

# SOLENT UNIVERSITY

## Identifying barriers and best practice for seafarers' centres in the UK

**A realist informed report for the Merchant Navy Welfare Board**



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

**By Dr Kate Pike and Dr Kev Harris of Solent University  
July 2018**

### **Executive summary**

On May 1st and 2nd 2018, the first UK Seafarers' Centres Conference for centre managers was run by the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB) in collaboration with Solent University. The inaugural conference was funded by MNWB and facilitated by Dr Kate Pike and Dr Kev Harris using a 'Realist Evaluation' approach which helped participants to focus on the varying contexts of their seafarers' centres, the key issues that challenge them and why this is happening. Finally, the areas of best practice amongst the centres were shared by participants. This allowed for the emergence of potential solutions, which are discussed in this report, along with other findings from the conference. Recommendations and scope for further research are also made to help develop sustainable and forward-looking seafarers' centres within the UK.

The report recognises the diversity of seafarers' centres within the UK and their primary aim to serve and do the best for seafarers.<sup>1</sup> By understanding how centres fulfil this mission and what works or does not work for them, the sharing of practice and collaborative thinking fostered by the conference means that participants will be better informed to consider the best way forward for their centres.

It should be recognised that there are many organisations that provide seafarers' welfare and they are all unique in their own way. The collaborative approach presented in this report hopes to foster mutual respect for all of the concerned organisations.

## **Structure of the report**

The structure of this report follows the flow and design of the conference workshops:

- Part 1: The background context for seafarers' centres and an outline of the conference.
- Part 2: Workshop 1 collaborative exercise: identifying barriers to best practice.
- Part 3: Workshop 2 collaborative exercise: identifying good practice.
- Part 4: Workshop 3 collaborative exercise: emerging themes for action/potential solutions.
- Part 5: Recommendations and further scope for research and evaluation.

## **Part 1: Context for seafarers' centres**

### **Introduction and background**

Seafarers' centres play a key role in the provision of 'front line' seafarers' welfare services in many busy UK ports. Although these facilities fulfil the same overall function of supporting seafarers, much like the ports they are located in, each one is unique and over time, they have evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of seafarers. UK centres are diverse; some are manned, some are unmanned and some may be both. Most centres depend on local committees, volunteers and transport to operate effectively; most are autonomous and a number are registered charities in their own right. All centres are members of the MNWB Port Welfare Committee support system.

During 2016 and 2017 the MNWB undertook a comprehensive review of a number of UK seafarers' centres operated by voluntary organisations. The review highlighted a number of factors that present traditional seafarers' centres with both challenges and opportunities if they are to continue to remain an integral part of seafarers' welfare provision. It also became clear that the vast majority of centres experience difficulties raising the funds necessary to cover their basic operating costs and need financial support of some kind. Indeed, some centres struggle to survive.

As the umbrella charity for the maritime charity sector, the MNWB exists to review, support and promote co-operation between organisations that provide welfare services to merchant seafarers and their dependants within the UK. Keen to support seafarers' centres where they are needed, the MNWB provided funds to hold its first UK Seafarers' Centre Conference, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2018, in collaboration with Solent University. Representatives from over 25 seafarers' centres across the UK, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands, in addition to staff from the main seafarers' welfare charities, met to tackle issues and problems relating to the operation of modern day manned and unmanned seafarers' centres.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'seafarers' used in this report, includes fishermen.

This report highlights the findings from the facilitated workshops and identifies the key barriers to achieving best practice, discusses why this is happening and offers some potential solutions and comments on the direction for the way forward for seafarers' centres.

### **Welfare provision under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006<sup>2</sup>**

It should be noted that the following legal instruments, under the MLC, 2006 exist for the protection of seafarers' welfare (ILO MLC, 2006, Standard A4.4). This requires members providing welfare facilities to ensure that they are **'available for the use of all seafarers, irrespective of nationality, race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion or social origin and irrespective of the flag state of the ship on which they are employed or engaged or work'**.

Member states have to **'promote the development of welfare facilities in appropriate ports** of the country and determine, after consultation with the shipowners' and seafarers' organizations concerned, which ports are to be regarded as appropriate'.

Members should **'encourage the establishment of welfare boards which shall regularly review welfare facilities and services to ensure that they are appropriate in the light of changes in the needs of seafarers** resulting from technical, operational and other developments in the shipping industry'. Finally, it should be noted that all signatories are required to report back to ILO under Article 22 on this welfare provision.

### **The 'realist evaluation' approach used during the conference**

The methodological design used a series of three realist informed workshops implemented over two days to capture the underlying mechanisms of how and why current outcomes are met, and then how and why can new pragmatic outcomes be captured.

A realist evaluation is a form of theory driven evaluation that uses the idea of a configuration of context (the background situation or environment) and the mechanism (the drivers of things that are happening), which amounts to the outcomes (results). This configuration aims to get to the heart of why things work or do not work and creates a programme theory which can, in this case, be tested via a variety of methods. Realist evaluation is used as a device to tease out particular areas in order to more fully understand their impact and causation (Jagosh et al, 2015<sup>3</sup>). Realist evaluations can be undertaken with small or large groups and with qualitative and/or quantitative data. This method was therefore considered highly relevant to the Merchant Navy Welfare Board in order to establish awareness of different UK seafarers' centres and the complexities associated with their effective operation. Running workshops within the networking conference enabled the realist evaluation approach to be mobilised in a collaborative way, whereby all stakeholders were involved and could express their views. These views make up the majority of this report and therefore highlight many varying ideas and opinions.

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<sup>2</sup> Gov.UK, Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006 [online]. Available from: [www.gov.uk/seafarer-working-and-living-rights/maritime-labour-convention](http://www.gov.uk/seafarer-working-and-living-rights/maritime-labour-convention) [Accessed 29/06/18].

<sup>3</sup> Jagosh, J., P. Bush, J. Salsberg, A. Macaulay, T. Greenhalgh, G. Wong, M. Cargo, L. Green, C. Herbert and P. Pluye. A realist evaluation of community-based participatory research: partnership synergy, trust building and related ripple effect. *BMC Public Health* 2015 15:725.

## Part 2: Workshop 1 collaborative exercise: identifying barriers to best practice

The participants were guided through a process of identifying the context and characteristics of their seafarers' centres. This helped to set the scene against identifying barriers to enabling best practice of running centres and explaining why these unfold. The configuration of the table below represents the realist approach that enabled this exercise. Some quotes taken directly from the conference have been used to illustrate certain points.

*The following points were made by the conference participants. The points vary depending on which port/location the centre is based and the available access to welfare facilities in this location.*

<b>Communication</b>		
<i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i>	<i>Barriers to best practice identified</i>	<i>Why do these barriers unfold?</i>
Seafarers, above most things, like to use good quality Wi-Fi to access computers, phones (internal/external to centres) and other technologies to contact their family and friends.	Some centres feel they need to charge for Wi-Fi as it is expensive to install and maintain.  Some centre staff need help in making the best decisions about media providers or other areas outside their daily expertise.	Choosing an appropriate, good quality internet provider can be an issue.  Seafarers want to have access to phone top up out of hours.
The lack of good quality Wi-Fi (or reliable communication mechanisms) on board/out of range at sea.	Seafarers that are not always able to use social media while they are at sea are even more reliant on seafarers' centres to provide access to these facilities 24/7 when they come ashore.	Difference of opinion exists within shipping companies over whether access to Wi-Fi at sea is supportive or detrimental to seafarers.
Seafarers requiring reliable and fast broadband.  Some staff are not particularly IT literate.	Centres unable to afford faster broadband.  Poor experiences of broadband because of slow speed.  Unable to solve IT problems.	New technology takes money, planning and strategy.  E.g. faster downloads now expected (streaming movies), increased experience required to operate IT systems and technology.  Older volunteers are sometimes not very technology literate.
Seafarers' centres need VHF radios to help them communicate with visiting ships.	They cannot communicate with vessels directly without them.  Port permission and VHF training would be required.	If centres can communicate directly with visiting vessel it will help to raise awareness of their facilities.
Seafarer centre staff do not often get the opportunity to speak to and share ideas about their work. This is important to them.	Lack of sharing of good ideas between centres.	Lack of opportunities to connect with and share knowledge with other staff from centres around the UK.

<b>Seafarers</b>		
<i><b>Environments and characteristics of centres</b></i>	<i><b>Barriers to best practice identified</b></i>	<i><b>Why do these barriers unfold?</b></i>
Seafarers sometimes lack time to get off the ship when it is in port.	Seafarers are sometimes unable to visit the seafarers' centres when they are in port.	Ship turnaround times in ports are much faster these days, with less time available ashore.
Centres want to put the seafarers at the heart of everything that they do.	It is not always clear what the seafarer want.	Centre staff do not always have the time or expertise to sit down and talk to seafarers about their needs. This may be especially the case if the seafarers have complex issues or are being treated badly at sea.
Some centres ban alcohol or have restrictions on what seafarers can do when they visit a centre.	Seafarers can sometimes feel like they are being treated like children.	With many different people making decisions about what seafarers are allowed to do when they visit a centre, there is a danger that the seafarer can feel like they have no responsibility.
There are many seafarers of different nationalities using seafarers' centres.	Communication challenges presented by seafarers with non-English first languages.	Multi-cultural crews are now the norm, with Filipinos being in the majority.
<b>Access</b>		
<i><b>Environments and characteristics of centres</b></i>	<i><b>Barriers to best practice identified</b></i>	<i><b>Why do these barriers unfold?</b></i>
Some seafarers' centres are either based outside of the port or can be located in the port but at some distance from the city or town centre.	Seafarers need and want 365/24/7 access to centres.  Seafarers cannot always access local amenities.  Some centres wanting to increase their footfall.	Increased port security. Centres are sometimes located outside the port.  Ships berthing outside 9-5 working hours.  Lack of availability of volunteers.  Ship visitors bypassing centres.
Some centres have to be locked out of hours, particularly if they are outside the port.	Not all seafarers have access to centres 24/7.	Due to security risks and lack of people to staff centres, some will simply close when staff and volunteers are not available to man them.
Transport from the ship to centres and the locality is very important to seafarers. "Quick chill time".	Seafarers value their short time spent away from the ship when they are in port.	Less and less time is spent in ports. Financial constraints contributing to lack of facilities and resources e.g. full-time transport.

<p>Many drivers taking seafarers from the ship to the centre and vice versa are volunteers.</p> <p>Many seafarers want to go shopping and need reliable transport to do so.</p>	<p>There are often shortages of drivers from ship to the centre.</p>	<p>Volunteers may not want to work anti-social hours which is not always compatible to the arrival of ships which can be at any time, day or night.</p> <p>Volunteers tend to be older and can sometimes have issues getting vehicle insurance.</p>
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### Community engagement/centre awareness

<i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i>	<i>Barriers to best practice identified</i>	<i>Why do these barriers unfold?</i>
<p>Seafarers want to feel welcomed and that they are in a home from home environment.</p>	<p>Seafarers are not always given the warmest welcome at centre.</p>	<p>Lack of 24/7 access to centre. Lack of staff and volunteers. Lack of funds.</p> <p>“Not always easy with a dozen different people, often speaking different languages, coming in and out of the centres”.</p>
<p>Some centres need basic maintenance.</p>	<p>There is a lack of available funds to adequately maintain some seafarers’ centres.</p> <p>Many centres are outdated.</p>	<p>Maintaining seafarers’ centres is important to create a welcoming ‘home from home’ atmosphere and this is not always achieved, often due to lack of funding.</p>
<p>Ships are arriving in port at different times.</p>	<p>Space issues can sometimes occur in accommodating all the seafarers who wish to visit a centre.</p>	<p>If many ships arrive at similar times, this can create unpredictability in the number of seafarers wanting to use the centre and will have an impact on capacity.</p>
<p>Some centres have issues keeping or increasing footfall.</p>	<p>“If the ships are out, the centre is empty”.</p>	<p>Some centres only have seafarers to visit them and no one from outside that community is visiting.</p>
<p>Some centres have shops and sell basic provisions, sim cards/top ups, clothes and even souvenirs.</p> <p>Not all centres can keep a good stock in their shops.</p> <p>Other seafarers wanting to have some of their own ‘home’ foods available to buy in the centre shop (if there is one).</p>	<p>Some items for sale can be too costly.</p> <p>Finding the best price for stock can be time consuming.</p> <p>Seafarers would like to be able to buy souvenirs.</p>	<p>Lack of affordable stock is an issue often caused by low sales.</p> <p>Minimum orders can often be too expensive for centres with low turnover.</p> <p>Sourcing the best priced products can be difficult with minimal staff and volunteer time.</p>
<p>Some centres do not always have the facilities for seafarers to send money home or to exchange currency.</p>	<p>Seafarers often need access to a money exchange or to send money home.</p>	<p>This lack of resource is usually due to funding issues.</p>

<b>Well-being/mental health</b>		
<b><i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i></b>	<b><i>Barriers to best practice identified</i></b>	<b><i>Why do these barriers unfold?</i></b>
When seafarers do get medical appointments, they cannot always attend them.	Difficulty for seafarers getting to and from medical appointments.	Lack of readily available transport to take seafarers to medical appointments.
It was suggested that some seafarers are spending too much time on IT/tablets.	Some centre staff have concerns that social media is having a detrimental effect on seafarers.	Possible lack of leadership, expertise and interest in this area.
Seafarers need and want outside spaces to visit when away from their ship. The change of environment can be beneficial to them.	Seafarers do not always have access to an outside space when in the port.	Some centres are lacking in outside spaces. This maybe a funding issue or may point to lack of collaboration with the port authorities, who may be able to assign un-used outside space to a centre.
Activity and engagement beyond the seafarers' family and friends should be encouraged.	Some centre staff feel that a wider variety of activities would be better for the seafarers.	Seafarers tend to prioritise engagement with their friends and families online when they are ashore.
There are cases of poor treatment of crews and bad conditions working conditions.  Reluctance of some ship owners' representatives to support crews.	Centre staff may face challenging situations with seafarers in helping them open up or seek help.	More resources are required to train centre staff to identify and assist seafarers who have had poor treatment or who are feeling low.
Seafarers can use the centres as a way of switching off from the industrial, on board ship environment for a while.	Seafarers spend most of their time on board a ship.	It is important for seafarers to spend time in a different environment away from the ship when they have time off.
<b>Staff and volunteers</b>		
<b><i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i></b>	<b><i>Barriers to best practice identified</i></b>	<b><i>Why do these barriers unfold?</i></b>
More volunteers are required at many centres. Those identified included volunteers from varying nationalities, gender diverse and of a younger age demographic.	Lack of diversity amongst staff and volunteers.	<p>"It is hard to be a volunteer these days – there are too many regulations and bureaucracy".</p> <p>Ageing volunteers are often recruited, sometimes with limited expertise or having less access to technology. Many volunteers are retired people (who are time rich compared to others still in the work force).</p>

<b>Ecumenical/pastoral</b>		
<i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i>	<i>Barriers to best practice identified</i>	<i>Why do these barriers unfold?</i>
Different societies visit ships.	Duplicate visiting on board ships from multi-faith welfare providers can occur.	Multi-faith welfare providers are not always working collaboratively together and coordinating work.
Some centres reported personality clashes between people and welfare providers.	Personality clashes can cause an uneasy atmosphere, which is not conducive to creating the 'warm, friendly environment' that seafarers want to experience.	Lack of collaborative working practices and training to fully understand the viewpoints of others.
Seafarers require pastoral support on board ships.	Sometimes ships visits are hard to facilitate.	This could be due to lack of volunteers to undertake this.  Additionally, with the introduction of the ISPS code, the chaplains and the ship welfare visitors can find it difficult to board ships due to the bureaucracy involved.
Seafarers can be offered a range of religious services.	Limited access to outside churches.	Lack of transport and funding.
<b>Governance</b>		
<i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i>	<i>Barriers to best practice identified</i>	<i>Why do these barriers unfold?</i>
There are numerous different societies that help to 'look after' seafarers.	Duplication in roles and wasted resources.	There is a lack of a central point of contact for seafarers when they visit a port.

### **Summary of workshop 1**

The first workshop, as depicted by the table above, has clearly articulated the barriers to best practice. The 'realist' nature of the workshop was also able to identify why these barriers occur.

### **Key barriers facing seafarers' centres**

It is difficult for some centres to provide all of the elements highlighted in the 'environments and characteristics of the centres' section of the table above. Many restrictions faced by centres can be attributed to lack of space, lack of funding, lack of volunteers and lack of awareness of the centre by the local community (both maritime and public) and the seafarers themselves.

The key areas where barriers to best practice were identified included: communications, addressing seafarers' needs, access to the centres (particularly on a 24/7 basis) and local port/city, community engagement/centre awareness, the centre environment, well-being/mental health, staff and volunteers, ecumenical/pastoral and governance.



### Part 3: Workshop 2 collaborative exercise: identifying good practice within centres

Following a close inspection of the barriers that seafarers' centres face, this second workshop aimed to collaboratively identify best practice in their own centres whilst exploring the context behind it and the reasons why best practice was achievable. The workshop followed the same format as the previous session.

*The following points were made by the conference participants. The points vary depending on which port/ location the centre is based and the available access to welfare facilities in this location.*

<b>Centre staff and volunteers</b>		
<b><i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i></b>	<b><i>What is done well?</i></b>	<b><i>Why do we do this well? And why do it well?</i></b>
It is in the employee culture to always welcome seafarers to the centre. Caring, sympathetic people working at centres.  Promoting a welcoming ethos at the centre.	Seafarers feel welcomed and at home at the centre.	Recruiting only people with the right mindset; those who really care about seafarers.  "Putting the seafarers' first".
Decisions need to be made quickly about seafarers' needs.	Fast decisions allow changes to be made quickly and to have more impact.	When making decisions about seafarers it is important to have sole responsibility sitting with one society/organisation.
The centres need to be able to respond quickly and be innovative and proactive.	Being adaptive and flexible as a centre.	There is a need for organisations that are agile and flexible. Being able to respond to changes as they happen is really important to the long-term sustainability of a centre.
"Making the seafarer the top priority, everything else can wait".	Providing for the seafarer's needs and wants.	The centre staff appreciate the value of providing for the seafarer. This is the business priority.
<b>Raising awareness</b>		
<b><i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i></b>	<b><i>What is done well?</i></b>	<b><i>Why do we do this well? And why do it well?</i></b>
Visibility of the work that they are doing raising awareness.	Getting schools involved.	Recognition that their beneficiaries are a hidden workforce. (The centre staff and chaplains). A more holistic approach taken as a way of dealing with this.
The more 'buy in' from the local community the better.	Engaging with the local community (both maritime and public sector) through events held at the centre.	Engagement between the centre and the local community promotes awareness of the centre and its mission and provides the opportunity to generate a better understanding for support.
Raising awareness of seafarers' centres is very important.	"There is community involvement in everything we do to increase the 'buy in' factor".	Increase publicity of centres using all suitable media.  Helps raise essential funding.

<b>Ecumenical/pastoral</b>		
<b><i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i></b>	<b><i>What is done well?</i></b>	<b><i>Why do we do this well? And why do it well?</i></b>
Seafarers are offered a range of welfare and chaplaincy services.	Chaplaincy service provided by port chaplains and a dedicated team of ship visitors on board vessels and in the centre.	Appropriate professional advice regarding interfaith working.
Seafarers are offered a range of interfaith services.	They want to get local churches as involved as possible	Engage with local church leaders. Developing multi-faith relationships.
Counselling available at the centre.	Seafarers are offered a range of support and welfare services.	In particular, chaplains give pastoral support, counselling, spiritual and liturgical support.
<b>Seafarers</b>		
<b><i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i></b>	<b><i>What is done well?</i></b>	<b><i>Why do we do this well? And why do it well?</i></b>
Seafarers are given the time and the opportunity to speak and are listened to.	The seafarers feel listened to and valued.	“We don’t know what they [the seafarers] are bringing in with them. If they fall out with someone on board, where can they go? There is nowhere to hide onboard a vessel and often the centre is the only place where the seafarer can bring their issues”.
Seafarers want a home away from home.	Providing a warm welcome and making the centre comfortable, available and attractive.	Providing a ‘home from home’ for the seafarers.
Seafarers will treat a centre with respect if they are trusted to look after it.	Give the seafarers ownership of the centres.	In the main, if trust is engendered with the seafarers using the centre they will treat the centre as their own and look after it.
Protecting seafarers’ rights.	Looking after seafarers’ rights at the local level. It should also allow people to respond higher up the chain in terms of reporting if they see something that shouldn’t be happening.	Relationships with port authorities and how the MLC has helped with that.
Time constraints often mean that many seafarers will not be able to leave the ship.	A combination of ship visiting and Centre provision is a good supportive option for seafarers with potential time constraints.	A coordinated approach to seafarers’ welfare provided a more inclusive and supportive environment for the seafarer.
Trusting the seafarers, even when there isn’t a member of staff present, particularly in centres that provide a dedicated unmanned area available on a 24/7 basis.	Trust of individual working practices.  Use of CCTV and coded security locks.	Create an environment of trust at every level.  Where possible section off a secure area of centres that can be accessed on a 24/7 basis.

<b>Governance</b>		
<b><i>Environments and characteristics of centres</i></b>	<b><i>What is done well?</i></b>	<b><i>Why do we do this well? And why do it well?</i></b>
Centres need to be prepared for the future.	Succession planning/transparency of roles.	A strong board and governance are required.
Centres need to be ready for changes and able to adapt.	Making sure we have organisations that are agile and can respond to the needs that are being raised by the centre staff.	Keeping up with future business trends.  Keeping up to date with innovations, legislation and technologies that can assist progress and development of centres.
It is a multicultural and global community.	Harnessing the role of the community in supporting the seafarers' centres through engagement.	Engage with the local community and break down barriers between the local community and the port.

## **Summary of workshop 2**

The key themes to emerge from best practice include; centre staff and volunteers, raising awareness, ecumenical/pastoral, seafarers and strong governance.

Seafarers are looking for a 'home from home' environment when they visit a seafarers' centre and it is important that there are support services and good facilities in place to facilitate this environment.

## **Key areas of best practice**

- A coordinated combination of 24/7 access and ship visits.
- Treating centres individually, 'one model does not fit all'.
- Engender trust in the relationship with seafarers and put them first.
- Listening and responding to the seafarers.
- Creating a 'home away from home'.
- Appropriate professional advice regarding interfaith working.
- Good governance.

## **Part 4: Workshop 3 collaborative exercise: emerging themes for action/potential solutions**

The realist design of the workshops has allowed some specific and emerging areas for action to be identified and in some cases offers practical suggestions for achieving this. The ideas are drawn from all three workshops. It is recognised that funding is a requirement to achieving some of these recommendations and that not all actions will be relevant to all centres.

### **Emerging themes for action: (and some potential solutions)**

*Some of the following points were made by the conference participants and some were ideas made by the facilitators based on the conference discussions. The areas for action vary depending on which port/location the centre is based and the available access to welfare facilities in this location. Note: Some cross-over of the themes below was inevitable.*

## **Communications**

- 1) Technology and its ability to change working environments and practice, is constantly changing and adapting. There is a need for centre managers to keep an eye on the future so that decisions can be made proactively, rather than reactively when they are likely to have less impact. New technologies can present new opportunities to use different communication methods such as: WhatsApp, Skype and others. These can offer cheaper, faster and sometime easier ways of communicating for seafarers as well as centre managers. Voluntary organisations and the MNWB could consider approaching corporates for sponsorship of Wi-Fi provision from providers such as: BT, Apple, Samsung and Walmart, for example. Linking this with a media campaign and education tool would be a powerful mechanism to show the people of Britain how their goods get onto the shelves (being transported by ship around the world) and would also help to raise awareness of the value of seafarers and their need for good welfare provision when they visit port.
- 2) Clearly, keeping up with technology does not come free and obtaining additional funds in order to secure better or new facilities was highlighted, with examples of funding for better Wi-Fi/fibre optic facilities (see Fundraising section). It may be useful to consider the use of an App or volunteer survey administered every 6 months to ensure that the momentum of good communication continues. The seafarer must come first, but those providing the service deserve equal consideration and should be supported in order to maintain 'goodwill'. It was suggested that voluntary organisations and the MNWB could be instrumental in providing research and advice on how to get the best deals when it comes to communication mechanisms. Finding deals on sim cards was mentioned as this is time consuming and can sometimes be a complex area for centre managers to get involved with.
- 3) Communication with non-national seafarers, where English was not their first language, was an issue common to many centres. This again points to the need for more culturally diverse centre staff and volunteers. Google and Siri Translate were mentioned as a helpful aid enabling some centre staff to talk to foreign seafarers. Access to 'Language Line' was also discussed. There are also plenty of free 'translate' Apps available.
- 4) There was a suggestion to create an on-line directory of ideas and facilities of organisations that might be able to help and support seafarers' centres (see Seafarers' well-being and mental health).
- 5) Discussion of the development of a single referral web platform for all information on seafarers' welfare in port, particularly all facilities available at centres was considered helpful.

## **Fundraising**

- 1) Thought should be given as to where to best source certain products from. Corporates and local businesses could be approached for donations, linking into community engagement and the need to build relationships with and promote awareness of the centres to the local community.
- 2) Increasing revenue through more targeted sales in centres with shops. For example, thinking about the target audience using the shops, what these people might need and what nationality they are. By understanding the target audience more thoroughly, it is likely to mean the seafarers have access to the products they want and need and that revenue from the sale of these items may increase.

## **Seafarers' well-being and mental health**

- 1) Seafarers are the central focus of all the seafarers' centres. Putting them first, providing a warm welcome and spending time talking to them is vital to understanding their individual needs and to the success of any centre.

- 2) There should be an understanding of the different requirements of seafarers with regards to their cultural differences e.g. Filipinos particularly wanting a home from home environment and Europeans more likely to want to visit local shops and pubs. This also highlights a need for more culturally aware and culturally diverse staff and volunteers working within the centres.
- 3) There were many discussions about the need for an App that seafarers can access before they come into port to show particular facilities within that location, that can be downloadable on and off line. This would be a huge cross-organisational piece of work. An App that would also give the seafarers the ability to seek support while they are at sea (if they cannot leave the ship in port). Existing technology specific to seafarers' welfare in ports was recognised; such as the Sailor's Society – Wellness at sea App<sup>4</sup>, and the ITF Seafarer's Trust and ISWAN's Shore Leave App<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, linking up with MIND<sup>6</sup>, The Big White Wall<sup>7</sup> and the Samaritans<sup>8</sup> could provide cross-organisation support. It may also be worth considering talking with The Princes Trust, Mosaic<sup>9</sup> for best practice, support and training. A link to these welfare providers from a centre's website (if available) could be beneficial.
- 4) Perhaps highlight the connection between mental health and well-being with increased connectivity, through access to family and friends and shore welfare support. However, some would argue that Wi-Fi has increased isolation and safety issues related to fatigue where crew stay up all night to get the right signal and use their phones in port, are distracting and a compromise to safe practice.
- 5) When considering medical resources, this should cover the offer of a GP service to seafarers as well as dentistry. (Fishermen can register temporarily with a GP but follow-on treatment is still an issue). Seafarers often wait to have medical issues or dentistry issues until they come back to work because it is free. Section 4.2 in the MLC 2006 discusses the Shipowners' liability to the seafarer in times of medical issues. Transport costs to and from the medical appointment should be covered by the shipping company or cash can potentially be issued on board by the Master. This would also be dependent on the seafarer's contract.
- 6) Bike rentals available in ports may help to promote health, along the lines of a 'Boris Bike' scheme, with key codes at ports for access to this.
- 7) Contact could be made with sports groups and organisations in the locality to ask for their engagement with the centres and seafarers.

### **Access/transport**

- 1) Some centres are using taxis to move seafarers around if there are not enough available drivers. Others ask the chaplains to help (and many are already doing so).
- 2) Discussion with terminal owners at the port could be instrumental in providing better access for seafarers to the services they need within the port. This again highlights the need for better engagement with the port authorities.
- 3) Bike rentals were suggested as one way to help seafarers with access to and from centres. However, this would require additional facilities and a coordinated effort of resources.
- 4) Another recommendation was the provision of free transport from the centre and city to and from berths, which could be in the form of a dedicated bus paid for by the port. Local councils could perhaps be approached for their input as helping seafarers to access the local facilities may increase the potential retail spend in the town or particular outlets.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://impa.net/news/article/sailors-society-launches-wellness-at-sea-app-for-seafarers>

<sup>5</sup> [www.seafarerstrust.org/apps](http://www.seafarerstrust.org/apps)

<sup>6</sup> [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

<sup>7</sup> [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)

<sup>8</sup> [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

<sup>9</sup> [www.mosaicnetwork.co.uk](http://www.mosaicnetwork.co.uk)

- 5) Giving seafarers the key code to restricted areas of centres allows them access 24/7. This has to work on a trust basis and there were good examples discussed during the conference where this has worked well e.g. in the Tilbury centre. Co-ordination with ports for berthing timetables and contact in times of delay would be required. Peak times of day under a shift plan may be more viable but would need co-ordination. This suggestion would have to be incorporated in a volunteer job description to make sure people knew what may be required. Different times of year and weather periods may have different demands.
- 6) Electronic signs about entrance information and opening times could be displayed on the centre door. A media light box displaying a location and opening times in the port, perhaps on a freight building or in a departure lounge, might also help raise awareness of the centre.

#### **Centre staff and volunteers**

- 1) Cultural awareness training was suggested for staff and volunteers to enable them to relate to and support multi-cultural crews better. Other training suggestions discussed were about the value and mission of the centres themselves to better inform staff and to help them focus on the key elements of the job.
- 2) Selective recruitment of staff and volunteers who have the 'right mind set' and who really care for seafarers, was suggested. The possibility of using recruitment advisors to help with this requirement was recommended.
- 3) Following the above point, better recruitment of volunteers to ensure that cultural diversity and a more inclusive mix of gender and age demographics was highlighted. This was seen as a vital part of maintaining a good and appropriate support service for seafarers.
- 4) Missions in Africa have set up business planning training for all centre managers and chaplains where a local business manager was assigned to help them and provide useful advice. Business training for centre managers could ultimately provide them with better tools to support seafarers using the centre.
- 5) "Learn to stand in seafarers' shoes". Fostering an inclusive philosophy at the centres and possibly facilitating this by establishing a memorandum of understanding.

#### **Community engagement/centre awareness**

Strengthening links with long-term supporters to aid sustainability of centres. Fostering links with the port and the local community to help raise awareness of the centre's work and garner support and potentially funding for them. Some suggestions for doing this follow below:

- 1) Organise half yearly open afternoons for supporters, local people, interest groups and dignitaries. This would ensure that the communication and engagement that has started in the seafarers' centre conference, continues.
- 2) Allowing port workers to use the centre facilities, such as the shop, bar, café (if centres have these) and other facilities, so that local engagement and potentially revenue is increased.
- 3) Port information leaflets should be circulated to ships by shipping agents and pilots. It is important to consider the audiences that will benefit from this means of communication. Liaising with Community Officers in local authority could help with this.
- 4) Developing better relationships with the port, shipping owners and pilots would improve engagement and awareness with the seafarers' centres.
- 5) The MNWB could potentially discuss seafarer welfare/gender/health topics with university sociology and social policy departments or associations, to improve education in this area.
- 6) Centres could run 'open evenings' aimed at raising awareness of the centre and attracting volunteers. Perhaps presenting the business case to the local stakeholders and networking with local businesses. There is a community role that needs to be utilised. Engagement with the community will help to break down barriers between the port and the community. For example, school visits; providing education about seafarers.

- 7) Produce a well-maintained centre website that is innovative and creative, allowing new ideas to be generated and service user involvement. Links from centre websites to other welfare providers is recommended.
- 8) Centres need to have a finger on the social media pulse to understand what the seafarer uses and to keep up with new advances in technologies, which should be linked to a web presence.
- 9) Encourage all shipping companies to adopt good quality Wi-Fi on board. This will allow seafarers to connect to information about centres (if available) in advance (refer to point 4 under seafarers' well-being and mental health).
- 10) Encourage smaller ports to provide access to WiMAX<sup>10</sup>, so that seafarers can access Apps and other on-line services when ashore.
- 11) The creation of development plans for centres was suggested.
- 12) Sea-Shed is a successful project for retired seafarers dealing with isolation and lack of skills. Now meeting monthly <http://www.seashed.co.uk/> it raises awareness of the centre and may provide a suitable place to advertise for volunteers.

### **Centre environment and facilities**

- 1) Emphasis was placed on making centres feel like a home from home. The physical spaces within centres could often be made much more attractive and homelier without much cost.
- 2) Portcabins could be used on the quay and kept open 24/7 where it is safe and secure inside the port security system. Some centres have experienced an increased footfall where this has been implemented. They run on trust. Some centres have installed CCTV to monitor these types of centre. The benefits of allowing a 24/7 access with key codes has to be balanced with the increased potential for theft. Trust and respect would need to be fostered and this would be easier for centres, which have regular seafarers returning. With the use of an App, a change of passcode for the centre could be regularly implemented for additional security and would also help to foster 'buy in' to the use of the technology.
- 3) Appropriate professional advice regarding conversion of existing facilities where this is needed.
- 4) The centres may also want to include details for sexual health centres and charity shops in the information they offer.
- 5) Make second hand clothing available for free. Provide a box of donated 'freebies' that may be of use to the seafarers.
- 6) If a centre does not have a shop or cannot keep much stock, it would be helpful for volunteers or staff to take seafarers to a shop outside the port where provisions can be bought.
- 7) Un-used or abandoned port land could be assigned by the port to the seafarers' centres to use as outside and recreational areas.

### **Ecumenical/pastoral**

- 1) Ship visits require security clearance. Contact with the master and agent (representing the ship owner) and the port owner/authority is usually required in advance to gain permission.
- 2) The ship is invariably very busy when in port, including maintenance duties, with staggered rest taking place. Co-ordination for the timing of ship welfare visits is therefore essential and a degree of engagement from officers to ensure seafarers felt or wanted visits on board is also required.
- 3) If port chaplains are not available in centres or for ship visits, good connections to local churches become more important and should be enabled where possible.

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<sup>10</sup> WiMAX can blanket a 30-mile radius with broad band access.  
<https://computer.howstuffworks.com/wimax.htm>

- 4) Better communications and support are required from shipping agents and port authorities to allow ship visits to take place easily without too much unnecessary red tape.
- 5) Denominational societies should work together towards innovation and making necessary changes in response to the needs of seafarers. Responsibility ideally should sit with one society/organisation.
- 6) The centre's provision of an holistic approach to the seafarer's well-being in terms of catering to their physical and spiritual needs. Providing a 'One stop shop'.
- 7) Clearly defined job descriptions and boundaries between port chaplains and centre managers would be helpful.

#### **Governance**

- 1) There is a need to have a central portal to help with centre governance and other seafarer centre related issues.
- 2) Succession planning is crucial for centre availability.
- 3) Good governance and overall management need to be closely examined, particularly the trustees on boards that serve the maritime charities and the role of the national directors.
- 4) There is potential to ask for a review of the MLC in section A5.1.2 (a) and (b) to member states responsibility and provide feedback regarding the welfare facilities provided ashore. Highlighted areas include recreational facilities if ship facilities do not provide equipment or gym areas, health and welfare protection.
- 5) Depending on the size of the centre, business plans should be developed.



## Part 5: Recommendations and further scope for research and evaluation

A number of interesting ideas for the way forward have been suggested during the workshops or drawn from the findings. They highlight a variety of directions which could be implemented individually or in unison and draw on research, technology and collaborative approaches.

### Research

Although specific suggestions have been made to help centres deliver good practice, it is recognised that there are still some complex issues that would benefit from further independent and extended research with a selected range of maritime stakeholders. It is suggested that this is conducted through a series of facilitated focus groups which explore critical and inherently complex issues facing seafarers' centres today, in order to achieve maximum impact.

#### ***Critical issues identified by the workshops were:***

- What do seafarers want and need?
- How to increase the number and diversity of volunteers?
- How to improve collaborative working between faith-based welfare providers?
- How to achieve 24/7 access for centres?
- How to improve the sustainability of funding?

#### ***Research with seafarers – “We need to find out what the seafarer really wants”***

Research with seafarers tied in with what could or should be provided using the MLC 2006 guidelines in terms of health and welfare protection. Research of this kind may involve identifying a sample of seafarers' centres where focus groups could be carried out to explore the diverse and subjective viewpoints of seafarers. Research tools such as the realist evaluation method and Q methodology<sup>11</sup> are mechanisms that would work well in exploring subjective viewpoints.

#### ***Research with volunteers – “The network of volunteers are changing. People are dipping in and out of being a volunteer and it can be a much more short- term engagement with a charity.”***

This mirrors the wider experience of organisations that draw on volunteer support. Drawing on experiences with organisations outside of the maritime sector to participate in focus groups is highly recommended.

#### ***Research with multi-faith welfare providers***

On-going discussions about multi-faith, cultural diversity and inclusion are recommended through focus groups and extended research. How do we facilitate this in predominantly Christian denomination-based charities that may have different theological perspectives on their mission/objectives and how can they implement any new ways of working that may be proposed?

#### ***Research around 24/7 access to centres***

The workshops highlight access to seafarers' centres around the clock as vital to the success of their work. Some proposals have been made as to how this could be implemented but there is, as ever, no one size fits all solution. Exploring the differences of centres and how they could best facilitate 24/7 access appears crucial.

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<sup>11</sup> Q methodology is an approach that explores subjective viewpoints across a sample and then synthesises those viewpoints into shared groupings. It elicits divergence and consensus within a group. For further information: [www.qmethod.org](http://www.qmethod.org)

### ***Research around funding sustainability***

Funding is a primary concern of most seafarers' centres, with some fundraising and managing financially and others struggling. Suggestions made during the workshop include centres becoming financially self-sufficient as a sustainable future. Whether this is a reality for most centres, or not, the question of funding is clearly a significant issue and warrants further research to explore the challenges and options more closely.

### **Technology**

As continual and rapid advances are made in technology, both opportunities and challenges arise. Understanding how to use technology to the best advantage within centres means they can provide cost savings, easier ways to collaborate and share information and promote the good work of these welfare services. With this in mind, it is crucial that technology is understood and kept abreast of, to allow the best possible outcomes. Additionally, considering connections with corporate sponsors for sustainable funding and technology provision is also advisable.

### ***Seafarers' Welfare Information Management System***

During the conference there was a call for a centralised online referral system that could be a point of information about welfare facilities in ports and the locality which could be downloaded onto various devices. Building on the technology of the existing MNWB UK centric databases, the MNWB and its stakeholders are creating an interactive, web-based referral portal where the maritime sector can access regularly updated welfare information on computers and mobile devices.

The interactive web-based portal will enable authorised users from multiple welfare agencies to update welfare information simultaneously, thus providing a unique joint picture of welfare services in UK ports. This collection of port data will provide the maritime welfare sector with a useful tool to manage limited resources. It will also make available updated information for seafarers, as well as when requested, signpost them to autonomous welfare providers.

The web portal will also produce interactive reports that can be used as a management tool by welfare providers and welfare boards. It will incorporate an innovative welfare evaluation 'traffic light' system to measure and monitor the provision of welfare services. The portal will be compatible with desktop computers and a wide range of handheld devices to keep it as up to date as possible with the changing technological landscape. To expand the system for international use in the future, the development of mobile apps (Android and iOS) and the use of APIs with partners in the maritime industry are currently being considered.

### **Collaborative approach**

Collaboration between seafarers' centres, management, staff and the wider community in host ports or local communities has been highlighted as a mechanism for increasing awareness of centres and raising their visibility. This has impact on footfall, funding and the daily operation of the centres.

### ***Further seafarers' conferences***

Following the success of the first Seafarers' Centres Conference in May 2018, it is evident from feedback forms and from discussion at the conference that there is an appetite for centre managers to meet at least annually to maintain and strengthen links with each other, share ideas and experiences. The reasoning is that there is much to learn from these events and it can help managers and centre workers feel part of a network of similar operators, and less isolated in their work. It was suggested that the conference could potentially be widened to include seafarers, pilots, harbour masters and other maritime stakeholders in the future.

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the Merchant Navy Welfare Board for hosting the first ever Seafarers' Centres Conference and to all the participants who engaged so well in the workshops, and for sharing their experiences, insights and humour. It is hoped that the collaborative efforts of all those concerned have been reflected as intended in this report and will help to facilitate improved ways of working that will best serve the seafaring community that use the centres and the sustainability of this valuable service.