

Pragmatic action on seafarer wellbeing crucial for a resilient shipping industry

SplashSeptember 30, 2022



An effective, practical wellbeing programme can retain skilled workers and attract new talent. Small investments now will help businesses through the great resignation and cost of living crisis, writes Sandra Welch, CEO of Seafarers Hospital Society.

These past few years seafarers' have shown great endurance amid a myriad of challenges. While many owners introduced measures to help cushion their workers from the strains of the crew change crisis during COVID-19, for many seafarers it has taken a toll on their physical and mental wellbeing. Now, beleaguered crews recovering from those trying times are having to contend with geopolitical conflict and navigate the stresses and strains of a beleaguered global supply chain, which continues to experience major delays around the world. If we want our industry to remain resilient, we must take active steps to improve our support for seafarer health and wellbeing.

All too often, allocating a budget for wellbeing is seen as an add on or luxury. And in a cost of living crisis, it is understandably difficult to justify spending money on seafarer welfare programmes.

However, a small amount of investment now will have positive spin offs such as a loyal workforce, helping companies to retain skilled workers and attracting new talent. The industry is facing a skills crisis, with shortages of officers already predicted by the International Chamber of Shipping and BIMCO before the pandemic. This will only be exacerbated further by the poor treatment crews received from governments around the world during the crew change crisis.

Taking proactive measures to improve working conditions and support for physical and mental health of crews is vital to keep talented seafarers in our industry, rather than lose them to roles ashore.