



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

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Department of Health and Social Care
The Rt Hon Maggie Throup MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

25 January 2022

Dear Maggie Throup,

Certification vaccination process for seafarers

I am writing to you on behalf of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB) to urge you to review the current Covid vaccination certification process which continues to inflict huge amounts of avoidable hardships on merchant seafarers.

Across the UK, there are 120 commercial ports and, at just two of these ports, nearly 15,000 seafarers have been vaccinated. While we congratulate the UK Government's role in facilitating this, seafarers are facing difficulties proving their vaccination status, as they are not NHS-registered and cannot use the official NHS Covid-19 App. Although seafarers receive a handwritten card that confirms a vaccination, there have been reports of them returning home and authorities not accepting this form of certification. This has negatively impacted crew changes and repatriation which, in turn, has caused seafarers to serve on vessels beyond their contracts which is denying them further employment opportunities.

At MNWB, the umbrella charity for the UK Merchant Navy & fishing fleets, we act as the UK National Seafarers' Welfare Board and operate a nationwide network of seafarers' welfare boards - known as Port Welfare Committees - covering the UK and Gibraltar. From the very outset of the pandemic, the Board launched a Covid-19 Seafarers' Welfare Working Group (SWWG) which brought together government departments, ship owners, trade unions, ports and a myriad of maritime charities where issues of vaccination certification were first raised.

Therefore, it is imperative that these concerns are acted upon and a form of vaccination certification for seafarers is created by UK Government that can be recognised by other States. With many countries in a similar position, it presents a golden opportunity for the UK to lead the way.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Rivers,
MNWB Chief Executive