

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2015.

For immediate release

## **Southend's RNLI Search And Rescue Hovercraft Launched To Join Search On River Medway**

**With Southend on sea's RNLI volunteer crews all tucked up in bed after a busy weekend of shouts, and preparing for the working week ahead, their pagers were again activated and the search and rescue hovercraft was launched from the inshore boathouse at 23.40hrs this Sunday evening.**

The hovercraft was tasked to assist Sheerness RNLI lifeboats and Medway/ Thames Coastguard approx. ten miles away at Stoke Creek on The River Medway to find three missing persons after a dinghy had earlier overturned.

The hovercraft arrived on scene, firstly picking up a member of Sheerness Lifeboat Crew to provide local knowledge of the area before starting the search.

The search and rescue helicopter from Wattisham had also arrived on scene to assist, locating and rescuing a female stuck in the mud. The helicopter landed at nearby playing fields and the casualty transferred to the Medway hospital.

The hovercraft started searching and was directed after shouts of help were heard by on shore search teams and lifeboat crews, to the B Ness jetty at Thamesport, now up on the mudflats due to the state of tide, where a father and child were.

Due to the amount of debris in the mud, the hovercraft was positioned some 35ft from the jetty and specialist mud mats were used to get to the casualties. A member of the hovercraft crew climbed the structure to assist the casualties and they were safely lowered down and put aboard the hovercraft.

The hovercraft made its way back across the mud to the water and the casualties were transferred to Sheerness's Trent lifeboat, to be taken back to the Sheerness Lifeboat Station and an awaiting ambulance to go to Medway Hospital..

With the hovercraft released from duty, Sheerness inshore lifeboat escorted the hovercraft safely out of the River Medway to make its way back to Southend arriving at approx. 02.10hrs, for a wash down and refuel and crews returning to bed around 3am.

Hovercraft commander Michael Whistler said "this is a good example of Southend's RNLI volunteer lifeboat crews working together with other emergency teams and our flank lifeboat stations at Sheerness. It is the second time this month we have been tasked to the Medway and shows the real benefits of having a search and rescue hovercraft based at Southend that can be used outside our normal area".

### **RNLI media contacts**

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- For enquiries outside normal business hours, contact the RNLI duty press officer on 01202 336789

**RNLI online:** For more information on the RNLI please visit [www.rnli.org.uk](http://www.rnli.org.uk). News releases and other media resources, including [RSS feeds](#), downloadable photos and video, are available at the RNLI [Press Centre](#).

**Key facts about the RNLI:** The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates over 230 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and has more than 140 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 137,000 lives.

Visit the RNLI's official [YouTube channel](#) for more films and follow our rescue stories on [Twitter](#).

A charity registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736).  
Charity number CHY 2678 in the Republic of Ireland.