



National Fishing Communities
Survey of Need and Projects

**FISHING FOR A FUTURE
REA SUMMARY NOTE
(OCTOBER 2017)**

Between May and September 2017 a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) for Seafarers UK was undertaken to provide:

- 1. An overview of the opportunities, challenges and issues facing those who catch fish and their direct families** – including the identification and mapping the current state and socio-economic conditions of those who depend on fishing for their livelihood.
- 2. The scope to strengthen and sustain livelihoods of those who catch fish and their direct families** – drawing out findings from previous projects/initiatives. How can we improve the profitability and viability of fishing businesses? Are there any gaps in provision and how might these be addressed?

This note summarises the findings from a general REA undertaken. This includes thirty-four documents relating to people who catch fish, fishing families and fishing communities. It does not include data or technical/industry documents about fishing.

The findings of the general REA are organised under the following headings:

- Fishermen, fishing families and fishing communities
- Needs / support
- Some of the opportunities, challenges and issues for people who catch fish, fishing families and fishing communities (table)
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Findings

Fishermen, fishing families and fishing communities

In the literature reviewed so far there are broad similarities in how fishing and fishermen are described: this is framed around fishing as a lifestyle as well as a job, and how this lifestyle is a continuing feature even in retirement. Three types of fishermen have been identified: (1) Leaders: strategic and business focused and proactive in looking for solutions, (2) Lieutenants: highly skilled fishermen and skippers likely to follow leaders and (3) Followers: crew and those skippers who want to carry on doing what they've always done.

The literature focuses on vessels of 10 metres or less (small fishing vessels) - as part of attempts to understand this sub-section of the fishing industry (i.e., the inshore fishing sector), its diversity and employment (i.e., how many people work full time on boats and what is the balance between inshore and commercial) and/or to consider part of the industry that are struggling to survive.

This literature describes how many under 10 metre vessels are struggling to survive and/or remain economically viable.

Evidence on fishing – and fisheries management in particular – focuses on the role of individual producers engaged in catching fish. This draws out:

1. Economic aspects of catching fish e.g. the declining fortunes of the fishing industry, the state of economic development in localities with high rates of engagement in fisheries related employment, notions of 'fishing dependency' i.e., the proportion of the workforce engaged in/employed in fisheries, catching, fish farming or processing, and their need for financial assistance from Government.
2. Environmental aspects i.e., the impacts of fishing on the marine environment. Here fishermen are often depicted as food providers and/or exploiters of the environment.
3. Spatial dimensions of fishing fleets i.e., as being 'place-based' (associated with the inshore sector and by fishermen who associate with a given place) and 'occupation based' (people who catch fish and have an understanding of the industry which spans coastlines and seas).

The way information on fishermen and fishing is presented does not always yield information relevant to understanding their impact on fishing families and communities.

What evidence is available on fishing communities and fishing families tends to be small-scale qualitative studies – these have generated insights into ‘sense of place’ and how fishing cultures are embedded in place and distinct from other ways of life. Some of the information relating to Scotland references broader community aspects of fishing relating to peripherality, accessibility, living standards and poverty. There is discussion in the literature between ‘real fishing communities’ [products, employment] and ‘virtual fishing communities’ [image, visitor/tourism facilities]. With terms such as disneyfication and placelessness applied in the ‘virtual’ context, how much decline can a fishing community absorb before it becomes virtual and would it still be categorised as a fisheries-dependent community?

All of this work often fails to capture (i) the kinds of ‘value’ fishing generates outside of the crude economic/resource use approach; (ii) the characteristics of fishing families or fishing communities – and in ways where they are not subsumed into a broader rural narrative, (iii) people migration to and from fishing communities and (iv) young people and the future of fishing – is fishing a job, a career or both/ something you do to get money at the time or something you do for the long-term?

Needs / Support

The literature presents a view that the fishing industry requires support to help it survive and succeed – alongside a belief amongst fishermen that the industry can ‘ride out troubled times’. Fishermen are found to have at least one disability/long-term illness that affects their everyday life compared to other seafaring groups. Fishermen were also more likely to struggle to ‘make ends meet’ and many of the reports highlight the financial insecurity facing fishing families.

Some of the literature describes the ‘coping strategies’ used by fishermen, including: diversification (tourism, heritage), new forms of fishing activity and/or the expansion of processing to include added value/niche fish products = with an increasing emphasis being placed on diversification.

There are more than 100 charities directly support the seafaring community in the UK, spending £125 million each year to support up to 50,000 people (e.g. health, education, housing, care, welfare etc.) The literature suggests a high proportion of the seafaring community (up to 50% cited in some reports) will have needs that charities and support organisations are able to meet or alleviate. Much of the support provided to fishermen and fishing families relates to helping them to make ends meet, provide extra comforts and/or cope with crisis.

Taken as a collective, there is no one view from all of the studies undertaken as to whether the number of older seafarers in the fishing sector is expected to increase, remain stable or decline to 2050. However, there is consensus that the needs of seafaring families is unlikely to diminish – and that the needs of former seafarers, regardless of their number, will also increase. But the needs of serving seafarers are changing - most come from overseas and traditional services such as seafarers centres in ports are likely to be less used while the role of ship welfare visitors in meeting and greeting seafarers is increasingly important. Five lifestyle characteristics have been identified:

1. People in the seafaring community often experience feelings of separation and isolation.
2. Seafarers face constant demands for readjustment between being at home and at sea.
3. Seafarers and their families and dependents may face physical and emotional problems linked to separation, isolation and adjustment.
4. Seafarers lifestyles are often characterised by using personal skills and resources to solve problems and a reluctance to seek support from others including maritime charities.
5. Poverty and debt - particularly among fishermen and young seafarers aged under 40 years and their families.

Alongside references to austerity and a reduction in public services and support was a view amongst seafarers that statutory services (particularly health and personal care) were lacking in quality and/or frequency.

While there are different patterns of need among fishermen and their families rather than a general picture, the common issues identified by support organisations relate to poverty, debt, ill-health and legal advice.

Six areas of future need among the seafaring community have been identified: poverty, isolation, services, health care, emotional support and long-term housing. Gaps in provision have also been identified the widows/widowers, carers and bereaved children – with befriending, counselling, respite care, childcare and holidays referenced alongside financial support.

This has all been accompanied by (a) a focus on how charities might work more closely together – particularly to design, develop and deliver interventions around money advice services, resettlement when leaving the sea, and health promotion to prevent ill-health. (b) How to raise the profile of charities with fishermen and other service providers. The literature suggests fishermen want more information about maritime charities about the support available, would like charities to approach them (some fishermen are reluctant to get in touch as they think they will be ineligible for support), and to think about what information can provided online (e.g. services, app, social media, web chat etc.)

Question to consider:

How can charities better assess and target needs which are particular to fishing communities and which other organisations do not address?

Some opportunities, challenges and issues for people who catch fish, fishing families and fishing communities

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing is not considered a job; it is a complete way of life and an addiction. • Fishermen are resilient - artisanal fishers often cross-subsidise their fishing activities by taking supplementary employment onshore thus insulating them from fluctuations in market conditions and periods of adverse economic circumstances. • Improving sea fisheries science through collaborative work with fishermen (e.g. surveys, mapping) - address the current time lag between knowledge and action. • Diversification of fishermen to increase incomes. • Greater integration of fishing with tourism, particularly through festivals and events. • Local food branding to add value to fish caught locally and to boost the value kept in the community - moulding consumer demand to the type of niche products which the fishing industry can supply (e.g. North Shields wanting to develop a premium brand to market locally caught fish) – having a niche and high quality product. • Third party accreditations to gain access to more markets and receive a greater return for that fish. • Small-scale Producer Organisations (PO) which can give smaller boats a voice and greater control to help rebalance power in the fishing industry. • Greater integration between fishing and education – encouraging young people to enter the industry/fishing as an ‘occupation of choice.’ • Helping fishermen to become and stay economically active (e.g. projects that enable injured and disabled fishermen to re-enter the labour market). • Assess the contribution of fishing to the local economy by finding how much fishers spend on suppliers and services – rather than looking at their catch. • Ensuring an influential voice for fishermen and the fishing industry in future management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing is defined by sector or fleet, not community. • Fishermen feel under constant financial pressure (e.g. the unpredictable nature of earnings). • A high proportion of fishermen have at least one disability or long-term illness that affects their everyday life (e.g. blood pressure, poor hearing/deafness, skeletal condition). • The inshore industry has reduced and business opportunities upstream have declined. • Smaller boats (less than 10m long) are responsible for a significant proportion of those employed in fish catching despite being responsible for only 11% of the total catch by weight and 9.7% by value. Smaller boats are the lifeblood of thriving ports - only 1.5% of the national fishing quota goes to the smallest category even though they make up 75% of vessels. Uncertain markets. • A declining and/or ageing workforce - the 2007 workforce is approximately half of that in the early 1970s. • Migrant workers seen as the solution to difficulties recruiting from the local population who regard fish processing jobs as low wage work with unpleasant working conditions. But long hours of work, language difficulties, restricted integration in their locality and now Brexit led few migrants to want to stay here in the long-term. • The rising cost of entry into the fishing industry. • Fishermen are skilled at what they do but most lack formal academic qualifications. • Lack of data on fishing activities (effort, habitats, self-employment) – a need to develop a database that reflects the reality of the fishing industry. • Gaining secure access to fishing grounds. • There is a market for fish but is this the species that is available locally? • Investment to modernise equipment, vessels, technology, improve health and safety etc. - Economies of scale and smaller fishermen become disadvantaged without these resources. • Health and safety provisions apply to vessels and fishing activities rather than fishermen. • Reduction in public sector funding/service provision and welfare reforms leader to greater needs among fishermen and fishing families (e.g. benefits, poverty) – with some retired fishermen suggesting the quality and frequency of public services (health, personal care) to be lacking.

Seafarers UK has been helping people in the maritime community for over 100 years, by providing vital support to seafarers in need and their families, and to those in education or training who are preparing to work or serve at sea. We do this this by giving grants to organisations and projects that make a real difference to people's lives.



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