needs (over 65s and parents of pre-school children), perceptions and understandings are prominent reasons for not accessing waterways[11]. Waterways were generally associated with negative symbolic and social characteristics, for example waterways as scary places, associated with risk-taking behaviours on the one hand or with being 'boring' on the other. *'Across all groups the most prominent reasons for not accessing waterways were perceptions they are dirty, dodgy and risky'* (Pitt, 2019). These perceptions are likely to be self-reinforcing if people do not have the experience of visiting waterways.

Further work is needed to look at whether there are similar negative perceptions of the coastal environment, whether these relate to specific types of coastal environment or places (e.g. urban vs rural coast) or to areas where there are higher proportions of social groups that have been found to access the coast less frequently, i.e. low income residents or BAME communities.

There may be a spectrum of feelings and perceptions affecting access to urban waterways ranging from 'nuisances' which may spoil but rarely prevent a visit (e.g. perceptions of dirtiness and litter), to 'absolute deterrents to use' such as 'fear of intimidating people and strangers' (Pitt, 2019, p94). Pitt (2019) suggests that in locations with plentiful quality greenspaces, nuisance may become more influential.

How do perceptions vary according to different recreational activities?
There is little evidence in the literature examined for this study about perceived inequalities of access to different recreational activities at the coast. This is consistent with the finding (Section A1.4.3.) that there appears to be less evidence on perceptions of inequality in access to coastal areas than on access to natural environments in general.

The finding by Elliot *et al.* (2015) that visits to coasts are associated with low-intensity activity such as sun-bathing and paddling, whereas as urban greenspaces and countryside environments are associated with more high-intensity activities such as running (see Section A1.4.2.) may reflect a perception that certain activities as not suitable for coastal locations. Sport England's Active Lives Survey looks at attitudes towards sports and physical activity. A review of children's attitudes (Sport England, 2019) found that girls and children from less affluent families were less likely to enjoy being active. '*There's a strong positive association between activity levels and enjoying it, feeling confident when taking part and knowledge of how to get involved or improve.*' (Sport England, 2019) This insight is not examined further in relation to the suitability of certain locations for different types of physical activity.

How do perceptions vary according to different social groups and people? And those living close to the coast and those living inland?
Given the variation in access to the coast between socio-economic groups, age groups, genders and locals vs non-locals (Natural England, 2016) and the reasons for this difference in access, Boyd *et al.* (2018) suggest that perceptions of quality

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[11] Themes within the 'waterway perceptions and understandings' category related to negative perceptions and expectations of waterways; the 'waterway space and environment' category related to the physical space (e.g. dirty, lack facilities, water safety, cyclists etc) and the 'personal situation' category related to the person rather than the waterway (e.g. cost, lack of time, etc).

and equity of access to coasts will also vary. From this brief review, there appears to be a gap in the literature on this issue.

Research on awareness, attitudes and use of the England Coastal Path for recreation does provide some insights into differences between socio-demographic groups. Omnibus questions added to the MENE survey over a two-week period in March 2013 and again in December 2015 regarding coastal visits and the Coastal Path[12] revealed that awareness of the Coastal Path is increasing (Natural England, 2016). Awareness was highest among men (33% compared to 28% of women), people over 55 (39% compared to 25% of those aged 16-54), and people who visit the coast more often (44% of weekly visitors were aware compared to 34% of those who visit less often and 26% of those who never normally visit the coast). It was also found that one third of the English adult population said they would be more likely to visit the coast because of the Coastal Path, compared to just over 50% who said it would make no difference and just over 10% who didn't know (Natural England, 2016).

Looking beyond the coastal environment to illustrate the potential issues related to perceived equity of access which can arise in accessing the outdoors more broadly, research has found that for minority groups '*the discomfort of feeling different*' to other users can be sufficient to deter (Rishbeth and Finney, 2006, in Pitt, 2019). For example, this sentiment was expressed by young Somali women in the context of access to UK urban waterways (not coastal) (Pitt, 2019). Parental control can be also be a limiting factor for recreation in general, particularly for young women. Sport England research suggests there are a number of factors at play that deter women from some backgrounds taking part, including the perception that sport is an activity for men, women's perceived responsibilities to the family (which limits their opportunities to take part in sport) and expectations about what women should wear or how they should behave (Sport England, 2017).

A1.4.4. Further describes the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation to people who currently visit infrequently.

What are the main health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation? How are they defined and measured?

There is considerable research that suggests that many health and wellbeing benefits may be derived from accessing the coast for recreation. These benefits can be described in different ways and no common coding of the benefits exists across literature, though there may be overlaps and similarities. Here we look at the physical health benefits, the mental health benefits and then the wider wellbeing benefits.

White *et al.* (2014) demonstrate a positive gradient between coastal proximity and the probability of achieving guideline physical activity levels, through leisure and

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[12] The England Coast Path is a new National Trail (or walking route) around all of England's coast, which aims to improve public access to the coast and is expected to be completed by 2020 (Natural England, 2018).

travel alone[13]. This proximity-activity relationship was mediated by coastal visit frequency which suggests that coastal residents use the coast for physical activity (rather than just exercising more, for example, using indoor gyms) (White *et al.*, 2014), which could explain other results that those living near the coast in England have better physical and mental health (Wheeler *et al.*, 2012).

The positive association between coastal proximity and health was stronger within more socioeconomically deprived groups, therefore it's possible that living near the coast may mitigate some of the negative effects of socio-economic deprivation (Wheeler *et al.*, 2012). A similar association has been suggested with greenspace (see Mitchell & Popham, 2008 as cited by Wheeler *et al.*, 2012).

Coastal visits have been shown to be associated with more overall energy expenditure than visits to other natural environments (urban greenspace or countryside), which can have positive impacts on health (see Sections A1.4.1. and A1.4.2.). This difference was more prominent in local visitors, which supports previous findings that coastal residents in England are more active and have better self-reported health (Wheeler *et al.*, 2012; Elliot *et al.*, 2015).

Time spent outdoors is the most consistent predictor of physical activity in children (see Sallis *et al.*, 2000 as cited by Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013). The benefits of physical activity in adults and children are widely understood and include reduced risk of obesity and depression, as well as development of a healthy lifestyle. The physical and psychological benefits of exposure to the natural environment in general are also widely recognised. Wider social benefits of awareness of the natural environment and willingness to take action to protect it have also been associated with spending time outdoors.

Ashbulby *et al.* (2013) explored the psychological and physical health benefits of family beach visits. Improved mood, feelings of relaxation and restoration and better physical health are some examples of wellbeing benefits of coastal visits. The MENE survey also suggests that for many, visits to the coast will result in feeling calm and relaxed, and refreshed and revitalised, among other benefits (see Figure A1.2).

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[13] Self-reported physical activity in the last week was reported in response to the question*: "In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 minutes or more physical activity which was enough to raise your breathing rate? This may include sport, exercise, and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places, but should not include housework or physical activity that may be part of your job"* Due to the exclusion of work and housework, White et al. (2014) refer to this as 'leisure and travel-related physical activity' (LTPA).

Figure A1.2. The percentage of survey respondents who 'strongly agree' with statements referring to different positive wellbeing outcomes of visits to natural environments by destination type. Results from MENE survey data between 2009-2015. (Natural England, 2016)
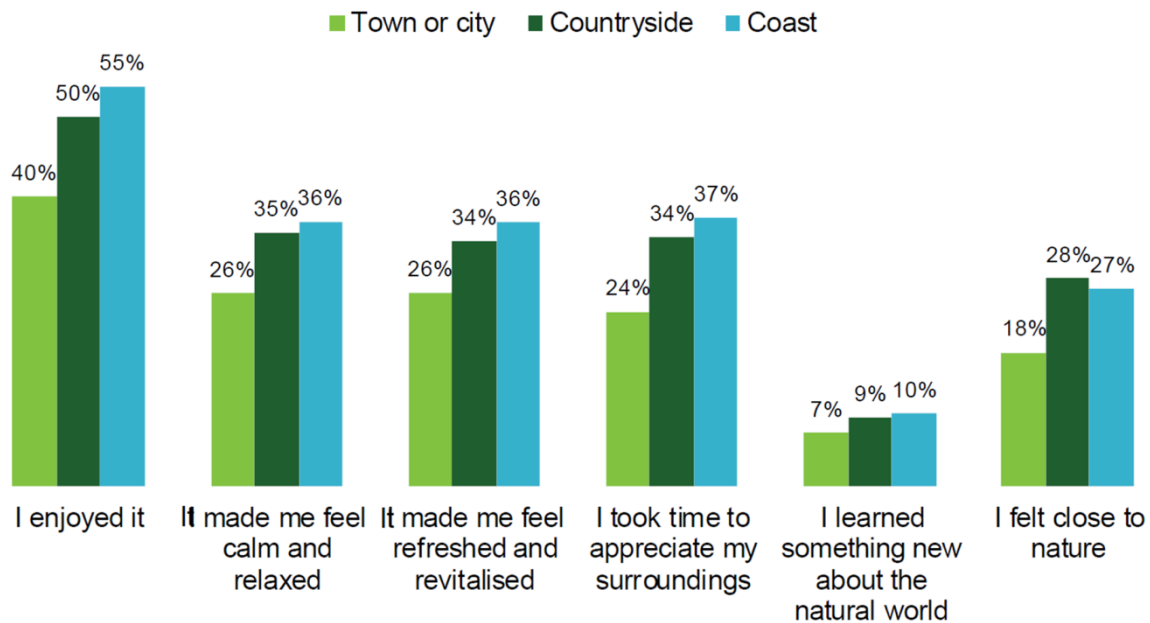
Focusing on the therapeutic effects of visiting the coast, Bell *et al*. (2015) use a typology which identifies four overlapping dimensions: 1) symbolic experiences related to e.g. place meanings, including sense of place etc; 2) immersive experiences including restorativeness, e.g. switching off, 'losing oneself' etc; 3) social experiences e.g. opportunities for family leisure and wellbeing; and 4) achieving experiences e.g. pursuing long-term goals and more short-term benefits, 'cathartic release' etc. They find that people use the coast in multiple and different ways suggesting '*the need to nurture diversity along the coastline, catering for wide-ranging needs and interests to minimise sensations of crowding and maximise opportunities for individuals, families, couples and friends to experience a sense of wellbeing.*' (Bell *et al*., 2015, p66)

Importantly, differences have been noted in the benefits of visits to the coast compared with other environments. Visits to the coast and countryside tend to have stronger positive wellbeing outcomes than visits to urban greenspace (Natural England, 2016), for example Figure A1.2. shows wellbeing benefits reported for visits to different natural environments. From reviewing existing literature, Wyles *et al*. (2014) also found that aquatic and blue environments have been shown to be preferred over green environments and are associated with a more positive mood and relaxation. Visits to rocky shores are also seen to have positive effects on visitors' marine awareness, in terms of overall biology, ecology, natural threats facing the environment, general human induced threats and specific visitor-induced threats (Wyles *et al*., 2014).

How do perceptions vary according to different recreational activities?

Using the Circumplex Model of Affect which emphasises that emotion is represented by two dimensions: arousal and mood[14], Wyles *et al* (2014) explore the perceived psychological benefits of different recreational activities at rocky shores. All activities examined were perceived to have a positive impact on visitors' mood, with wildlife watching consistently being the most beneficial activity. Lesser benefits were obtained during walking and snorkelling, while cycling, fossil hunting and jogging had the least positive impact on visitors' mood (Wyles *et al.*, 2014). However in terms of excitement level, playing with family, crabbing, snorkelling, rock pooling, fossil hunting and cycling were perceived to make visitors more excited while sunbathing/relaxing, dog walking, walking, picnicking and paddling were perceived to have a calming effect (Wyles *et al.*, 2014).

In terms of motivations for visiting the coast, recreational visits to beaches were found to be inversely related to health motivations and recreational visits to other coastlines were unrelated to health motivations (Elliot *et al.*, 2018). This may be explained by the finding (see section A1.4.1.) that sunbathing or paddling, as well as fishing, are popular recreational activities at the coast (Elliot *et al.*, 2018). It is possible that people are not visiting the coast for health promotion motives to the extent seen in inland environments. Health benefits may be seen as subsidiary or incidental co-benefits of coastal visits. The indirect promotion of physical activity is currently a popular idea in behavioural economics and these findings suggest that beach and coastal visits provide an opportunity for this. However positive health impacts should be balanced against the potential adverse health impacts of other recreational activities shown to be popular during coastal visits such as eating out or picnicking.

Efforts to increase children's physical activity levels may be more successful if promoted as contributing to enjoyment or play or other benefits that are valued by parents such as improving attention, social development, or positive emotions. This is supported in the results of the study by Ashbulby *et al.* (2013). Active play at the beach could be a less threatening and more positive way to motivate both parents and children who rarely engage in physical activity. Both parents and children in this study described physical activity at the beach in terms of enjoyment and fun.

How do perceptions towards benefits vary according to different social groups or proximity or living to the coast?
The data from the MENE survey showed that half of the English adult population would like to take more visits to the coast, although there were significant social differences. Women were more likely than men to want to visit the coast more often (52% compared to 45% of men), as were people under 55 (53% compared to 43% of people over 55), people in the highest socio-economic band (51 % of ABC1s compared to 46% of C2DEs), people with children in their household (56% compared to 46% of people without children) (Natural England, 2016). The results suggest the need for qualitative research to explore the reasons for these differences in more depth.

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[14] "*participants were asked to rate how each activity would change visitor mood (1 = much worse mood, 3 = no change, 5 = much better mood) and visitor excitement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = much calmer, 3 = no change, 5 = much more excited).*"

Ashbulby *et al.* (2013) found that, when asked, both parents and children emphasised the psychological and mental health benefits experienced during visits to the beach, and that physical fitness was not the primary health benefit identified. Benefits described by families included: fun, enjoyment, stress relief, relaxation, and engagement with nature. While the sample size was not big enough to draw definitive conclusions, findings indicate that parents who visit beaches less frequently were more likely to mention more generic benefits of being outdoors rather than specific benefits related to the beach (Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013).

Accessibility and use of spaces are influenced by complex socio-cultural factors (Morris and O'Brien, 2011 in Pitt, 2019). To promote use among groups that are currently under-represented, greater understanding is required about how people perceive and interact with spaces as well as what prevents access (Pitt, 2019, drawing on Roe *et al.*, 2016, Hitchings, 2013 and McCormack *et al.*, 2010).

A1.4.5. Methodological: what are meaningful questions to ask people when talking about access to health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation?

How does MENE define the key social groups less likely to visit?

Those who reported currently never visiting coastal environments (beach or other coastlines) but who wanted to visit more, were most likely to be aged 16-24, in the lower (C2DE) socio-economic groups, either have children in their household or be pre-family, and be residents of London of the Midlands (Natural England, 2016) (Table A1.6.).

Those who reported currently visiting the coast less than weekly were most likely to be age 25-54, be in the higher socio-economic groups (ABC1C2), have children in their household, be working full or part-time, be residents of Yorkshire, Humberside, or East of England (Natural England, 2016) (Table A1.6.).

Table A1.6. The profile of groups who want to take more visits to the coast but currently are the least likely to visit the coast as identified from the 2009-2015 MENE survey data (Natural England, 2016).

	Want to visit more – currently never visit	Want to visit more – currently visit less than weekly
More likely to be…	Aged 16-24 C2DE Children in household or pre-family Residents of London or Midlands	Aged 25-54 ABC1C2 Children in household Working full or part time Residents of Yorkshire, Humberside, East of England

	Want to visit more – currently never visit	Want to visit more – currently visit less than weekly
Barriers to visiting the coast more likely to include...	Poor health Too expensive Too far from home No access to car A physical disability	Too busy at work Too busy at home Young children

What questions/approaches have been used to ask people about their access to health and wellbeing benefits of recreation and barriers?

Most of the reviewed academic literature took a quantitative or mixed-methodology approach, either extracting data from existing surveys, such as the MENE survey (see Elliot *et al.*, 2018; Boyd *et al.*, 2018; Elliot *et al.*, 2015; White *et al.*, 2014), the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) (Wood *et al.*, 2016), or census data (Wheeler *et al.*, 2012) or conducting independent surveys (Pitt, 2019; Wood *et al.*, 2014). Only three of the reviewed papers included qualitative research techniques (Ashbulby *et al.*, 2012; Wyles *et al.*, 2014; Pitt, 2019), with only two of these focusing on coastal environments (Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013; Wyles *et al.*, 2014). These included open-ended survey questions (Wyles *et al.*, 2014), semi-structured interviews (Ashbulby *et al.*, 2013) and interviews and focus groups (Pitt, 2019).

In analysing 2009-2016 MENE survey data to explore demographic, motivational and temporal variations in recreational visits to beaches and other coastlines, Elliot *et al.* (2018) maintain that comparing visits to comparator inland environments is critical to highlight opportunities within a policy/management context for extending the benefits of coastal visits to groups that currently do not visit these locations. They included three inland comparator categories "a river, lake or canal", "a park in a town/city", and "a woodland or forest". These comparators represented, respectively, a primarily aquatic environment, the most visited type of natural environment in urban areas and the most visited type of natural environments in rural areas (Elliot *et al.*, 2018). To improve equity of access to natural environments, Pitt (2019) argues that qualitative investigation of non-use of various spaces is required to better inform policy interventions to promote access amongst under-represented groups.

Ashbulby *et al.* (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews with both parents and children to explore how families engage with beach environments, some key interview topics and example questions that will be relevant to this research are outlined in Table A1.7.

Table A1.7. Key interview topics and example questions for parents and children as used by Ashbulby et al. (2013).

Interview topics	Example questions
Activities during a 'typical' family beach trip in summer/early autumn	Imagine that you have just arrived at the beach with your family - can you talk me through what would happen and what you would do? [Prompts: Where would other members of your family be? What would they be doing?]
The frequency with which families visited the beach throughout summer/early autumn	Some families visit the beach nearly every week whereas other families go less often such as once or twice in the summer - What would you say it is like for your family?
The extent to which children engaged in activities independently or with other family members/peers and supervision of children in the water and on the beach	When you are doing x activity would you be with anyone?
The perceived importance of children spending time at the beach	Do you think it is a good idea for children to spend time at the beach or not? Can you explain why?
Benefits and risks of spending time at the beach	Do you think there are any particular benefits from children and parents spending time at the beach? Are there any risks or dangers that you watch out for when you go to the beach?
Barriers and enablers to visiting the beach	Is there anything that helps you and your family to visit the beach? Is there anything that stops you from visiting or makes it harder to visit regularly?

What (if any) key methodological limitations/issues were noted that are relevant to the current research?

The limitations of quantitative analysis, compared to in-depth qualitative work, are widely acknowledged within the reviewed literature (Boyd *et al*., 2018; Elliot *et al*., 2015; White *et al*., 2014; Wood *et al*., 2016). For example, quantitative data is unable to explore complex interacting features that explain underlying reasons for differences in, for example, visit frequency or choice of coastal location (Boyd *et al*., 2018). Although associations between variables can be observed, causality cannot be ascribed from quantitative cross-sectional approaches (Wood *et al*., 2016; Elliot *et al*., 2018). However, there appears from this review to only be a small amount of qualitative research exploring the benefits of coastal recreation (Ashbulby *et al*., 2013; Wyles *et al*., 2014)

Elliot *et al*. (2018) acknowledge the limited set of predictor variables used in a descriptive analysis of recreational visits to coastal environments. Such predictors[15] explained little variation in the outcome variables which suggests a range of other important determinants that can be explored in future research. However the predictors chosen were based on important demographic, motivational and temporal predictors as identified in previous research and considered to be useful to policy makers, as well as the variables available in MENE data.

Boyd *et al*. (2018) note that the terms 'barriers' and 'constraints' of visiting natural environments imply a latent desire to be in these environments. However this is not always the case and some individuals have no desire to be in these spaces. Therefore Boyd *et al*. (2018) choose to adopt more a neutral term 'reasons' to explore why people do not visit natural environments. This seems to be a useful way of broadening out the exploration of factors influencing access to the coast.

Wood *et al*. (2016) recognise a need for future individual-level studies exploring the relationship between obesity and coastal proximity. They note that such studies could benefit from using more nuanced measures of access, for example, the road or path distance from individuals' home locations which would allow analysis to differentiate whether coastlines are actually walkable or open to the public.

A1.5. Conclusions

This brief literature review has highlighted the considerable evidence that exists about access to coastal environments for recreation as well as gaps that require filling in order to develop strategies for increasing access, especially by those groups that currently visit the coast least frequently.

Natural England's MENE Survey provides quantitative longitudinal data about visits to natural environments, including coastal environments, which is a valuable source of evidence about current practices and trends over time. However, the review found few qualitative analyses that specifically examine visits to coastal environments in England.

A1.5.1. Who visits the coast?
The MENE data shows that coastal environments are an important resource for recreation and leisure, with visitors travelling further to reach the coast and visits lasting longer than in the case of inland recreation. Other studies indicate that visits to the coast have more positive outcomes for health and wellbeing than visits to any other destinations. Motivations for choosing to visit coastal environments vary from relaxation and social motivations (including to spend time with friends and with family) to health motivations and the MENE survey identifies a range of different types of coastal recreational activities, from picnicking and eating out, to playing with children, sunbathing, watching wildlife, walking and water sports.

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[15] Either demographic (i.e. sex, age, socio-economic group), motivational (i.e. health, relaxation, social), time of visit (i.e. weekend or weekday) place of residence (home address identified as being in one of the nine regions of England) (Elliot et al., 2018)

The national MENE survey data has highlighted significant variations in how often different demographic groups visit coastal environments, with the groups visiting least frequently being women, people in the lowest socio-economic group, people with children in their household and members of the BAME population. These findings suggest a need to understand the reasons why these groups visit less frequently, particularly as the overall findings from the MENE data indicate that compared to inland natural environments, coastal environments encourage visits from all sectors of society, and that coastal environments have a universal attraction.

One motivation for looking further at the reasons why specific groups access the coast less frequently are the particular benefits provided by recreation in coastal environments, for example for families with children: these include immediate health benefits such as reducing obesity as well as longer term benefits in terms of establishing practices of exercise in both boys and girls and strengthening bonds between family members.

A1.5.2. What are the reasons why people do not visit the coast?
The literature reviewed identifies a number of different reasons why people do not visit the coast, however, few of the reasons listed (for example, too busy at work, bad weather, too busy at home, poor health, too expensive) help to understand the issues specific to visiting coastal as opposed to inland natural environments.

It is also apparent that people face different barriers, depending on their personal characteristics and situation (for example, age, physical ability, income, etc.), their motivations, the type of activities they are planning and area of the coast they are visiting or considering visiting. This suggests that further qualitative research is needed to unpack the elements of the lived experience of accessing coastal environments for recreation and the factors that make this more or less difficult.

A1.5.3. Perceptions of barriers and equity of access
Considerable research has been done on how perceptions of the natural environment (for example, countryside and forests) can act has barriers to access to nature, especially for BAME communities where perceptions of the unfamiliarity of certain natural environments may be compounded by social or cultural barriers such as a sense of not belonging.

However, little relevant evidence was found in the literature reviewed on perceptions of access by the groups that access coastal environments less frequently. Indeed, Table A1.6. shows that many of those who currently do not visit the coast or only visit infrequently say they would like to visit more often. Further research is needed to understand whether and to what extent perceptions of inequitable access to coastal environments or of the poor quality of the environments that are accessible, represent a barrier to greater use and enjoyment of coastal environments by these groups.

A1.5.4. What benefits could be gained by increasing access to the coast by those who currently visit infrequently?
The literature largely supports arguments that visits to coastal environments have a particularly strong beneficial impact for a range of visitors, in terms of physical health from engaging in activities from play to sports, mental health and social wellbeing

associated with being with friends and family in the natural environment. Given the evidence many more people would like to access coastal environments, White *et al.* (2014) have described the coast as an 'under-appreciated public health resource'. Equity considerations suggest that the benefits of coastal recreation should be available to all. One group which seems a priority are families with children, given the importance of physical activity for children's long-term health as well as establishing a familiarity with coastal environments that will influence their future recreation choices.

These findings are reflected in themes to be developed in the Focus Groups. The framing of these themes has drawn on learning from the methods and approaches used in the literature reviewed. Section A1.6. presents an initial set of questions/topics, based on the literature reviewed, that could be used to explore the health and wellbeing benefits and barriers to accessing the coast for recreation among people with children, which will be further refined in the next stage of the research.

A1.5.5. Gaps in the literature in terms of answering the research questions
In addition to the topics related to why families with children do not visit the coast for recreation, or do not visit as frequently as they would like to, which will be addressed in the next stage of this research, the literature review identified a number of other evidence gaps which will need to be addressed in the future:

- There is a need for a more comprehensive qualitative study of the reasons why some groups do not visit coastal environments as frequently as others. While half of the English adult population reported that they would like to take more visits to the coast, there were significant differences between demographic and social groups, with women, people under 55, people in the highest socioeconomic band (ABC1) and people with children in their household being most likely to want to visit more frequently. The results suggest the need for qualitative research to explore in more depth the complex socio-cultural factors influencing these differences.
- Wood *et al.* (2016) point to a need for future individual-level studies on health impacts of coastal access and factors affecting it, e.g. exploring the relationship between obesity and coastal proximity. They note that such studies could benefit from using more nuanced measures of access, for example, the road or path distance from individuals' home locations which would allow analysis to differentiate whether coastlines are actually walkable or open to the public.
- More evidence is needed about equity across social groups (e.g. people in lower socio-economic categories, BAME, women) in access to coastal environments for recreation. This research should also consider perceptions of equity (or inequity) to ensure that psychological and cultural factors are taken into account.

A1.6. Suggested topics for the focus groups to explore barriers to accessing the coast for recreation (to be refined in the next stage of research)

How often do people access the coast for recreation? [opener]
Who visits the coast for recreation and how often? Categorise into regular users and infrequent/non-users (i.e. less than 2 visits in last 12 months)?

What is the experience of accessing the coast for recreation?
Explore through a journey mapping exercise the key decision gateways and potential interactions or 'touch points' of relevance to the MMO, in the process of visiting coastal locations for recreation. The journey mapping will include from finding out about locations and taking a decision about visiting, to interactions with the physical environment or with people during a visit.
For users of the coast for recreation, what do people with children *do* once at the coast? (i.e. what kinds of activities)
For infrequent/non-users, what would people with children *like to do* once at the coast?

Why do people visit or wish to visit the coast rather than other locations? What is special about the coast?
What parts of the coast are visited most and why? Are any parts of the coast particularly associated with certain activities or purposes - if so, which and why?

What are the perceived benefits (or dis-benefits) of coastal recreation?
For users, what are the benefits of these coastal recreation activities? How does this make them feel? Are there differences in how different recreational activities make them feel and their perceived benefits? And what are the perceived benefits for the children?
For infrequent/non-users, what do they see as the potential benefits for themselves and the children? How might this make them feel?
Are there any other benefits of coastal recreation not yet mentioned? What about (mental and physical) health and wellbeing benefits? (if not already mentioned)
Overall, what are seen as the key/most valued benefits of coastal recreation?
Are there any perceived dis-benefits to accessing the coast for recreation?

What are the reasons for not accessing the coast for recreation [i.e. barriers]?
Explore general perceptions towards quality of access to the coast.
At what point along the 'journey map' do reasons not to use the coast for recreation /barriers appear?
What are the kinds of reasons? Explore/probe using the six types of barrier: physical barriers; facilities and infrastructure; interpretive or virtual access; health barriers; cultural barriers and other.
Are reasons/barriers common or unique for different types of recreational activity and/or coastal environment?
[Continues onto next page…]

Overall what are the key reasons for not using/barriers to using the coast for recreation?

Overcoming barriers: What would help or enable people with children to use the coast more for recreation/ to overcome these barriers/? [Map out against the barriers identified above]

And what would help to increase the health and wellbeing benefits they gain from coastal recreation? i.e. what needs to change to help realise more of the HWB benefits they identified and/or new benefits?

How do barriers and opportunities vary across different groups?
Drawing on the findings across the three focus groups, the analysis will aim to explore (data dependent) how perceptions towards HWB benefits, barriers and opportunities to coastal recreation among people with children vary across:

- Regular users vs infrequent/non-users
- Different socio-demographic groups
- Those living adjacent to the coast vs further inland

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Annex 2: Focus group report

A2.1. Introduction

This annex presents the results of the second stage of the research: the local focus groups to explore with members of the public their experience of accessing the coast for recreation and the reasons why they do not visit more frequently. The results of this stage of field work subsequently informed the interviews which completed the evidence-gathering for the project.

This annex is organised as follows: approach to the focus group research including purpose, recruitment strategy, summary of focus group plan, and approach to the analysis; key findings organised by theme/research question; and finally, the conclusions including suggestions of questions for the final interviews and the research gaps identified.

A2.2. Approach to the focus group

The purpose of the focus groups was to:

- describe the typical experiences of visiting the coast of people with children (one of the social groups identified by Natural England (2016) as being less likely to visit coastal areas for recreation) in one Marine Plan Area;

- trial an experimental application of the 'journey mapping' technique[16] as a means of identifying where and how people visiting the coast with children interact with the MMO or other relevant authorities and describing how these interactions affect their visit, positively or negatively.

In consideration of the outcomes of the literature review (Annex 1: Literature Review) and after consultation with the MMO, it was agreed that the focus groups should explore the experience of people with children, one of four demographic groups found by the MENE survey to visit coastal areas less frequently than the majority of the population. People with children were selected because of the importance of physical activity for children's long-term health and of establishing a familiarity with coastal environments that will influence their future recreation choices.

Three focus groups were held in the South East Marine Plan Area, involving a total of 29 participants. Two groups were held in inland locations (Braintree and Colchester) and one was held in a coastal location (Clacton-on-Sea), as shown in Figure A2.1.

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[16] See Annex 4: Using Customer Journey Mapping as a technique for exploring experiences of visiting the coast for recreation for a summary of the Journey Mapping technique.

Figure A2.1. Locations of three project focus groups in the south east inshore marine plan area.

Key: focus group location

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Participants were recruited by a professional market research company, based on pre-established criteria designed to firstly, ensure that all participants belonged to the target population, i.e. people with children who visit the coast less frequently or would like to visit more often; and secondly, to reflect a range of characteristics of this population group, in terms of gender balance, age and employment:

- All participants had at least one child under 16 years old;
- None of the inland participants had visited the coast for recreation more than once every two to three months in the past year[17]; all coastal participants said they would like to visit the coast for recreation more frequently;
- Balance of men and women – *note that this criterion was only partially met as fewer men were recruited (12 men / 17 women);*
- Mix of ages (using the standard age cohorts used in the MENE survey), with the majority being in the age ranges (: 25 – 34, 35 – 44 and 45 – 54;
- Mix of employment situations: including full-time work, part-time work, unemployed (seeking work), not in employment (not seeking work).

Table A2.1. gives a summary of the main characteristics of focus group participants.

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[17] Natural England's report (2016) *MENE survey: Visits to coastal England* classifies this as visiting infrequently.

Table A2.1. Main characteristics of focus group participants

	Braintree	Clacton	Colchester	Total
Age group[18]				
18 – 24	0	1	0	1
25-34	2	7	3	12
35-44	3	0	3	6
45-54	5	1	2	8
55+	0	0	0	0
Gender				
Male	4	2	5	11
Female	6	6	6	18
Employment				
Full time	4	4	7	15
Part time	2	1	3	6
Unemployed (seeking work)	1	0	0	1
Not in employment (not seeking work)	2	3	1	6
Retired	1	0	0	1

A schedule of questions and prompts was developed to draw out themes identified in the literature review and to create a customer journey map or maps for different types of people visiting the coast with children (see Annex 4: Using Customer Journey Mapping as a technique for exploring experiences of visiting the coast for recreation). The journey steps used were:

- Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast
- Step 2: Get ready to go out
- Step 3: Find a place on the coast
- Step 4: Spend the day out
- Step 5: Go home

The same schedule was used for each of the three focus groups.

Full notes were made of the discussion in each focus group. An audio recording was also made and the content transcribed.

A2.3. Key findings

The following sections provide a summary of the discussions under the main headings covered. As this is qualitative research, the number of people expressing particular points is not generally noted because the purpose was to explore and

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[18] The standard Census age cohorts used for the MENE Survey were applied. As the focus was on people with children, these were mainly under 55 years old, so all the cohorts aged 55 years and over where combined into one category.

understand a range of views and the focus group participants are too small a sample to be representative of the wider population.

A2.3.1. How people with children access the coastal environment for recreation and what they access it for

The discussions all focused primarily on visits to the beach and town piers/seafronts, with a minority of participants mentioning visits to other coastal locations as this matched participants' experiences. The frequency of visits to the coast varied among participants but was predominately low.

- From the screening criteria used in recruitment, it was found that the majority of participants (Colchester and Braintree) visit the coast less than five times a year.
- From the group discussion it was clear that participants from Clacton-on-Sea generally visited the coast more often than participants from Braintree or Colchester but there were some participants who had visited the coast very rarely, despite living in such close proximity.

Visits to the coast are taken seasonally with more visits being taken in summer and some participants only visiting in summer.

- Weather is a key deciding factor in visiting the coast; the majority of participants said they would only visit the coast if it is nice weather.
- Several participants explicitly said that they only visit the coast in summer.

The majority of participants travel to the coast by car, with some traveling by train.

The main places that participants visit for day trips include: Clacton-on-Sea, Frinton-on-Sea, Walton-on-the-Naze, Southend, Holland-on-Sea and Harwich.

A2.3.2. Experiences and perceptions of quality and equity of this access.

Issues related to the quality of access to the coast either experienced or perceived by participants included: accessibility of parking, facilities/toilets, perceptions of child safety and the cleanliness of coasts/beaches. The participants did not generally bring up issues of equity of access (that is, differences in the ability to access the coast in general or certain parts of the coast because of socio-economic or demographic characteristics, e.g. income, gender, race, mobility, etc), although the cost of visiting the coast was mentioned by some people, especially in Clacton.

Many participants found the getting ready to go out stage and the process of packing very stressful, especially for participants with younger children. It was generally felt that packing for trips to the coast is more demanding than packing for other days out as it requires taking more stuff, for example towels and a change of clothes for children.

- *"I think it depends on the age of the children as well, if the children are older you can be a bit more spontaneous but if they're younger you've got to think about it and what you've got to pack. [...] If you're going to go to the beach and you've got 3 and 4 year olds it's kind of the day before prep as opposed to spontaneous."* (Braintree)

There are strong feelings of association among participants about having certain foods, specifically fish and chips, when at the coast.

- *"That's part of the day out… A cone of chips, yeah."* (Braintree)
- *"Yeah, get an ice cream, get your portion of chips and then play a few arcades and then go home."* (Braintree)
- *"Maybe get some food…Ice-cream. Fish and chips. Just normal stuff really"* (Clacton)
- *"I think I'd go down to the beach and take a picnic and that's the whole point of the day… It might be fish and chips on the beach."* (Colchester)

Several participants perceived visiting the coast as a unique opportunity for socialising and many described taking trips with friends and family.

Perceptions that other coasts and beaches away from the local area are nicer or better quality. Participants used the examples of visiting Cornwall and the Norfolk coastline.

- *"Last year we visited Cornwall and that blew this area out of the water, nice blue waters, this is all brown and silty, they've got nice beaches where the beach itself is actual sand, this is all rock and stones, just the quality."* (Colchester)

There appeared to be differences in perceptions of the cost of visiting the coast for recreation between some participants.

- *"I see it as a cheap day out going to the beach so I want to keep it cheap; ice-cream is not breaking the bank."* (Colchester)
- *"That's why you choose parking as well because you don't want to go to a beach where you've got to pay for loads of parking because you want your cheap day out."* (Colchester)
- *"We avoid the pier because it's so expensive, if you want a cheap day out you pack a bag of lunch and a blanket and some balls."* (Braintree)
- *"It's not too bad. I mean I've got 3 so it does add up, especially the drinks and refreshments and stuff."* (Clacton)
- *"The food is expensive there I thought. I thought it was quite expensive."* (Clacton)

A2.3.3. Reasons for not accessing the coast for recreation, and whether these are common across different social groups

Key reasons for not accessing the coast for recreation, or 'showstopper' issues which were identified by participants as really difficult and likely to put them off future visits, included: weather, hygiene and cleanliness of the beach, safety (crime), anti-social behaviour, traffic, lack of child-friendly facilities.

Participants mentioned weather as a significant deciding factor on whether or not to visit the coast, for example, people wouldn't go to the coast if it was raining or too hot. However, once committed to going, there is often a 'grin and bear it' attitude.

Heat in particular raises concerns about children's health, for example the risks of children burning. If the weather is too hot participants reported doing something inside, though it was also noted that the coast is often cooler.

- *"Well if it looks like it's going to rain I probably wouldn't go"* (Braintree)
- *"It depends on what time of the year it is as well because if it's a baking hot summer day then you can't really take them down there because there's no shade."* (Colchester)

Hygiene and cleanliness of the beach was a very significant issue for many participants particularly in the Braintree and Colchester groups. Participants felt that there wasn't the same 'countryside code' for the beach/coast about looking after the environment:

- *"It's weird because you have a country code, if you go walking in the country you've got to literally stay to the footpath and pick up your rubbish, you don't seem to have that on a beach."* (Colchester)
- *"Last bank holiday weekend we went up to the beach but we didn't go on it because of the amount of broken bottles, there is no way I would let her go and play on it, it was awful. […] it's disgusting and it's really put me off a bit."* (Colchester)

Dirty or unhygienic beaches were reported to result in people leaving a location, changing plans, and deterring them from going back to places. e.g. if it's dirty then will leave/not go back.

- *"If it was dirty I probably wouldn't go back again, I'd probably just leave to be honest."* (Colchester)

Safety (crime) is a key concern at the 'getting ready to go' stage (step 2): once there (step 4) it can be a real showstopper – especially in early evening time when more people are drinking. Antisocial behaviour was the biggest negative showstopper for a few participants. This affects decisions about whether or not to go to the coast e.g. one participant in Colchester 'wouldn't go back again'; also decisions about where to go (step 3); and timing of when to leave (step 5) e.g. there is more risk of crime in the early evening. For people living in the area, it is experienced as a violation of their normal space:

- *"People who are down on holiday always start day drinking a lot earlier […] we could just be going to the bank to pay a bill or something and then you've got a couple of guys walking around with cans of beer and that and it's like noon… If you've got your kids in the buggy and that, it's not great."* (Clacton)

A concern about anti-social behaviour seems to colour the perception that children are particularly at threat, because of 'stranger danger', as well as risks of losing children at beach.

A second focus of safety concerns are specifically related to the coast and water. For some adults, these are an important factor in finding a place to spend the day on the coast (step 3). Participants worry about children's safety at the coast e.g. because of

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the shore, steep cliffs, water safety and risks of drowning. Safety is seen as important regardless of children's ages, affecting young and old children.

- *"The only thing that stresses me out sometimes, or a lot of the time […] even if he's in the shallow bit of water I'm worried that he's going to go in. People don't want to sit near me because I'm like 'Don't go there, don't go there, no further', that's the only really worry that I've got."* (Braintree)

Some participants suggested there should be more information for people visiting the coast:

- *"I don't think there's much information, not at Frinton there doesn't seem to be, there used to be somebody who walked up and down the beach but you see them about once a day […] seen someone on a lilo and they're getting further and further away and you're thinking, "Who am I calling here?" if you suddenly see them disappearing."* (Colchester)

Discussions highlighted issues related to the cover and adequacy of on-site safety information and signage e.g. warning flags, equipment (e.g. life buoys), first aid points and lifeguards. Where people had seen signage and flags, there was a difference of opinion as to how meaningful they were: some participants commented that they always looked out for warning flags and buoys while others said they didn't know what the flags meant.

- *"I mean really it should be the whole of the seafront but it is only certain areas that get the beach patrol."* (Clacton)
- *"We used to always familiarise ourselves with the current flows, on the beach you've got your flags and things like that. So if we were on the beach when the children were younger we wouldn't go on the outside or the outskirts of the buoys and things like that, we were very safety conscious in that way."* (Braintree)

Concerns were also expressed about beach quality and bathing water quality. This affects decisions about finding a place to spend the day on the coast (Step 3) and also whether or not people will go into the water (step 4). There was a general feeling in the Colchester group that beaches 'here' were of poorer quality. Participants were not familiar with official information about water quality on the beaches, and many had limited understanding of what indicates good or poor water quality; instead people generally see if the water looks clean to them and then decide whether or not to go in.

Beaches in Norfolk were considered better quality that beaches in Essex, in terms of the sea and sand. Participants mentioned that beaches around Essex (Aldeburgh and Mersey were given as examples) have brown water.

- *"It makes me cringe when the girls want to go running in there, when you see the colour of the water."* (Braintree)

- *"Yeah I mean obviously I don't expect it to be see through like you'd have abroad but it needs to look half decent without piles of rubbish floating in it and stuff like that."* (Braintree)

Frinton-on-Sea was preferred, in terms of quality, to Clacton-on-Sea, while some participants said that they prefer to visit the coast abroad.

Facilities are a big issue for many, in particular the availability of and cleanliness of toilets. Some factors affecting the experience of toilets were knowing in advance (whether or not there would be toilets and also their location (steps 1, 2, 3) The toilets are often too far away from the beach and are either unclean or closed/shut down by the council. People also said they would like to know in advance if baby changing facilities are available - and accessible to men. There are no baby changing facilities for dads or men to use at Clacton seafront.

- "*If you have a child who needs changing, they've only got it in the ladies' toilets.*" (Clacton)

A few people said there should be showers. These are important issues since they limit the amount of time that people with children can spend at the coast: a lack of or poor quality toilets is likely in its turn to affect the cleanliness and hygiene of the coast. Facilities were often considered to be better abroad.

The availability and quality of changing facilities will affect the amount of time participants spend in a place; participants would spend longer at the beach if there were better facilities.

There were mixed views about the costs associated with visiting the coast for recreation. For some, certain aspects of coastal visits are seen as expensive, for example the piers, car parking prices, attraction prices; for others it is a cheap day out, for example the beach is free, there are places to park for free, they will bring lunch with them. Some participants commented that it can be more expensive when taking older children as they are more aware of the attractions on offer, such as arcade games and ice cream shops.

- *"Older kids probably want this and want that. You spend more money taking older kids out. When you've got younger ones [...] you can pack a little lunch for them and they'll be happy."* (Clacton)

Issues associated with the cost and difficulties of parking were raised by those who lived in seaside resorts as well as by visitors. It was noted that where parking is free, for example where people have relatives living in the area whose driveways they can park on, this encouraged more frequent visits.

- *"My dad lives in Felixstowe and my in-laws live in Clacton [...] I get free parking because I just park at their houses."* (Colchester)

Crowded seaside locations, for example when there are events, can put parents off due to fears of losing children as well as increased queues and general busyness. This was especially felt by participants who are single parents.

- *"I'm a single parent, so it's harder for me to get as excited because I've got more responsibility than if I had a partner with me who could share the responsibility […] My fear is one of my children getting lost in the crowd so, if there were more people with me, then I'd feel more relaxed."* (Clacton)

There were mixed feelings about dogs at the coast, with concerns relating to child safety and cleanliness (for example, dogs urinating on the sand near where children are playing). For some participants however, dog walking is also an important reason for going to the coast.

- *"Dogs should never be off the lead anywhere. I mean I've had a dog come running up, nick my little girls sandwich and run off."* (Braintree)

Finally, poor path conditions were mentioned as a problem by one participant who is a cyclist: sand on pathways makes it harder for both cyclists and people with push chairs. Participants who walked along the coast, for example between Clacton-on-Sea and Walton-on-Sea did not report any problems with the paths.

A2.3.4. Addressing reasons why people do not access the coast more frequently for recreation

The discussions highlighted a number of practical opportunities for encouraging people to visit more frequently and to overcome some of the issues for access. These related to facilities and infrastructure; importance of promoting the beach as a year-round opportunity for recreation; improving cleanliness, parking and transport options and 'behaviour zoning'. A number of key points made by participants included:

Improving safety at the coast through better zoning of areas for different activities, for example by providing designated swimming areas. Safe swimming zones could indicate where currents are not strong; Brightlingsea was mentioned as a place where a safe swimming area has been designated.

- *"I mean Brightlingsea have got it, I think they've really sorted it out where they've got that safe swimming pool bit that never goes high, the tide always stays at that one level, I think we need more of that sort of stuff really"* (Colchester)

Other people suggested that more patrols, more life rings on the beach and signs telling people what to do in an emergency would improve safety on the beach, as well as providing more signs along the coast, to let visitors know what activities are suitable where.

Participants suggested that there is less information about safety around the coast than there is about safety in other areas. Some said that there should be information and advertisements, for example, on TV, about safety at the coast.

Many participants said that beach cleans and litter-picking activities were good ways of creating awareness of the need to be responsible for one's own waste and keeping the coastal area clean. They talked about improving cleanliness and

educating people about how to look after the coast. For example, more litter pickers, involving more people in ensuring beaches are clean, and setting up schemes like 'spring beach' with school children so that younger people think more about keeping the beach clean.

- *"I think the thing about the litter pick is a really good thing […] I think if schools literally had a spring beach […] and they took a class at a time to take one section of beach and clean it then, for one it will make the beach clean, for two it will make young people think about the mess that they're making before they make it."* (Colchester)

Improved facilities and infrastructure at the coast. For example, there should be better toilets and changing facilities, more showers or hoses to wash off sand and salt water, and information about what facilities are available. However some concerns were raised that facilities would get vandalised. Things could be learnt from experiences of beach holidays abroad, e.g. the 'beach butler' to bring you things you need.

Promoting the coast for recreation and leisure and developing year-round activities at the coast, for example wildlife watching, and promoting them more, was seen by Colchester participants as a really positive option that may help to ensure cleaner beaches, less vandalism and keep more people employed. Some participants felt people today have less experience of just spending time at the coast, so this may need to be specifically promoted:

- *"I appreciate the fact the weather gets more choppy as the seasons get colder and stuff but just watching the waves was quite a good thing when we were younger, just watching them, I don't think that sort of stuff is promoted I suppose."* (Colchester)

Improving parking and transport options – for example free parking, park and ride schemes or shuttle buses.

Participants identified a number of positives which make visits to the coast truly memorable and encourage them to visit the coast. These included:

Unique activities such as seeing wildlife:

- *"When we went to Great Yarmouth the kids saw some seals and it blew their minds."* (Colchester)

Special events can be a big draw when deciding whether to visit the coast and in finding spots on the coast, for example they can help keep children occupied. For others this is something to be avoided because of the crowds. There was a sense that not enough events happen or that events are not advertised enough:

- *"If there's a specific event in town that day i.e. the air show or something like that. […] It's normally word of mouth. The events aren't really advertised that much."* (Clacton)

A2.3.5. Perceived health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation to people who currently visit infrequently

Visits to the coast for recreation were associated with a range of health and wellbeing benefits both emotionally, physically and socially, through spending time with children and family members. Many participants reported a positive sense of emotional wellbeing after a visit to the coast. This was expressed as feelings of happiness, as well as personal satisfaction or achievement in terms of having a day out at the coast and from seeing children enjoying themselves.

- *"When you've had a good day it always makes me want to go back sooner rather than later to have another good day."* (Colchester)
- *"It's a sense of achievement, especially if you've gone with a social group, quite often you've got kids of various ages within your group and all the kids play together and it feels a sense of achievement that you've got teenagers out of the house and off their phones."* (Colchester)

One participant described the physical benefits of being outside in the sea air as feeling more "*weathered*"; other participants mentioned health benefits for children ("*sea air is good for the baby*"), but no physical health benefits related to fitness were mentioned.

In terms of relations with children, family members – visits to the coast are an opportunity for parents to spend time with children, to have fun together, as well as for parents and children to socialise with others. One participant gave the example that the coast is a place where boys and girls are happy to do things together unlike other locations where it's hard to find activities where boys and girls can play together. The coast is also a place which allows parents to enjoy down time while children are occupied in activities.

- *"I've got a boy and a girl and it gels them together because it's something they can both do together which is really hard, especially as they get older, trying to find activities that they both want to do is quite hard so I find the beach is easy, they'll gel together again."* (Colchester)

The opportunity to create memories, as well as re-living one's own childhood memories with children was frequently mentioned.

- *"You have a story at the end don't you? I remember taking my daughter to build a sandcastle and we watched the waves come in and trash it and she was so upset by it. Now we can laugh at it because she's grown up a couple of years, but those little memories and those little conversations you can't take away, they're vital for any family really."* (Colchester)

Visits to the coast were associated with 'going back to nature', as well as a 'different kind of nature' compared to other locations.

- *"A sense of wellbeing. I love being close to nature. […] my kids […] nature which living in a town they don't necessarily see so it's nice in that respect."* (Clacton)
- *"It's like going back to nature."* (Colchester)

A2.4. Touch points on the customer journey

The main points at which people with children visiting the coast come into contact – directly or indirectly – with authorities that have responsibilities for the coastal environment (including promoting or monitoring economic development, spatial planning, provision of infrastructure and maintenance of infrastructure and services) were found to occur throughout the steps on the customer journey may (before, during and after a visit to the coast) but primarily in steps 1, 3 and 4, as show in Table A2.2.

Table A2.2. Potential touch points[19] on the coastal visit journey.

Journey step	Possible MMO touch points	Possible touch points for other authorities
Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast	• Offer of attractions - planning function	*Local Authority (District/County Council)* • Offer of attractions (economic development authorities; planning authorities) • Offer of attractions and private services, e.g. restaurants, water sports, etc. (Local authority – Licensing of business activities) • Provision of infrastructure, e.g. parking, toilets, coastal path, cycle paths
Step 3: Find a place on the coast	• Zoning activities – avoiding activities that block views or access to valued areas of coast	*Local Authorities* • Provision of signage for beach safety • Zoning activities - recognising different needs e.g. dog walking, beach games, quiet areas. • Provision of infrastructure e.g. changing and showering facilities *Environment Agency* • Provision of bathing water quality information at beaches
Step 4: Spend the day out	• Promoting economic development that benefits local residents and visitors, e.g. water sports facilities. • Provision for the protection of heritage and	*Local Authorities* • Permitting and licensing events and commercial activities – e.g. air show. • Life guard station (for safety) • Maintenance of infrastructure e.g. paths • Provision of services e.g. refuse and cleaning services • Accessibility of services: provision of baby changing facilities in female and male toilets

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[19] A touch point is where a customer (in this case, a person visiting the coast with a child or children) interacts with the relevant organisation / department / service.

Journey step	Possible MMO touch points	Possible touch points for other authorities
	cultural assets like piers.	Environment Agency • Assessing water quality and providing information about hazards. • Influence on access to fishing through rod licensing

The service mapping exercise shown above was used to design the interviews with local and national organisations, as described in Annex 3: Interviews with National and Regional Stakeholders.

Annex 3: Interviews with National and Regional Stakeholders

A3.1. Introduction

This annex provides detail on the interviews with national and regional stakeholders. The interviews were part of the third stage of the research and built on findings from the literature review and focus groups to further explore the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation and reasons for differential access by some socio-demographic groups.

This annex is organised as follows: approach to the interview research including sampling and recruitment strategy, interview schedule, and approach to analysis; key findings organised by theme/research question; and finally, the conclusions in relation to the Interview research questions, as well the gaps/limitations and areas for future research.

A3.2. Approach to the interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to explore the touch points identified in the focus group research (see Annex 2: Focus group report) and to look in greater depth at the interactions between people visiting the coast with children and the authorities and the ways in which this interaction could affect health and wellbeing benefits of these visits and tackle any of the reasons why they do not access the coast.

Interviews were conducted over the telephone and lasted between 35 and 60 minutes, depending on the detail of interviewees' answers.

A3.2.1. Recruitment strategy

The types of organisations and institutions approached for interview were those that have responsibility for things that influence visitors' access to and experience of the coast; for example through providing infrastructure, facilities, and services or through promotion or provision of events and education. The types of organisations approached therefore included national public bodies, local authorities (for example local district and county councils), coastal charities or NGOs, organisations working with parents and children (for example local and national family charities and organisations), and academic researchers.

A total of eight interviews were carried out, of which four were with individuals from national public bodies (MMO, Sport England, two from Natural England), two with individuals from local authorities (Tendring District Council and Swale Borough Council), and one each with an academic researcher and an individual from a coastal charity (the Royal National Lifeboat Institute). The interviews were conducted over a three week period in June 2019.

A3.2.2. Interview schedule

The interview questions covered the following topics and were tailored to the areas of responsibility and expertise of each interviewee:

1. How their organisation interacts with people visiting the coast for recreation with their children (directly, indirectly or virtually).
2. Reasons why people with children visit the coast for recreation, where they visit, what they might do during the visit.
3. Things that may occur during a typical visit by people with children to the coast that may significantly change the experience positively or negatively ('show stoppers').
4. Planning for and facilitating visits to the coast by people with children:
   a. To what extent their organisation considers interests and perspectives of people visiting the coast with children.
   b. Does their organisation differentiate between types of people with children and what are the particular needs of these people?
   c. What might encourage people with children to visit the coast more often?
5. The benefits and dis-benefits of coastal recreation for people with children.
6. What would help or enable people with children to use the coast more for recreation and also help to increase the health and wellbeing benefits they gain from this.

A3.2.3. Analysis

Notes were taken during the interviews which were then shared with the interviewee for them to make any amendments or clarifications. Qualitative analysis was then used to gather data from the interview notes under the different headings laid out below.

A3.3. Key findings

The following sections provide a summary of the discussions under the main headings covered.

A3.3.1. Specific interactions between the organisations interviewed and people visiting the coast for recreation with children

The two local authorities and RNLI primarily interact directly with people visiting the coast for recreation with children, whereas the MMO, Natural England, Sport England, and the academic researcher primarily have indirect and virtual interactions with people who visit the coast for recreation with children. The various ways that organisations currently interact with people visiting the coast for recreation with children at each of the 'Journey Steps' previously identified in this research are mapped out in Table A3.1.

Some examples of direct interactions that local authorities have specifically with people visiting the coast with children include providing free recreational equipment on beaches such as footballs and volleyball nets, providing events such as air shows, and implementing a wristband system on beaches that helps children from getting lost. Children wear coloured wristbands that are coded to the part of the beach where their parents are sitting; parents are also able to write their phone number on the bands for greater security. The two local councils that were interviewed had very different levels of services on offer and this appeared to be due to a difference in the amount of resources they had available. While all local

authorities have experienced reductions in their income, for one this has led to cut backs in some coastal recreational activities such as crazy golf.

Local authorities are also responsible for the general cleanliness and health and safety at their beaches, activities which directly affect the experiences of people visiting the coast with children through regular waste management services and organising beach clean-ups. They also maintain local roads and many footpaths and cycle paths, and have a role in managing bus services, all of which are essential for many visits to the coast, whether by public or private transport. Both the local authorities and the coastal charity interact directly with people with children to ensure and improve safety at the coast. Local councils work in partnership with coastal charities and organisations such as the RNLI, providing beach patrol stations and lifeboat stations that people can visit and learn more about. Both the charity and the local authorities also give educational talks and assemblies at school about safety at the coast and in the sea and facilitate school trips and beach tours where children and young people can learn about safety while visiting the beach.

A large proportion of the RNLI's efforts goes towards fundraising and the charity uses this as an opportunity to go out and interact with people in an educational capacity. The RNLI is well-known for its rescue operations at sea and on the coast, however the majority of the organisation's resources go towards preventative action through educational work. For example, the RNLI runs a Swim Safe Programme which teaches children how to swim and be safe in the sea. This scheme varies in availability depending on the region for example, it was operating in one of the two local authority areas although the other local authority interviewee said that they would like to see this in the future. Again this appeared to be an issue of funding and resources.

Local authorities and the RNLI provide information for visitors both online and at the coast. The RNLI has information and educational resources on its website such as videos and games aimed at different age groups; it also puts up signage about safety and flags to show which areas are safe for swimming, surfing etc. on the beach. As the bodies responsible for many of the services and facilities at the coast (e.g. toilets, waste collection services, etc) the local authorities interviewed put information on their websites about these facilities and services. They also mentioned using social media, such as Facebook, to interact with people looking for information about visiting the coast.

National bodies tend to interact more indirectly with people visiting the coast for recreation, promoting and monitoring the implementation of national policy while measures are taken on the ground by local actors. For example, Natural England is the public body responsible for implementing public right of access to the coast through the development of the England Coastal Path which aims to make all parts of the English coast freely accessible for most people. Interviewees pointed out that although Natural England is responsible for putting the path in place nationally, it is not currently within their remit to promote use of the coastal path and this is instead left to local authorities. However, Natural England does get involved in some national initiatives to promote the Coast Path, including a partnership with the MMO that aimed to encourage children and families to understand the marine environment and explore the Coastal Path using the 'Snail and the Whale' activity booklet based around a popular children's book.

Other national public bodies, such as Sport England, interact indirectly with people with children through funding programmes that encourage people to get active in England, for example a programme to get 700 disadvantaged young people in eight coastal communities active in sports[20]. This initiative is implemented through a model of partnership working between national funding bodies and local providers. The local authorities interviewed also said that they mobilise resources by working in partnership with organisations such as the RNLI or Wildlife Trust who may be responsible for delivering activities or services on the ground.

Activities to monitor access to and use of the coast, such as Natural England's MENE Survey, provide evidence to develop and support policy and initiatives to further support access. An interviewee from Natural England said that they have future ambitions for the MENE survey to engage more directly with young people to understand from them how they engage with the natural environment. They also mentioned research as part of the Living Coast programme that focuses specifically on the experiences of young people (but not people with children).

Table A3.1. Examples identified from the interviews of how organisations currently interact with people visiting the coast for recreation with children at each of the previously identified 'Journey Steps'.

Journey Step	Organisation and examples of current touch points/interactions with people with children
Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast	*Local Authorities* • Offer of attractions/events through information sources e.g. social media, organisations' websites • Give talks at schools and facilitate school trips to the beach to teach children about safety at the coast/in the sea • Provide information online about the quality of the environment, e.g. bathing water quality, blue flag awards etc. *Coastal Charities e.g. RNLI* • Online educational information about child safety at the coast and information about the services the charity provides at the coast e.g. which beaches are lifeguard supervised and when • Give talks and assemblies at school to educate children on safety at the coast/in the sea • RNLI Swim Safe scheme teaches children to swim/be safe in the sea *National public bodies e.g. Natural England, Environment Agency, Sport England* • Provide information about opportunities to access to the coast (e.g. the England Coastal Path)

[20] https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-features/news/2019/february/21/dame-kelly-holmes-trust-to-work-with-disadvantaged-young-people-in-eight-coastal-communities/

Journey Step	Organisation and examples of current touch points/interactions with people with children
	Schemes to encourage people (particularly families) to get active outdoors create awareness of opportunities for recreation in different places
Step 2: Get ready to go out	No touch point
Step 3: Find a place on the coast	*National Authorities* • Facilitate free access to the coast via e.g. the England Coastal Path • Snail and the Whale programme that promotes knowledge and use of the coastal path to families and people with children • Provide information about the quality of the environment, e.g. bathing water quality, blue flag awards etc. *Local Authorities* • Wristband system on beaches to keep children safe/prevent children from getting lost (Tendring District Council) • Transport strategy and management through contracting bus services and maintaining local roads, foot- and cycle paths • Keeping coastal places clean and free from litter • Provide information (signage) about the quality of the environment, e.g. bathing water quality, blue flag awards etc. *Coastal Charities e.g. the RNLI* • Provide signage and flags to inform people about danger risks
Step 4: Spending the day out	*Local Authorities* • Providing recreational equipment e.g. volleyball nets • Responsible for waste management services • Coordinate with the police over crime and anti-social behaviour management • Licence entertainment venues, food sales (restaurants, cafes, take-aways and pubs) and visitor attractions • Work in partnership with other organisations e.g. RNLI *Coast Charities e.g. the RNLI* • Provide lifeguard/lifesaving services • Allow the public to visit and interact with lifeboat stations and beach patrol stations • Use fundraising interactions as an opportunity to educate people about water safety • Operate rescues when people get into difficulty in the sea/at the coast
Step 5: Go home	No touch point

A3.3.2. How people with children access the coastal environment for recreation and what they access it for

Interviewees generally assumed visits to the coast made by people with children meant visits to beaches and seaside resorts rather than other types of coastal locations. Interviewees said that this was because they felt that beaches and traditional seaside resorts are generally more popular with people visiting the coast for recreation with children and that people with children are most likely to visit places where there is more to do for the children. Motivations for going to the coast were said to include relaxation, play, to socialise (and also de-socialise).

According to interviewees, common activities by people with children at the coast include building sandcastles, playing with family, relaxing on the beach, paddling and swimming, crabbing, throwing stones, and playing games such as football or volleyball.

It was pointed out that children's visits to the coast are determined by their parents and therefore activities will depend on parents' preferences, for example whether parents prefer to go walking or prefer to entertain children at a pier or amusement arcade. Additionally it was also noted that activities often revolve around keeping children entertained.

One interviewee suggested that there is a class divide between visits to seaside resorts and visits to quieter remote parts of the coast: people from more affluent middle classes are more likely to visit quieter remote coastal locations where they might have booked a holiday cottage for example. Whereas less affluent socioeconomic groups may be more likely to visit seaside resorts, particularly if they are relying on public transport as more rural coastal locations are often not accessible by public transport. However this was their personal observation and there is not currently evidence to support this.

Transport and ease of getting to the coast were mentioned repeatedly throughout the interviews and seemed to be significant determining factors in how and where people with children will visit the coast for recreation. This is discussed more in Section A3.3.4.

A3.3.3. Experiences and perceptions of quality and equity of this access.

Experiences and perceptions of the quality of access

Interviewees felt that there are parts of the coast that are less accessible for people with children. For example, one interviewee noted that areas of the coast that are not designated bathing water sites are less accessible for people with children as there is usually less parking and fewer facilities such as toilets.

In terms of the quality of the coastal environment, many coastal towns are struggling with multiple deprivation and local authorities often do not have the resources to maintain or upgrade facilities and infrastructure. One interviewee explained that their local authority has experienced cuts in budgets over a number of years, which has meant they have had to reduce spending on secondary recreational facilities, such as crazy golf on the coast. Another example given by interviewees is the lack of baby changing facilities in male toilets which is a problem for men visiting the coast with children, particularly if they are visiting on their own.

People with children are more likely to visit coastal locations that they perceive as being safer; therefore bathing beaches that are lifeguarded are generally more accessible for people with children. Interviewees did note however that people with children, particularly local families, will still visit non-lifeguarded beaches. Cliffs are commonly perceived as being more dangerous; according to interviewees, research has found that adults with children have the least positive recreational visits to cliff locations because they find them stressful.

One interviewee from a national body has worked on quality of natural environments and what quality means to people. This interviewee said that quality can mean different things to different people but generally refers to whether something is fit for purpose, for example, does the environment allow for what the person wants to do there? From research, their organisation found that people talk a lot about barriers to access related to the quality of the environment, including perceptions of danger, litter, and dogs on beaches.

Experiences and perceptions of equity of access
Interviewees generally considered visits to the beach or coast to be a relatively cheap day out for people with children compared to other options such as theme parks. A holiday at the UK coast is also considered to be cheaper and more accessible than a beach holiday abroad.

Living further away from the coast was identified by most interviewees as a key barrier to visiting the coast for recreation, but interviewees also recognised that equity of access issues can affect people who live in coastal areas. For example, coastal towns are often deprived areas and may have poor infrastructure and services. According to several interviewees, some children who live there may have never been to the beach despite living only a 5 or 10 minute walk away. One contributing factor identified by interviewees is the gentrification of seaside resorts, such as Brighton and Margate, which has led to the exclusion of less affluent local populations.

An interviewee from Natural England referred to research looking at reasons why young people from lower socio-economic groups visit the coast less frequently, which found that some young people feel unwelcome by adults. The same research identifies other barriers to children from low income areas visiting the beach, including parents not having time due to working long hours or working shifts and poor public transport or the high cost of public transport.

According to interviewees, people who have no education or experience of beach and coastal environments are more at risk in these environments. For example people who travel from inland locations or cities often bring inflatables to the beach, which are unsafe for use in the sea. An interviewee who works directly with people visiting the coast said that in places with cliffs, visitors often allow their children to climb on rocks or even climb with their children, unfamiliar with the risks. An unequal level of education about safety at the coast puts certain groups at greater risk. For example many interviewees spoke about the RNLI Swim Safe scheme (see Section A3.3.1.); however this scheme is not widely available in inland locations, and even some coastal areas miss out.

In terms of facilitating access by people with specific access issues, one local authority interviewee said that they provide facilities and services to make sure the beaches are accessible for different groups, for example beach wheelchairs for disabled visitors. They also provide accessible toilets for disabled people. The interviewee from the RNLI explained that part of their training as lifeguards is to learn who the vulnerable people are, for example children, disabled, or elderly people.

An interviewee who works on the Coastal Path said that it's important not to try to make all parts of the coast the same, instead it's about giving people the choice by providing information about what is available in each place. For example, not all parts of the Coastal Path will be accessible for disabled people but instead of pre-determining people's limitations and telling them where they should go, it is better to provide information about what they will find when they get to any particular part of the path and allow them to make their own decisions about where to go based on their own limitations.

Other equity issues, as noted earlier, relate to the lack of baby changing facilities in male toilets which makes it more difficult for men visiting the coast with small children, particularly if they are visiting on their own.

'Show stoppers': things that can significantly change an experience either positively or negatively
Interviewees gave several examples of events that may act as 'show stoppers', both positive and negative, for people with children visiting the coast for recreation. Overall interviewees thought that these were generally things that would be 'out of the ordinary' and whether they would act as 'show stoppers' would be dependent on the expectations of those visiting. One interviewee suggested that photos may play an important role in setting expectations; what are the differences between the event itself and the photo of the event that potentially rewrites the experience - do people remember the actual experience or the pictures they took?

In the most extreme case, interviewees felt that witnessing a serious incident, such as someone drowning, or having to be rescued themselves would certainly be a negative show stopper for people visiting the coast with children. However, some interviewees suggested that it is generally not one independent event that determines whether the experience is positive or negative but rather the overall experience, including the travel to and from the coast.

Things that interviewees felt could be positive show stoppers for people visiting the coast with children included contact with wildlife and biodiversity, helpful and welcoming staff at the beach, and dogs either being allowed or not allowed on beaches (depending on whether they have dogs themselves or are scared of dogs). Some interviewees noted that it can be simple things, for example watching jet skiers or planes flying overhead can be positive show stopping events for children who don't see this every day.

A3.3.4. Reasons for less frequent access to the coast for recreation, and whether these are common across different social groups

According to an interviewee who works with families, general issues for engaging in outdoor physical activity include concerns about safety, not knowing what the experience holds, not knowing where to go, and not understanding what's on offer.

Several interviewees felt that concerns about safety of children in coastal locations are a factor that stops people with children accessing the coast for recreation. As previously mentioned (Section A3.3.3.) those who have less understanding of coastal environments and safety at the coast are at greater risk; these are often people from inland locations.

Interviewees mentioned a lack of facilities at the coast or not knowing what facilities are available at the coast are barriers for people with children. For example, as good weather is not guaranteed, the lack of secondary facilities for things to do if it rains or not knowing what facilities there are can prevent people visiting the coast for recreation. Poor quality facilities such as dilapidated toilets or a lack of baby changing facilities, particularly in male toilets, are also reported by interviewees as barriers to access for people with children.

Some interviewees suggested that personal preference may play a role in why certain people don't visit the beach as often, for example some people just don't like the beach because they 'don't like getting sand in their sandwiches'. It was also felt that some people might prefer to visit other places for recreational visits with their children such as theme parks or the zoo. This seemed to be mentioned where coastal locations are further away or harder to get to. According to the academic researcher, most visits to the natural environment normally take place within 2km of the home.

Travel or transport logistics were described by several interviewees as reasons why people with children don't visit the coast for recreation as often. Parking and traffic when travelling to and from the coast are seen as significant problems. People with children can only visit the coast with their children during weekends and bank holidays, which are times when there are more crowds and traffic. Additionally, limited and inefficient public transport infrastructure in many coastal areas mean that some locations are inaccessible except by car. As previously mentioned, one interviewee believed this contributes to a class divide between visits to different types of coastal location.

Time pressure and cost were also recognised as issues by interviewees; as previously mentioned in Section A3.3.3. these barriers can disproportionately affect people from lower socioeconomic groups. Another issue mentioned by interviewees is the weather. This also relates to a lack of alternative options for recreation at the coast when the weather is bad.

Not all beaches allow dogs, which can be a barrier for people who want to visit with their dog. However some places do have beaches that have areas designated for dogs as well as areas where dogs aren't allowed.

A3.3.5. Dealing with factors limiting access to the coast for recreation

Interviewees spoke about a number of ways that some of the problems of access to the coast for recreation could be overcome, either through work that is currently being done (either by their own organisation or by other organisations they were aware of), or by future initiatives.

All interviewees felt that more could and should be done to provide information about what's available at the coast to encourage more people with children to visit. Providing more affordable events and activities, such as nature trips, was also suggested by interviewees. It was suggested that educational activities for children and families could be a way of overcoming some of the barriers to coastal recreation. Teaching people more about the coastal environment could improve safety and reduce the fear of the unknown. An example of a programme that encourages children to interact more with the natural environment is the National Trust's '50 things to do before you're 11$\frac{3}{4}$'; interviewees suggested that this could be applied to the coast.

Some organisations are already doing things that could be continued or expanded to help overcome problems related to poor education about coastal environments and safety at the coast. For example, talks and assemblies in schools teaching children about water safety and the natural environment. One interviewee made the point that the more children learn, the safer they'll be in the future and they will also feel more comfortable coming back to the coast as adults. An example given by an interviewee of a project that aims to engage children and young people with the marine and coastal environment is Kent Wildlife Trust's Guardians of the Deep project[21].

Providing information about the quality of the environment and bathing water quality was also suggested as a way to encourage more people to visit. One interviewee gave the example of an app launched by Surfers Against Sewage, called the Safer Seas app, that provides up to date information about the bathing water quality of beaches. The academic researcher mentioned research currently being undertaken in Europe to investigate what impact providing information on bathing water quality has on peoples' decision making about visiting coastal locations and their behaviours when they're there. According to some interviewees, however, some institutions such as the National Trust are not keen on putting signage on beaches as it impacts the natural beauty of the area. A large part of the coast is owned by the National Trust so this is an issue that needs to be resolved if more information about safety is to be provided in situ.

Promoting safety at the coast in schools and providing training about water safety for children and young people can also reduce concerns and encourage more people to take their children to the coast for recreation. Many interviewees recommended that teaching water safety (i.e. the RNLI Swim Safe scheme) is valuable everywhere, not just for coastal communities. However, the scheme is not provided everywhere, not even in all coastal areas (see Sections A3.3.1. and A3.3.3.). Similarly the provision of lifeguard supervision on beaches varies across the country and this is something that interviewees said encourages access for people with children. However, some

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[21] https://guardiansofthedeep.org/

interviewees noted that there is a misperception by some parents that because there are lifeguards present, they do not need to watch their children in the water. This is an educational issue and parents need to be aware that they are still responsible for their children even if there is a lifeguard present.

A few interviewees spoke in depth about the England Coastal Path. According to interviewees from Natural England, the coastal path aims to provide complete access to enable as many people as possible to access the coast; however the development of the coastal path doesn't specifically take into account the interests of people with children. Interviewees suggest that by giving people information about what's available at the coast it provides a choice, which could improve equity of access to different types of coastal location. For example, providing information about the coastal path at typical seaside resorts, lets people there is the option to walk half a mile down the path to experience a completely different coastal environment.

Interviewees believe that investing in better and more affordable public transport infrastructure in coastal regions is important in overcoming access barriers for visiting the coast for recreation. This is particularly relevant for addressing equity of access issues for lower socio-economic groups.

Time pressure was also reported by interviewees as a reason why people with children do not visit the coast as often. The academic researcher suggested that policies for a four day working week would be one way of overcoming this and said that there is evidence to support this.

A3.3.6. Perceived health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation

Interviewees were all aware of extensive health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation. In particular interviewees talked about the positive benefits of bluespace on mental health, the opportunity for more high quality socialising and family time than other settings, and how the coast is a stimulating environment for children. Interviewees who work directly with people visiting the coast with children said that they can see the physical excitement and enjoyment on peoples' faces, especially children who have travelled from inland locations who do not get to experience the coast as often.

Interviewees noted that not everyone is aware of the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation: this depends on education but also on parents. Children's recreational visits to the coast are largely determined by their parents. Some interviewees commented that for most people, the motivation for visiting the coast is probably not for health and wellbeing but more likely for relaxation, socialising, getting close to nature etc. The health and wellbeing benefits are therefore probably secondary or may not even be recognised.

Potential dis-benefits of coastal recreation for people with children
One interviewee said that poor bathing water quality and contaminated water streams from sewage system overflow can present a health hazard, particularly for vulnerable groups including children. The interviewee commented that parents or carers sometimes encourage children to play in water streams instead of the sea because they are worried about children's safety in the sea, without being aware of

the hazard of water contamination in these water sources. Streams that are fed by combined sewage overflows (CSOs) are full of contaminated water in heavy rain; heavy rain is associated with storms and winds which is also when people don't want children going in the sea.

Interviewees also mentioned the hygiene hazard of pollution in sand, where sewage contaminants collect in the sand that children play in. Interviewees said that this is has become an issue in countries like Portugal but is not widely recognised by the public in England. It was suggested that there has been unwillingness by the authorities to raise the issue because of fear of a public backlash. This is apparently a problem that has already been raised in other countries such as Portugal and there is evidence that the most vulnerable, including children, are most at risk. Interviewees feel this information would most likely change parents' decision making about visiting the beach for recreation with their children.

Another health dis-benefit identified by interviewees is the tendency for people to eat and drink unhealthy food during visits to the coast; for example, drinking alcohol, eating fish and chips or burgers and chips. Interviewees recognised that more needs to be done to promote healthy foods at the coast but also acknowledged that these foods are part of the tradition of visiting the seaside.

Issues of safety and risks of the water were also raised by interviewees as dis-benefits of coastal recreation for people with children. Interviewees emphasised drowning as a serious issue and something that needs to be managed all the time. The RNLI, which is responsible for provides lifeguards and lifeboats on some parts of the coast in England, only operates in some areas and only during school summer holidays (6 week period). There was mixed awareness about this scheme among interviewees and variations in its availability. Places that are more popular holiday destinations seem to have better provisions of lifeguarded beaches. One interviewee mentioned that 'locals' will often visit non-lifeguarded beaches away from the flags that demonstrate where it is safe to swim and this poses a hazard.

Other dis-benefits identified by interviewees included children getting lost on the beach causing distress for the child and the adult, and that the coast can be a relatively harsh environment with a greater risk of sun burn.

Promoting the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation
Interviewees proposed that more education about the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation, for example the positive effects of blue space, would encourage more people to visit the coast. Some suggested that more research and quantitative evidence would strengthen the argument for coastal recreation. There is currently research being done on the impacts of the Coastal Path on public health which predicts that the more people use the coast for active recreation, the more the health and wellbeing benefits will increase. One interviewee suggested that coastal recreation should be prescribed by the National Health Service.

Another way to enable more people to experience the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation is by making sure that the environment is good quality (i.e. fit for purpose). For example, some interviewees said that authorities need to address

issues with water quality and sewage systems; while much has been done already but there is much more to be done.

Again, providing better information and increasing awareness about things such as bathing water quality, sun safety and safety in the water were mentioned as ways of addressing these issues. Many interviewees spoke about working with schools to improve awareness and education about coastal environments and safety at the coast among children. This education will make the children safer and more likely to visit the coast as an adult. The academic researcher said that there is currently research being done on how exposure to coastal environments as a child affects attitudes and behaviours towards the sea/coast as an adult.

Interviewees also recognised that more needs to be done to encourage healthy eating during visits to the coast. Interviewees suggest that more can be done to encourage local food and drink venders to supply healthier food and drink options.

A3.4. Conclusions and Implications

A3.4.1. Main barriers and dis-benefits identified by interviewees in relation to each of the previously identified Journey Steps and how these can be overcome

It's important to note that all interviewees mainly talked about visits to beaches and seaside resorts; only a few mentioned other types of coastal locations.

Key barriers and dis-benefits to people with children visiting the coast for recreation identified by interviewees, and how organisations that interact with people visiting the coast, can help to overcome these are summarised in Table A3.2.

Table A3.2. Barriers to and dis-benefits of accessing the coast for recreation affecting people with children, mapped out for each of the previously identified 'Journey Steps'.

Journey Step	Barrier and disbenefits identified by interviewees	Overcoming these barriers and dis-benefits
Step 1: Deciding to go out to the coast	- Concerns about safety - Not knowing where to go - Not knowing what facilities and services are available at the coast - Fear of the unknown/lack of education about coastal environments, particularly the hazards and how to be safe - Personal preference e.g. dislike of sand - Time pressures - Unawareness of the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation	- Better education about safety - More areas that are lifeguard supervised - More promotion, e.g. of the Coastal Path - Better information about the facilities available at different locations - Better education in coastal/water safety e.g. RNLI Swim Safe scheme - Educating people about the variety of coastal environments - More quantitative evidence of the health and wellbeing benefits of coastal recreation

Journey Step	Barrier and disbenefits identified by interviewees	Overcoming these barriers and dis-benefits
Step 2: Getting ready to go out		
Step 3: Finding a place on the coast	• Lack of adequate public transport infrastructure to many parts of the coast • Lack of understanding about safety issues • Poor quality of the environment/ not knowing about the quality of the environment • Lack of lifeguard supervised areas/not knowing where they are	• More efficient and affordable public transport infrastructure in coastal areas • Better signage, flags about water safety etc. • Signage/information about environmental quality e.g. bathing water quality • More resources for/partnerships with organisations such as the RNLI that provide lifeguards
Step 4: Spend the day out	• Lack of adequate facilities e.g. no baby changing in male toilets • Lack of information about things to do at the coast • Lack of recreational facilities • Cost • Risk of drowning • Risk of children getting lost • Health and wellbeing dis-benefits associated with polluted sand and water streams • Health and wellbeing dis-benefits associated with consuming unhealthy food and drink • Risks of sun burn	• Upgrade facilities to improve quality and equity of access • Providing and promoting more affordable/education events and activities for people with children e.g. nature trips • Promote water safety in schools • Encourage people to visit lifeguard supervised areas of the coast. • Encourage food venders to sell healthy food and drinks • Promote sun safety/provide sun cream to people with children
Step 5: Go home	• Travel and transport logistics; poor public transport links, busy traffic.	• Invest in affordable and efficient public transport infrastructure

A3.4.2. Potential future touch points for organisations for overcoming identified barriers and dis-benefits

It was identified from the interviews that there are several areas of interaction or touch points where organisations can contribute to overcoming some of these barriers. These recommended touch points have been mapped out for each 'Journey

Step' in Table A3.3. The points at which organisations can have most interaction are Step 1: Deciding to go out to the coast, Step 3: Finding a place at the coast, and Step 4: Spending the day at the coast.

Table A3.3. Identifications of touch points where organisations can contribute to overcoming the identified barriers to and dis-benefits of coastal recreation for people with children mapped out for each of the previously identified 'Journey Steps'.

Journey Step	Touch points for overcoming barriers identified
Step 1: Decide to go out to the coast	*Local Authorities* • Offering more events and attractions for families/people with children; also better promotion of what is available. • Increased partnerships with organisations such as the RNLI to provide services such as the Swim Safe scheme. • Local authorities in inland locations should also provide schools/youth groups with education about safety at the coast. This might be through work with partners such as the RNLI. • Provide information about their partners' services e.g. lifeguard supervised beaches, educational talks and events, swimming training. *Coastal Charities e.g. RNLI* • Increase the cover of lifeguarded beaches. This will rely on funding opportunities. *National Authorities* • Provide quantitative evidence of the health and well-being benefits of coastal recreation.
Step 2: Get ready to go out	*Local Authorities* • Provide information about facilities and services on offer e.g. sports equipment, baby-changing facilities.
Step 3: Find a place on the coast	*National Authorities* • Provide free access to all parts of the coast through e.g. the England Coast Path. • Coordinate with local authorities to ensure promotion of the Coastal Path, particularly to people with children. • Cooperate with local authorities and coastal charities to ensure proper signage at coastal locations e.g. about safety, bathing water quality etc.
Step 4: Spending the day out	*Local Authorities* • Wider provision of recreational equipment, e.g. volleyball nets, at different parts of the coast. • Extension of wristband system to stop children getting lost to other beaches/coastal locations. • Promote and encourage food venders at the coast to sell more healthy food and drink options.

Journey Step	Touch points for overcoming barriers identified
	• Provision of baby changing facilities in both female and male toilets. *National Authorities* • Address issues of beach water stream contamination from sewage systems that leads to hygiene risks. • Address issue of pollution/ sewage contamination of sand at the coast.
Step 5: Go home	*National / Local Authorities* • Provide better transport infrastructure and promote improved bus services.
Across all steps	*National Authorities* • Provide evidence through research that contributes to understanding and overcoming the barriers to visiting the coast for recreation faced by people with children.

A3.4.3. Limitations and future research

Although we were able to conduct interviews with a fairly broad range of organisation types, we were unable to engage with any local or national family charities or organisations, e.g. Gingerbread, Family Lives etc. Although we reached out to these organisations, either due to the time restraints of the research or because they felt this research was not relevant to their area of work, we were unable to hold any interviews with this group. It would be beneficial for future research to target these organisations.

Due to the nature of work of some of the organisations interviewed or of the role of the individual interviewed, not all questions were able to be answered by all interviewees. For example, national bodies tend to interact more indirectly with people visiting the coast for recreation so were not able to provide evidence relating to the questions about direct interactions with people visiting the coast with children. Therefore some of the information provided in the interviews is anecdotal rather than evidence based.

Annex 4: Using Customer Journey Mapping as a technique for exploring experiences of visiting the coast for recreation

A4.1. Introduction

Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) is a technique which:

- Allows organisations to understand how customers define and experience services from their own point of view
- Exposes steps which hold part of the solution for streamlining the whole journey
- Helps to identify what needs to be done to simplify a particular part of the journey.

The technique was developed in the public sector but has also been used in government. The Government Civil Service website describes CJM as: "*a strategic tool to ensure every interaction a customer has with your organisation is as positive as it can be*" (https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/campaigns/customer-journey-mapping/). In England, the Government has used CJM to think through ways of improving women's experience of prison (Begley, H., undated). It has the potential to drive efficiencies as well as improving customer experience. It can reveal opportunities for innovation and improvement in that experience and acts as a tool to ensure that every interaction with the customer is as positive as possible.

The technique is typically used to map customers' journeys as they deal with a service provider (this could be a private company or Government) in a particular situation or when they want to complete a task. An individual or family considering, planning or making a visit to the coast for recreation is different from a typical 'customer' in several ways:

- The journey is not generally dependent on an institution or service provider: the individual or family will generally make the decision to visit / not visit the coast by themselves and will often not have any direct contact with institutions or service providers during the planning or the visit itself.
- There is no single or even main organisation or service provider that people deal with during this journey. They may deal with a number of different public, private or voluntary organisations on their journey.

Nevertheless, it was felt that this method would be useful in breaking down the experience of visiting the coast for recreation into meaningful steps, exploring the experience of the target group that this research is focusing on (adults with children) and identifying key points affecting overall satisfaction with the journey[22].

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[22] These are referred to as 'moments of truth' in the literature, but we have chosen to use the term 'show stoppers' which was more meaningful for members of the public participating in the research.

A4.2. Method and approach

Journey mapping has three main components:

- Customer experience mapping
- Mapping the system
- Measuring the experience (satisfaction mapping)

The method involved structuring the project focus group discussions around a set of proposed 'steps', in order to test whether these were meaningful for participants and to provide a basis for describing the elements of a typical journey. This allowed the field work to cover the first component of journey mapping: the customer's experience. Subsequent interviews with a selection of service providers and organisations working with people with children in the context of visits to the coast, contributed to the second component: mapping the system. The third component (satisfaction mapping) was also explored during the focus groups, to give a sense of where participants' satisfaction increased or diminished, rather than to provide a quantitative measure.

The journey to be mapped was defined as visits to the English coast for recreation by adults with children. Our hypothesis was that this journey would be seen as important by participants because it has a significant impact on customer satisfaction when it does occur. The experience also provides a significant opportunity for improvement.

We then created an inventory of 'touch points'. A touch point is where a customer interacts with the company, institution or service. Recognising that there are unlikely to be direct interactions between visitors to the coast and the MMO, we used points at which customers were likely to be interacting with any local institutions or services, on the basis that MMO has an influencing role and with a range of institutions like local authorities, the Environment Agency and Natural England. In defining the touch points, the focus is on activities relevant to the customer and that the customer actually wants to accomplish.

For coastal access, the touch points identified were:
- Decide to go out to the coast
- Get ready to go out (what to take and what you are going to do)
- Find a place on the coast
- Spend the day out
- Go home

A template was developed which showed these steps in a table which was completed with each focus group. The template is shown in Figure A4.1.

Figure A4.1. Customer Journey template for visits to the coast for recreation with children.

STEPS/ TOUCH POINTS	1.Decide to go to the coast	2.Get ready to go	3.Arrive at the coast	4.Spend a day out	5.Go home
WHAT HAPPENS					
SATISFACTION RATING +100 0 -100					
'SHOW STOPPERS'					

Participants in each focus group were first asked whether the steps shown covered the main process involved in visiting the coast with children. In all three groups they agreed. They were then invited to describe what happens at each of the steps. The descriptions covered a range of activities, many of which were not common to all participants. For example, parents with younger children had more to do at Step 2 because of the equipment and provisions needed. Income, lifestyle choices and personality also affected the activities described, with better-off adults setting off with few provisions and eating out; 'get up and go' people did less searching for information and visited different destinations, depending how the mood took them. Each different experience was recorded on a post it, rather than seeking to find common threads at this stage.

Once the group had fully described a touch point, they were invited to say how satisfied they felt that this point, using the scale of +100 to -100. Participants found the scale difficult to use and preferred to describe their emotional response at each step in qualitative terms ('very happy', 'a bit anxious', etc.) The facilitators distributed placed a marker at the point on the scale described. Where more than one participant made the same assessment of their level of satisfaction, only one marker was used, with the note-taker recording how many people had similar views.

Finally, at the end of the process, participants were asked to say which moments during the visit (if any) represented 'show stoppers', in either a positive sense

(experiences that made them want to visit again) or a negative sense (factors that put them off visiting the coast).

The customer journey maps from the three sessions were used to develop three personas:

- a low-income single parent living on the coast
- a working parent in a two-parent family living inland, with young children
- a working parent in a two-parent family living inland, with teenage children

The experiences attributed to each persona attempt to synthesise dominant narratives within the groups, rather than specific people.

The interviews with national and local institutions and organisations were used to map the 'system' of support for coastal recreation by people with children: the points at which individuals interact with institutions and services, either directly (e.g. visiting a beach where there is a lifeguard). The purpose was to identify links or dependencies between the work done by different organisations and institutions as well as any gaps in services or interactions, in order to suggest possible interventions to improve access (Annex 3: Interviews with National and Regional Stakeholders).

A4.3. References

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