

## Improving Outcomes for Seafarers and Fishers

We recognise that working at sea can be dangerous and cause unique disadvantages and challenges that are not present in other employment. This is why we fund welfare services that support seafarers and fishers which enable them to [Thrive](#). We ensure our funding support covers every stage of the seafaring journey - from first starting out on a seafaring career to beyond retirement.

Our aim is to use research, advocacy, campaigning and grant funding to make a positive difference to the working life of seafarers at sea, and on land. We aspire to make a positive impact by targeting our grant funding on 5 strategic outcomes which enable seafarers to achieve:

- Enhanced financial resilience
- Better working lives at sea
- Raised safety standards and practices
- Improved health & wellbeing
- Increased social justice

We refer to the organisations we fund as 'delivery partners' as they are on the frontline, directly delivering a service that we have funded.

This paper sets out what each outcome means and the type of organisations and services that are currently funded to support seafarers to achieve each outcome.

### Enhanced Financial Resilience

This outcome is about a seafarer having enough money to meet their needs. This may be achieved through a one off hardship grant to respond to an immediate crisis, or a regular ongoing grant payment received over an extended period of time. It can also be achieved through receiving advice and information about an employment contract and maritime labour laws. Advice and information about access to welfare benefits and support with debt, housing and other everyday problems also play a role. Supporting seafarers to increase their financial capability so they are able to better manage their money and understand financial choices also has an important role to play.

The Seafarers' Charity funds helplines and regular and hardship grant payments administered by delivery partners, as well as a Credit Union for fishing families – all of which help to enhance the financial resilience of seafarers.

The Seafarers' Charity's provides annual grant funding to support these helplines for seafarers and their families:

- [\*\*Seafarers' Advice & Information Line\*\*](#) (SAIL) is a freephone confidential Citizens Advice service for seafarers and their families. Our funding supports a team of trained advisers able to provide advice and help in respect of access to welfare benefits, debt problems, housing issues, immigration problems and consumer issues affecting UK residents. For those who are eligible, they can make applications to other maritime welfare charities for hardship grants. They also make referrals to Relate for seafarers whose personal relationship may benefit from relationship counselling (another service funded by The Seafarers' Charity for seafarers).
- [\*\*International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network\*\*](#) (ISWAN) provide [\*\*Seafarer Help\*\*](#) for international seafarers through a free, confidential, multilingual 24-hour helpline which is funded by The Seafarers' Charity. A team of multilingual trained advisers are able to give advice on employment and contract issues, problems on board and worries about family at home. They are trained in emotional support as well as being able to provide advice and information.

There is also a home visiting caseworker service for older seafarers which is funded via a grant to [\*\*Nautilus Welfare Fund\*\*](#). They receive an annual grant which enables a team of caseworkers located in six maritime hotspots in the UK to make home visits and carry out casework which support the financial and social care needs of older seafarers.

The Seafarers' Charity's provides annual grant funding to support grant payments direct to individual seafarers experiencing hardship. Individual grants for seafarers are administered and distributed through the following delivery partners:

- [\*\*International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network\*\*](#) (ISWAN) receive regular contributions towards their [\*\*Seafarers' Emergency Fund\*\*](#) to provide financial support to international seafarers and their families in crisis.
- [\*\*Shipwrecked Mariners' Society\*\*](#) provide regular bi-annual grant payments to over 70 retired seafarers and their partners who are living in the UK on a low income. Our grant funding helps to top up the charity's payments. An annual contribution is also made to support one off hardship grants for seafarers who do not otherwise meet Shipwrecked's eligibility criteria in respect of length of service.
- [\*\*Sailor's Children's Society\*\*](#) and [\*\*Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution\*\*](#) both receive an annual grant to support regular grants payments to the children and orphans of seafarers experiencing hardship.
- [\*\*The Fishermen's Mission\*\*](#) were awarded £200K in April 2020 to provide grants to fishers experiencing hardship as a consequence of Covid-19. At the same time an additional £50K was distributed to local fishermen's associations to enable them to award hardship grants to fishers in need.

Other funded initiatives to enhance the financial resilience of seafarers include:

- [The UK Maritime Anchor Fund](#) is a £200K grant fund that provides a holistic package of support for UK merchant seafarers impacted by COVID-19. It is accessed through SAIL and administered by [Seafarers' Hospital Society](#). The Fund recognises that when a seafarer is not able to earn their living from the sea, they may need help to access the welfare benefits they may be entitled to, as well as advice and support to tackle their debt problems and other related issues such as housing and payment of tax. This fund also offers access to free relationship counselling from [Relate](#) and free mental health counselling from [TogetherAll](#) in recognition of the impact financial problems may have on relationships and mental wellbeing.
- The [Fishing Animateur](#) project provides advice, guidance and support to complete funding applications to enable fishers to access government grants in order to modify and improve the safety of their vessels. This project helps to keep fishers safe and earning their income from the sea, rather than becoming reliant on welfare benefits or charitable grants.
- [Commsave Credit Union](#) has been funded to develop a bespoke range of financial services for commercial fishers and their families. In addition to a savings and affordable loan offer, the Credit Union also offers fishers a tax budgeting and bill payment account, loans to support access to government grants and a Bereavement Fund.
- **Financial Capability** training, resources and tools have been developed by The Seafarers' Charity to support the financial capability of fishing families.

## Better Working Lives at Sea

The Seafarers' Charity has a long history of providing grant funding to support better working lives at sea. Our grant funding of port welfare services is well developed with responsive grant funding of independent seafarer centres and significant annual grant awards to many well-known maritime welfare charities who provide maritime ministries at ports and quay side with ship visitors and chaplaincy services available to respond to the welfare needs of visiting seafarers to UK ports. Some of the delivery partners we fund to deliver this outcome include:

[Mission to Seafarers](#) receive an annual grant which supports their core costs of providing advocacy for merchant seafarers in need and delivering a ship visitor programme at some of the larger ports used by merchant ships. Their ship visitors bring both chaplaincy and practical support to seafarers in the form of mobile Wi-Fi and phone cards to enable communications, as well as shopping while seafarers are docked at port for short periods of time and without shore leave. In 2020 we also provided grant funding for the newly launched



Chat to a Chaplain digital communications programme which enables seafarers to access spiritual support wherever they are in the world. Funding was also provided to help them to ensure Flying Angel Seafarer Centres and transportation were Covid safe environments for seafarers.

[Stella Maris](#) receive an annual grant to support their core costs and their network of Catholic Chaplain ship visitors who support the welfare and spiritual needs of merchant seafarers and fishers. Similar to Mission to Seafarers, they support seafarers in an emergency such as abandonment and provide practical and spiritual support.

[Sailors' Society](#) received a grant specifically focused on supporting their port chaplaincy in Scottish ports in 2021.

[The Fishermen's Mission](#) receive an annual grant to support their core costs of providing emergency and practical help to fishers, as well as to support their network of superintendents based in fishing ports around the UK coast.

[Merchant Navy Welfare Board](#) lead Port Welfare Committees which aim to support co-operation between various welfare initiatives in local ports. They have also led a number of partnership projects that support maritime charities to deliver welfare support more efficiently to seafarers. The Seafarers' Charity does not directly fund MNWB but has partnered with MNWB on the following projects:

- In partnership with the Department for Trade and (MNWB) we have provided grant support for [MIFI devices](#) which are used by various maritime charities to provide seafarers with remote Wi-Fi access.
- In partnership with MNWB and others we also provide an annual grant to support the [Port Vehicle Replacement Programme](#) which funds the vehicles used by maritime charities to provide transportation from ships to seafarers' centres and into town.
- And we provided funding to support the [International Port Welfare Partnership](#) with MNWB and ISWAN which aims to spread good practice in port welfare committees internationally.

[Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest](#) (QVSR) receive an annual grant to support the core costs of providing Seafarers' Centres at the Port of Tilbury & DP World London Gateway, in Stanford-Le-Hope. Seafarer Centres provide a location off ship where seafarers can relax, socialise, shop and enjoy entertainment.

In addition to QVSR, Seafarers' Centres which have received grant awards from The Seafarers' Charity include Aberdeen Seafarers Centre, Felixstowe and Humber Seafarers Service. These tend to be occasional grants for specific request. Seafarer Centres had greater need for grant support when locked down during the coronavirus epidemic and unable to earn income from their usual shop and café sales.

Increasingly, we aspire to fund more digital welfare services which enable seafarers to have increased access to a range of maritime welfare services while at sea, and not just when visiting ports.

## **Raised Safety Standards and Practices**

Grant funding to support safety improvements is focused on these UK wide strategic initiatives:

- **[CHIRP Maritime](#)** is a Confidential Human factors Incidents Reporting Programme for the whole maritime sector. It enables seafarers on large container ships to small fishing vessels, as well as professional yachts and cruise ships to confidentially report dangerous practices and safety breaches which are then shared and investigated. A similar programme exists in respect of aviation but is funded by Government. Whereas CHIRP Maritime is reliant on charitable support and The Seafarers' Charity, along with other charities provides an annual grant to support CHIRP Maritime's core costs. CHIRP Maritime is a UK based charity and has a global focus.
- **[The SafetyFolder](#)** is a free online safety management system used by over 60% of UK fishing vessels. It enables fishing vessels to manage, keep track of and regularly update their onboard risk assessments which are an important part of keeping all onboard as safe as possible. The SafetyFolder is supported and recommended by the Maritime Coastguard Agency and all of the national fishing representative bodies. The Seafarers' Charity is partnering with The SafetyFolder to develop a national audit infrastructure to support safety and ILO 188 compliance.
- **[The Fathom Podcast](#)** is produced by the Cornish Fish Producers Organisation and is solely funded by The Seafarers' Charity. This is an innovative initiative that was developed by CFPO in response to our Fishing for A Future research report which identified the literacy needs of fishers. It aims to help support fishers to understand complex regulations and legal changes that they need to be aware of. Government has recognised the Fathom podcast as being a useful tool to speak directly with fishers. To date the Fisheries Minister and representatives from the Marine Management Organisation, Seafish and other bodies have all agreed to be interviewed on the podcast.

## **Improved Health and Wellbeing**

These are some of the services that we currently fund to support the health and wellbeing of seafarers

- [Relate](#) relationship counselling helps to support health and wellbeing. This funded service helps seafaring families to reconnect and re-establish their relationships which can be adversely affected when spending long periods of time apart.
- [Age UK Seafarer Links](#) are friendship calling circles for older seafarers to enable them to connect with people with similar experiences and reduce the loneliness of older age.
- [The Not Forgotten Association](#) provides activities and social events for veterans to help to prevent isolation and loneliness.
- [Safer Waves](#) provides email support to seafarers who have experienced sexual violence at sea.
- [Befrienders Worldwide](#) provide emotional support to seafarers contemplating suicide.

[SeaFit](#) was a substantial partnership programme funded by The Seafarers' Charity over a two-year period up to 2021. It arose from our Fishing for a Future research report. It was delivered in partnership between The Fishermen's Mission and Seafarers' Hospital Society. It brought dental, physical, mental health and physiotherapy services to the local quayside at fishing ports throughout the UK and made it easier for fishers to access health care. Some residual mental health, physiotherapy and health trainer services are continuing with funding support from Seafarers' Hospital Society and other local partners.

Our current strategy for funding health and wellbeing services prioritises services that support physical health. This is because there exist a number of stakeholders providing both free and paid for mental health awareness training courses – including industry and charity initiatives. There also exists [Togetherall](#) which is a free NHS counselling service offered by Seafarers' Hospital Society.

Our priority is to enable working age seafarers to return to working at sea as soon as possible, thereby preserving their pride and reducing reliance on the welfare state or charitable aid. The [Dreadnought](#) priority medical service at Guys & St Thomas Hospital Trust is an important component of this but is funded by Seafarers' Hospital Society and not The Seafarers' Charity.

For older retired seafarers there is a looming crisis in respect of their need for social care in a location and form that suits their personal choice. Local authority social care budgets are already under pressure and the cost of providing social care is increasing – presenting an increasing chasm between the amount paid by local authorities and the actual cost of care. Annually The Seafarers' Charity provides a large grant to “top up” the cost of care for seafarers on a low income who receive local authority funding at [Mariners Park](#) and [Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society](#). However, not all seafarers will wish to move to Mariners Park, Royal Alfred, [Care Ashore](#) or [QVSR](#). In partnership with others we are at the early stages of exploring the possibility of providing a “Social Care Subsidy Fund” that can be accessed by all seafarers in need who require social care and will be available to purchase the type of social care they need, and at the location they chose, including within their own home.



## Increased Social Justice

This includes access to services and outreach programmes, as well as equality, diversity and inclusivity. Upholding human rights, prevention of modern slavery, tackling labour exploitation, reducing violence and harassment in the workplace and supporting abandoned seafarers are all areas that we aim to develop further.

The most well-known charity in this space is [Human Rights at Sea](#) who we have funded since they were first established. In March 2021 a grant was awarded to Mission to Seafarers to support their work advocating for abandoned seafarers in the United Arab Emirates - a particular hot spot for abandoning seafarers.

## Our Impact

In summary, The Seafarers' Charity is the single largest grant funder of maritime welfare services in the UK.

Many of our grants are "hidden" as they support the core costs of organisations and are not in the forefront high profile branding of new projects. However, our annual grant awards to 20 maritime welfare charities provides reassurance and certainty which alleviates the stress of constantly seeking out new sources of grant funding and scaling up or down different welfare services dependent on the availability of new sources of grant funding.

In effect our grant awards support a number of jobs and services in the maritime welfare sector. Without The Seafarers' Charity's grant funding there would be a lot less welfare services supporting seafarers' financial resilience, safety, health and wellbeing, access to social justice and to enable them to enjoy better working lives at sea.