



FOREWORD FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY



Welcome to the first edition of our Maritime Health and Safety Newsletter, which focusses on Maritime mental health, to coincide with World Mental Health Day on 10th October.

It is becoming clearer that, at last, mental health is being taken seriously by employers and employees alike, not least because of the issues

that have been raised as we have progressed through the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, a survey RMT undertook earlier this year of our Maritime grades showed that employers need to remove the stigma which still exists with regards to mental health.

They need to listen, respect confidentiality, and stop treating Maritime workers as an afterthought and put in the resources that are needed.

Seafarers, divers and offshore workers more than most, face issues of isolation, being far away from their loved ones, with their place of work also being their temporary home.

RMT is working with mental health organisations in order to both educate employers and provide the facilities our members suffering from mental health issues need.

Yours sincerely,

Mick Lynch
General Secretary

OVERVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH BY NATIONAL SECRETARY, DARREN PROCTER



Mental health has become more and more relevant across all sectors of maritime membership since I was elected as your National Secretary. I believe that previously, we have been lacking in this area as a union, paying lip-service without pressing employers and seeking

to provide support for our own membership.

Through internal dialogue with your respective lead officers we have established which companies have a pro-active approach to mental health and which companies are literally putting up a poster and think they are fulfilling an obligation by doing so.

All too often when visiting workplaces, I am being approached more and more by members identifying mental health issues, often showing physical signs throughout our conversation.

Mental health is much more of an issue

within the Maritime sector due in part to the fact that you are on a vessel, an offshore installation or in a saturation chamber for a period of time but it also impacts greatly on our port worker members and society in general at the moment.

Whilst we need to raise awareness of mental health amongst our membership, a HR manager stated to me recently that "mental health is the new bad back" in terms of sickness within the workplace.

Part of our role is to ensure that all employers are recognising mental health issues and supporting individuals who require support by creating an environment where it is ok to do so, and eradicating the "man up" culture that may exist in your workplace.

I hope this short newsletter highlights what we have been doing as a union in recent months, as well as highlighting the resources available for all of you who are in need at this time.

Regards,
Darren Procter

MARITIME SAFETY WEEK 2021

During this year's Maritime Safety Week, RMT wrote to the UK Chamber of Shipping, MIND, See Me Scotland, the Seafarers Hospital Society and Togetherall. During Maritime Safety Week, where we were promoting the importance of mental health in the maritime sector, using the opportunity to share resources and information with the various organisations in terms of what RMT is trying to achieve, noting that during recent surveys we undertook, we ascertained that some companies are being progressive and supportive around mental health and some doing the bare minimum.

The Chamber of Shipping wrote back to us confirming that the UK maritime social partners have been very active in promoting the mental wellbeing of seafarers. The National Maritime Occupational Health and Safety Committee (NMOHSC- of which RMT is a member) first issued guidelines to companies in 2018 and earlier this year published practical guidelines. This was launched with a webinar in which National Secretary Darren Procter participated in a panel discussion hosted by the Chamber. Also, in July of last year the Chamber also organised a webinar on seafarer mental health in the pandemic.

During Maritime Safety Week, RMT also wrote to all maritime companies with whom we have a relationship, informing them that we are compiling a matrix of the approach of employers of their approach to mental health. We asked whether companies have an Employee Assistance Programme in place, and if so, what it consists of.

In terms of some basic actions which employers can take, we also highlighted the issue of sleep problems as a result of mental health issues in safety critical roles and emphasised some of the things which should be relatively obvious- the importance of quiet spaces and basics such as mattresses, pillows, duvets.

SEAFARERS HOSPITAL SOCIETY

RMT met with the Seafarers Hospital Society (SHS) in August in what proved to be a useful exchange of views and experiences. The SHS agreed that there was much work to do to improve mental health within the Maritime sector. We were subsequently invited to a roundtable discussion, which included employers, at which we participated and exchanged views on varying subject matters linked to mental health. The SHS provides free information on its website: <https://seahospital.org.uk/> and can facilitate face to face meetings and free therapy sessions. It is a national charity, which has grants available via its Anchor Fund. We hope to have a feature article in the next newsletter to give a greater overview in what they do and what current research is taking place.

TOGETHERALL

We met with Togetherall (formerly Big White Wall) in September. Our stated aim is to engage in a partnership with Togetherall, providing mutual support and sharing resources.

Togetherall is a service provider to companies, rather than a charity, It has promised to provide RMT with a link to its free service, "Sea Codes" and we will be looking to engage with them on a regular basis and provide further updates to you in due course.

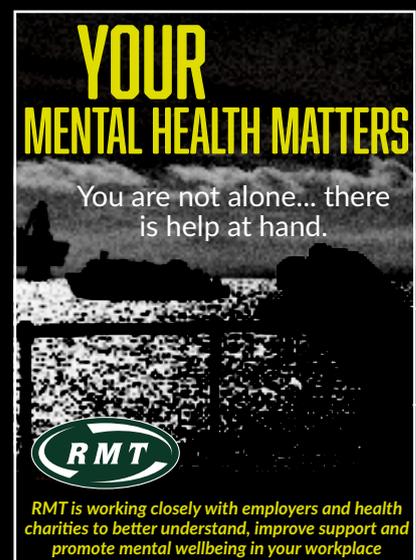
RMT'S MARITIME MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

This committee meets regularly and reports back directly to RMT's National Executive Committee. It is attended by the National Secretary, Darren Procter and Health and Safety Officer. Should anyone be interested in finding out more about this committee, please contact Jonathan Havard at j.havard@rmt.org.uk

MARITIME MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

Our campaign to improve mental health in your workplace depends upon RMT members becoming involved, informing us of how you think your employer is doing, initiating conversations with your workplace reps, safety committees, branch officials and lead officers in an effort to make improvements where necessary. Whilst some employers are better at this moment in time than others, we need to establish what you think should be the minimal of every employer to improve mental health in your workplace.

Get in contact with j.havard@rmt.org.uk and let us know your views.



YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

You are not alone... there is help at hand.

RMT

RMT is working closely with employers and health charities to better understand, improve support and promote mental wellbeing in your workplace



GET ACTIVE GET INVOLVED...

HEALTH & SAFETY • MENTAL HEALTH • YOUNG MEMBERS • WOMEN • EQUALITIES • PENSIONS

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

From our research and engagement with members during workplaces visits we have identified that not all employees are comfortable in talking to employer assigned occupational health services. Below are the contact details of the organisations who are sources for further information and support:

MIND

The charity Mind provides advice and support on mental health issues. It campaigns to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding about mental health.

Email: contact@mind.org.uk Tel: 020 8519 2122
<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

SAMARITANS

Offering emotional support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Tel: 08457 909090

MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

A charity that engages in research, campaigning and training programmes on mental health and learning disabilities.

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/

TOGETHERALL

Togetherall is a 24/7, safe online community for people who are stressed, anxious or feeling low, with self-guided courses and resources.

<https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>

TIME TO CHANGE

An anti-stigma campaign run by mental health charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness.

Email: info@time-to-change.org.uk

Tel: 020 8215 2356

www.time-to-change.org.uk/

FOR SCOTLAND:

SAMH - (the Scottish Association for Mental Health)

Operating in communities to provide a range of mental health support and services.

Tel: 0344 800 0550, available 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, except on Bank Holidays.

www.samh.org.uk/

SEE ME SCOTLAND

See Me is Scotland's programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination.

Tel: 0141 530 1111

www.seemescotland.org/

CONTACT DETAILS

All RMT members need to ensure that if you change employer, change jobs, change mobile numbers, change your email address etc., you inform head office. If we don't have your correct details on file then we will be ineffective in our communication to you.

If you do not receive texts from RMT - we don't have your correct mobile number.
If you do not receive RMT news at home - we do not have your correct home address.
If you do not receive emails from RMT - we do not have your correct emails address.

Contact RMT Head office on 0800 376 3706 or log in to the website to update your details.

Scan the QR Code to join RMT
or visit
www.rmt.org.uk/join



www.rmt.org.uk