GETSEAFIT®

Programme Report

SEAFARERS HOSPITAL SOCIETY 18 21

THE FISHERMEN'S MISSION

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Footnote: Feedback from those we've spoken to within the fishing industry have told us they prefer the term 'fisherman or fishermen' regardless of gender.

Foreword

By Fishermen's Mission CEO, David Dickens

For the Fishermen's Mission the GetSeaFit programme has been a major step in the charity's long standing strategic aspiration to tackle the particular challenges to wellbeing faced by active and retired fishermen and their families.

Working with the Seafarers' Hospital Society since 2012, several successful pilot wellbeing projects were run, but the challenge was always to translate local impact and engagement into UK-wide understanding and provision. What was needed was something more national and sustained, both to capture the extent and nature of wellbeing and to encourage state and other players to adjust services to better meet the needs of fishing communities. Thus was the GetSeaFit programme formed.

Intentionally, the programme was not designed to measure clinical outcomes: the objectives were to gain an understanding of fishermen's health and wellbeing, including dental and mental health issues and to explore potential models for improved service delivery. Quayside delivery of key elements of the programme was a vital component in reaching those we sought to help.

With generous funding from The Seafarers' Charity (formerly Seafarers UK) a 2-year GetSeaFit programme got underway in mid-2018, running through to March 2021 due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

From the Fishermen's Mission's perspective, the programme has exceeded expectations. Not only have scores of fishermen received immediate assistance for serious health issues, but also the extent of the communities' disengagement with available wellbeing services has been highlighted. Models for sustainable provision, especially at the quayside, have taken shape, while many authorities have been attracted to the SeaFit model for bringing effective service delivery to other hard-to-reach communities.

Finally, I am most grateful to the many partners and friends who have joined us on the SeaFit journey, with great hopes that these relationships will enable work to develop further to improve the wellbeing of our hard-pressed fishing communities for the long-term. Now a recognised and trusted brand, SeaFit provides an excellent vehicle for the expansion of the Fishermen's Mission's wellbeing 'offer' to its clients.

David Dickens

Fishermen's Mission Chief Executive

Foreword

By Seafarers Hospital Society CEO, Sandra Welch

The Seafarers Hospital Society is proud to be associated with the SeaFit Programme and all that it has achieved over the past two years. Through our partnership with the Fishermen's Mission and Seafarers UK (now The Seafarers' Charity) we have achieved tangible improvements in the health and wellbeing of fishermen and their families and established a blue print for the delivery of health and wellbeing services to this hard to reach group.

At the same time the SeaFit brand has become established and trusted within the fishing community and is now recognised in many fishing ports. We have also begun to influence health and wellbeing policy makers and service providers and look forward to seeing the lessons learnt from the Programme translated into planning for future provision. We consider that a success and hope that you do too.

Evidence from the SeaFit Programme shows that fishermen are more likely to seek help to improve their health and wellbeing when services are taken to them at the quayside. Thanks to its holistic health and wellbeing approach, SeaFit has empowered fishermen to change their behaviour and make positive lifestyle choices, as they realise the importance of looking after their own health and wellbeing.

The positive impact of the various projects associated with the Programme, from healthy lifestyle advice and support to dental treatment and counselling, is unquestionable. Our health provider partners and the fishermen themselves have highlighted clear-cut health benefits, with many reporting quantifiable improvements in their health and wellbeing over the period of the Programme.

The SeaFit Programme has also begun to lay down a strong foundation for culture change among a hard to engage, predominantly male, workforce. Fishermen and family members who received support are benefiting from better health and are encouraging their peers and fellow crew members to seek advice or treatment. It is hoped that this will in turn lead to more uninterrupted hours at sea and increased earning capacity, which is particularly important given the uncertainty arising from Brexit.

We are indebted to the dedication of the Project Development Manager, Carol Elliott, who has worked so successfully with our partners and their staff, including: The Fishermen's Mission, Smile Together CIC and Dentaid, the mental health providers Fishwell and Fairwinds, NHS Cornwall, Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust and all the Health and Wellbeing advisors who have worked tirelessly with us on the Programme. We are confident that these responsive and collaborative partnerships will make the Programme sustainable in the long-term.

I sincerely thank and applaud everyone in the SeaFit team for their invaluable contributions to this Programme and to the improvements in the health and wellbeing of fishermen.

Sandra Welch

Sandra Welch
CEO, The Seafarers Hospital Society

Introduction

This report focuses on how the GetSeaFit Programme tested and delivered a range of health services on quaysides. Working with many different partners we gained insight as to how easier access could improve the health and wellbeing of fishermen and their families.

Activities included co-ordinating and commissioning healthcare services. There was emphasis on both physical and mental health, conducting quayside health checks, holding events, and having regular informal conversations to gain the trust of the fishermen.

> **'It has definitely been a good thing for fishermen as it is hard for them to seek support. A lot of them are at sea a lot of the time, so that makes it hard for them/ us to make appointments. Having it quayside has made it a lot easier, as well as flexibility with appointments and not being struck off if appointments missed.'**
>
> ***Survey Respondent***

Healthy Lifestyle Advisors were based in 3 main ports: Newlyn (Cornwall), Bridlington (East Yorkshire), and Peterhead (Aberdeenshire). Mental Health support was provided by Fairwinds in Cornwall and Fishwell in Norfolk and Suffolk.

We also conducted specialised Health Events at various ports, comprising of mental health counselling, dental checks and treatment, NHS health checks, health screening, information on self-management of long-term conditions, physiotherapy, cancer information and eyesight tests. We developed a network of 14 physiotherapists. Services were provided free of charge to fishermen and their families, with subsidised costs for follow on dental treatment.

The programme was a joint two-year initiative, with a time extension of seven months, run by the Fishermen's Mission and the Seafarers Hospital Society, with funding from The Seafarers' Charity. In addition to the main partners, we also worked with local GPs, opticians, dentists, health professionals and other charitable organisations.

Over time the programme became known as SeaFit, and through constant visibility on the quayside, we established a brand that has become synonymous as a trusted, healthy lifestyle support service for fishermen and their families.

This pioneering programme has extensively raised awareness of the importance of health care within fishing communities, influenced providers to offer flexible services around tides and fishing seasons, and kickstarted a culture change among an often hard-to-engage, predominately male, workforce.

The Seafarers' Charity was formerly known as Seafarers UK throughout the duration of the SeaFit Programme.

Reach

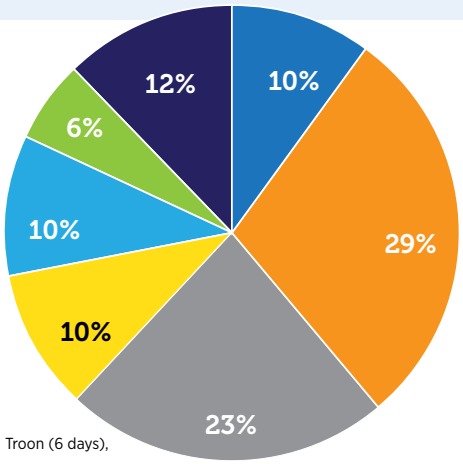
Intentionally, the programme was not designed to measure clinical outcomes: the objectives were to gain an understanding of fishermen's health and wellbeing issues and to explore potential models for improved access and service delivery that could influence local statutory health and wellbeing services.

- Over **4500** interactions with fishermen and their families.
- Healthy Lifestyle Advisors engaged with **1754** people and conducted **516** Healthy Lifestyle Checks.
- **495** people received Dental Treatment & Advice.
- Physio Network **14** physios recruited, **819** free sessions for **204** fishermen.
- **355** Mental Health counselling sessions, engaging with **700** people.
- Health Events in **18** ports over **48** days.
- Health Checks at Events **328**.
- Parcels of Kindness **383** food parcels delivered.*

Health Events
Health Advisors
Mental Health Provision
Dental Provision
Physio Network
Planned Events

**Additional funding provided by the Seafarers' Charity*

A small sample survey looked at what services were being used, with over 50% of respondents engaging with either the health checks or mental health support.



Services Used

- Dentist
- Healthy Lifestyle Health Check
- Mental Health Counsellor
- Weight Management
- Stopping/Reducing Smoking
- Stopping/Reducing Drinking
- Physiotherapist
- Optician
- Macmillan Cancer
- Prostate Cancer

Health Events took place in: Scotland - Peterhead (3 days), Troon (6 days), Northern Ireland - Kilkeel (2 days), Ardglass (1 day), Portavogie (1 day), Cornwall - Newlyn (7 days), Mevagissey (5 day), Hayle (1 day), Newquay (3 days), Padstow (3 day), Cadwith, Coverack (1 day) Looe (2 days), Ilfracombe (1 day) Devon - Brixham (4 days), Plymouth (4 days) E. Yorkshire - Bridlington (2 days) Dorset - Poole (2 days)

Objectives

Through over 140 years of experience the Fishermen's Mission is aware of just how difficult it is for fishermen to ask for help, especially when it comes to them looking after their health and wellbeing. We are regularly told that they perceive asking for help as being weak.

We also know that when fishing conditions are good fishermen will prioritise being at sea over everything else in order to earn a living.

Consequently, fishermen are repeatedly disadvantaged in accessing health services. Appointment-based systems are often inflexible and do not consider the transient and unsociable nature of their work.

Therefore, the overall aim of the SeaFit Programme was to influence the NHS and Local Authority Public Health teams at a local level by highlighting the health needs of a 'hard-to-reach' section of society, with traditionally a history of poor access to health and preventative services, and whose work and lifestyle put them at risk of developing chronic and serious health issues in later life.

To achieve this we developed collaborative methods that demonstrated alternative models of practical healthcare delivery at ports and quaysides. Providing UK fishermen and their families with free and confidential health advice.

It was anticipated that by raising awareness of what health and wellbeing support was available, and by making services more accessible, we could begin to change traditional behaviours of fishermen who were not accessing health services and not talking about mental and physical health concerns.

It was envisaged that the Programme would have a wider long-term impact, and although less quantifiable, it could bring about outcomes that contribute to bringing social change among fishing communities. If a fisherman is in good physical and mental health, and able to manage long-term health conditions that is likely to translate into sustained and uninterrupted hours at sea. Leading to less financial hardship, reduced deprivation, and an improved home life through greater financial stability.

It was also hoped that SeaFit's flexible, mobile place-based model would be taken up by statutory health providers, so that there would be continual easier access to health services for fishermen and their families.

Achievements

We believe that the SeaFit Programme has been unique in bringing such a wide range of health and wellbeing services to quaysides for fishermen and their families.

It has taken over two years of collaboration and constant port visibility to gain the trust of the fishermen. Through normalising informal health conversations, we know that fishermen have engaged with, and actively sought support from our Healthy Lifestyle Advisors and Mental Health services, and are talking about their real-time lived experiences to other fishermen.

We conducted a series of events over **48** days in **18** ports. In addition to providing easier access and treatment right on the quayside, we also raised awareness of the importance of health care via campaigns, social media, and publicity on specific health conditions. All contributing to improving the health and wellbeing of many fishermen and their families.

Over the course of the programme, the SeaFit brand has become synonymous as a healthy lifestyle support service for fishermen.

We received requests from health organisations to use our logo when wanting to engage with fishermen. NHS Cornwall asked if they could add the SeaFit logo to their Covid-19 social distancing posters, as they recognised that the fishermen were more likely to take notice of and respond to the SeaFit brand.

Stronger connections have been made with some GP practices and Primary Care Networks. We have linked Healthy Lifestyle Advisors and Community Practitioners to the fishing community. Several GP surgeries, in Brixham, Newlyn, St Austell, Peterhead, now offer extended hours of medical care and urgent on-the-day care, as a result of a better understanding of commercial fishing lifestyles.

We have set up newly formed Wellman Clinics with the NHS St Austell Primary Care hub as we made them aware of the need to adapt services to running both appointment based and drop-in sessions around tide times and fishing seasons. The capacity and flexibility of these services means no lengthy waiting lists and improved access to health care.

It is not only health organisations being influenced by the SeaFit programme. Joint working with Seafood Cornwall Training has increased the psychological and health related knowledge for the fishing community via training of new entrants to the industry and upskilling of fishing providers, related stakeholders, and fishermen.

There have been many enquiries about our model including a reporter wanting information on how we provided mental health support for fishermen for a mental health article published in the Canadian Hakai Magazine*. Other organisations such as Barclays Bank have come forward wanting to work with SeaFit to take mobile banking services to the quaysides.

Our pioneering model has helped many fishermen and their families to make healthier life choices. Several fishermen are now speaking about mental health issues, with the revelation that they might not still be alive if they had not received help from the SeaFit Programme.

Some fishermen now self-manage long-term health conditions and regularly see a GP. New behaviours have been introduced as they engage in healthier lifestyles and reduce unhealthy behaviours.

As a result of the SeaFit programme more fishermen have stopped smoking, lost weight and adopted a healthier diet. Some have taken up exercise, received dental treatment for the first time in decades, had fast-track access to free physiotherapy and eyesight tests.

There have been over **4,500** interactions with fishermen and their families, with many now actively seeking support from our partners. All of which leads to a healthier workforce, that can be said to lead to more sustained, uninterrupted hours at sea, with greater earning potential and financial stability.

* www.hakaimagazine.com/features/mental-health-and-the-modern-fisherman/

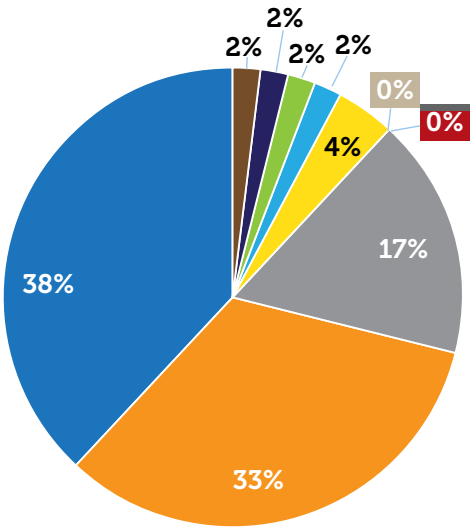
'I have heard a lot of people talking about it, it has helped a lot of people, it has been advertised really well. I have only heard positive feedback.

Communication has been great, it has pulled some of the fishermen out of that hole of not being able to talk, so it has been a great first step.'

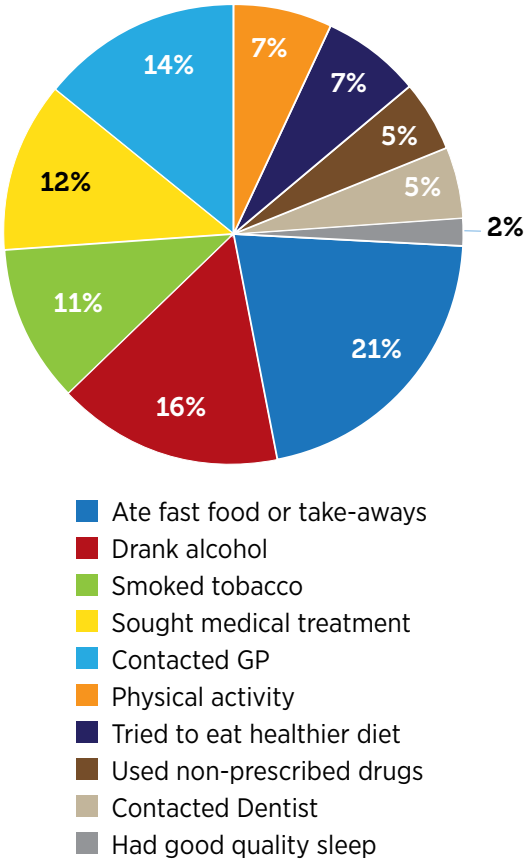
Survey Respondent

Healthy Activities Engaged in

More Often



Less Often



Impact and Influence

Previous reports such as Fishing for a Future, and Fishing without a Safety Net, (The Seafarers' Charity) have evidenced health deprivation among fishermen and the wider fishing community. Such health inequalities are often caused by a complex mix of environmental and social factors, which includes limited access to health support, with dental and mental health services being especially difficult. The SeaFit model has been able to demonstrate that taking and using place-based services on the quayside does increase access and raise awareness of the support available. This in turn has led to increased engagement, which has helped to improve both the physical and mental health of fishermen and their families, including migrant and retired fishermen.

Recent research conducted by the King's Fund, *Developing place-based partnerships: The foundation of effective integrated care systems,* https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/place-based-partnerships-integrated-care-systems acknowledges that place-based partnerships can contribute to the improvement of health, wellbeing and inequalities reduction. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-inequalities-place-based-approaches-to-reduce-inequalities. Public Health England's service strategy is also encouraging local NHS bodies to adopt place-based approaches and work jointly with Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Healthcare Trusts and Voluntary Sector Organisations.

Although it may take many years to establish a culture change of flexible healthcare, some statutory agencies are acknowledging that targeted place-based health and wellbeing services can make a real difference. NHS organisations, particularly in areas where the Healthy Lifestyle Advisors are based, have recognised the importance of taking health services to quaysides.

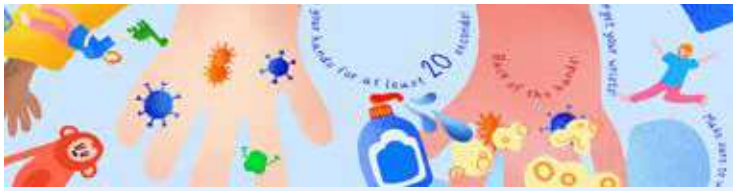
In some areas key partnerships and referral avenues have been well established and continue to be strengthened. As a result, in Cornwall, the SeaFit model is likely to be replicated in other vulnerable locations, such as within farming communities.

The project in Bridlington was originally co-funded through the Holderness Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG), a local community fund for projects falling outside of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF). Our partners at the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust provided specific guidance as to how this project could be rolled out nationally and included within a future scheme supporting fishermen's welfare. We influenced a change of rules, requiring policy change and UK/EU authorisation mid-programme. Thus, successfully influencing national policy and funding priorities for the creation of a new domestic replacement scheme, recently launched as the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme.

Generating UK wide, bespoke health services, especially during times of austerity, requires higher-level intervention and commitment, along with further investment in the programme for longer-term sustainability. However, within the duration of two years we have established:

- Brixham GP offering priority and same day appointments for fishermen.
- SeaFit Model likely to be replicated by NHS Cornwall.
- Seafit Healthy Lifestyle role being used as model in other vulnerable communities i.e. farming.
- Primary Care in Yorkshire looking at using smaller mobile vehicles to target a female smear campaign and vaccination clinics for vulnerable older adults.
- Keeping the Healthy Lifestyle Advisor role in post in Newlyn during NHS redeployment and restructure.
- Kernow CCG awarded additional funding for Suicide Prevention founded upon high reputation of current mental health work after seeing the benefit it made to the fishing community.
- Newlyn GP, Dr Boulter won the Sun Newspaper 'Who Cares Wins' Best GP 2019 award and requested the funding donation from Chris Evans CarFest go to SeaFit Mental Health services in recognition of our work.
- Northern Ireland Farm Families expressing interest in continuing annual harbourside checks.

- Humber Teaching and NHS Trust offering continued services to fishermen within core business.
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust commitment to apply for EMFF to continue and expand along Yorkshire coast.
- Fishwell although only running for a year, has traction already with Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation NHS Trust.
- Aberdeenshire Council seeing merit in provision, established local initiative. After two years will ascertain if the Fishermen's Healthy Lifestyle Advisor role will become a core post.
- Four GP surgeries in West Penwith, E. Cornwall working closely with Healthy Lifestyle Advisor referring patients to SeaFit services.
- Developing links and jointly working with a Primary Care Network, St Austell Healthcare, establishing regular wellman and health clinics for fishermen with a clinician on the quayside.
- Mevagissey have agreed to put alerts on any registered fishermen's notes to be offered priority appointments/calls with GP.
- Healthy Cornwall NHS Trust funding a Mental Health First Aid session for fishermen, family members and harbour masters. A positive step in starting peer-led conversations, raising important messages around mental health.



Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided additional opportunities for engagement in a way that could never have been foreseen. Services had to be modified, continuing to support fishermen and their families through phone calls, email, online and socially distanced activities, demonstrating the flexibility of the programme and illustrating how a crisis can often be a time when change is created.

In addition to requests from the NHS to use our logo on social distancing posters at the port, some Harbour Masters also asked our Healthy Lifestyle Advisors to reinforce public health messaging around social distancing, Covid testing and staying safe on the quayside.

Fishwell, one of our mental health partners, developed an additional project called Parcels of Kindness, delivering **383** food parcels to older fishermen and their families in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Fairwinds, our mental health partner in Newlyn trialled Outdoor Talking Therapy. An evidence-based approach combining conventional outcomes of indoor mental health therapy with the known benefits of being outside.

The SeaFit Programme Manager took on an added role as Vaccination Volunteer for NHS Sussex, providing social media messages to fishermen. As a result, we were contacted by Suffolk County Council to run a similar programme.

We quickly realised there was an intractable gap in the NHS national vaccination programme. Migrant fishermen in particular, who were not registered with a GP, were not being invited for their vaccinations and yet were working in close quarters alongside their UK crewmates.

The SeaFit Programme Manager became the connecting influence between the fishermen, large boat owners and the NHS. The Fishermen's Mission Port Staff and SeaFit Healthy Lifestyle Advisers and local NHS Trusts all worked together to set up various appointments and drop-in based methods, from quayside pop-ups to reserving block appointments at vaccine centres. This led to the take up of just over 1400 vaccinations, and contacts made with fishermen to offer further support. SeaFit became the main delivery vehicle for welfare, delivered through the recognised programme brand.

Healthy Lifestyle Advisors

The SeaFit Programme commissioned Healthy Lifestyle Advisors to be based at 3 ports in the UK: Newlyn, Bridlington and Peterhead. They conducted a total of 516 NHS Healthy Lifestyle Checks, with just over 1750 interactions on quaysides.

The Healthy Lifestyle Advisors had to spend time getting to know the fishermen's wellbeing needs, alongside wider fishing issues within the industry. This fishing-related knowledge was vital and used as a way to start conversations that began to build relationships.

It was the continual walking around, being visible, and having informal chats that helped with engagement. Most fishermen know that there is help and support available, but they do not always ask for, or seek assistance unless they see someone on the quayside.

The Healthy Lifestyle Advisors have also built strong working relationships with industry stakeholders to raise health as an item on their agendas. For example, in Newlyn during training sessions for new entrants into the fishing industry, mental health and healthy lifestyles information is now being included as standard.

Another benefit of having Healthy Lifestyle Advisors is packaging both physical and mental health specialist support alongside each other. One fisherman told us that asking for help for PTSD was easier because he had previously accessed and trusted dental and health check services on the quayside.

'It's there and it's easily accessible. You can sort of slip away and have a chat.

If you had to go to your doctor and say, 'Look, I'm not feeling right' and then he had to pass you on to somebody else and they pass you on, you would never do it.'

Fisherman, Newlyn

Newlyn

It took time for the Healthy Lifestyle Advisor to establish key partnerships and relationships within the fishing industry. Mainly achieved through a presence on the harbourside, talking to the fishermen, offering a cup of tea and a chat. The brief and informal conversations have been essential in building their trust and understanding the challenges fishermen face.

This model originated in Newlyn and is now used throughout ports in Cornwall, East Yorkshire and Aberdeenshire. Once trust is built, this then opens conversations about health and wellbeing, along with the offer of more formal NHS Health Checks for cardiovascular risk, diabetes, and other long-term conditions.

Healthy Cornwall acknowledged the increased trust and engagement levels that the Healthy Lifestyle Advisor had established and agreed to run Mental Health First Aid sessions for Seafit. Usually, participants have to pay for this course, but it was fully funded for a mix of fishermen, family members and harbourmasters. This is a positive step in raising important messages around mental health, providing those living in fishing communities with knowledge and confidence to have peer-led conversations about living with mental health issues. There is potential to have a 'Peer Champion' in each fishing port to begin to form part of a longer-term programme legacy.

The Healthy Lifestyle Advisor also developed links with a local Primary Care Network, St Austell Healthcare. Working closely with the Social Prescribing Team enabling them to understand the needs of the fishermen, they have agreed to put alerts on their system to offer up priority calls/appointments. They will also look to establish regular Wellman Health Clinics for fishermen in other ports.

'I would not of stopped smoking, as I only did so due to the health trainers being there for help and support.'

Survey Respondent

Healthy Lifestyle Advisors

SeaFit has raised a local directive for working with vulnerable, hard-to-engage groups, particularly in areas of inequality within their geographical location.

Promoting such direct and targeted work will transform the way we approach hard-to-reach communities in the future.

SeaFit has a created a footprint for bringing in secondary supporting services and specialists, with new formats for dental and physiotherapist contracting'.

The Humber NHS Foundation Trust

Bridlington

Through a specialist tripartite agreement, SeaFit, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and the Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust provided the equivalent of two full-time Healthtrainers to support targeted engagement along the Holderness coast.

The approach was also based on listening, communicating, building relationships and sharing information in order to have an overall impact on the health and wellbeing of fishermen.

Focus was placed on key health issues and conditions common to fishermen, with consideration for seasonal needs.

Campaigns ranged from diabetes to cancer awareness, healthy eating, dentistry, physiotherapy and eyesight tests. The use of a Boditrax, body scanning machine, enabled the fishermen to have a visual baseline for measuring their health and wellbeing.

The fishermen became quite competitive with each other and it made a huge difference to how they engaged with the Healthtrainer service. Stopping habits of a lifetime (smoking, alcohol) are not always straightforward, but the Boditrax machine allowed them to look at the whole person, review their statistics and draw on behavioural change, which has proven to be a real success.

Having a vehicle provided both a focal point and a mobile private space. This resource has influenced the approach health services may take in the future for providing services to targeted rural and isolated population groups. The current approach utilises larger vehicles, which require a dedicated driver with an HGV licence.

SeaFit has demonstrated that smaller vehicles can be used for specialist service delivery, driven on a standard car licence, opening up opportunities for more regular use and cost efficiencies. An example of this has been Primary Care looking at using mobile vehicles to run a female cancer smear campaign and vaccination clinics for vulnerable older adults.

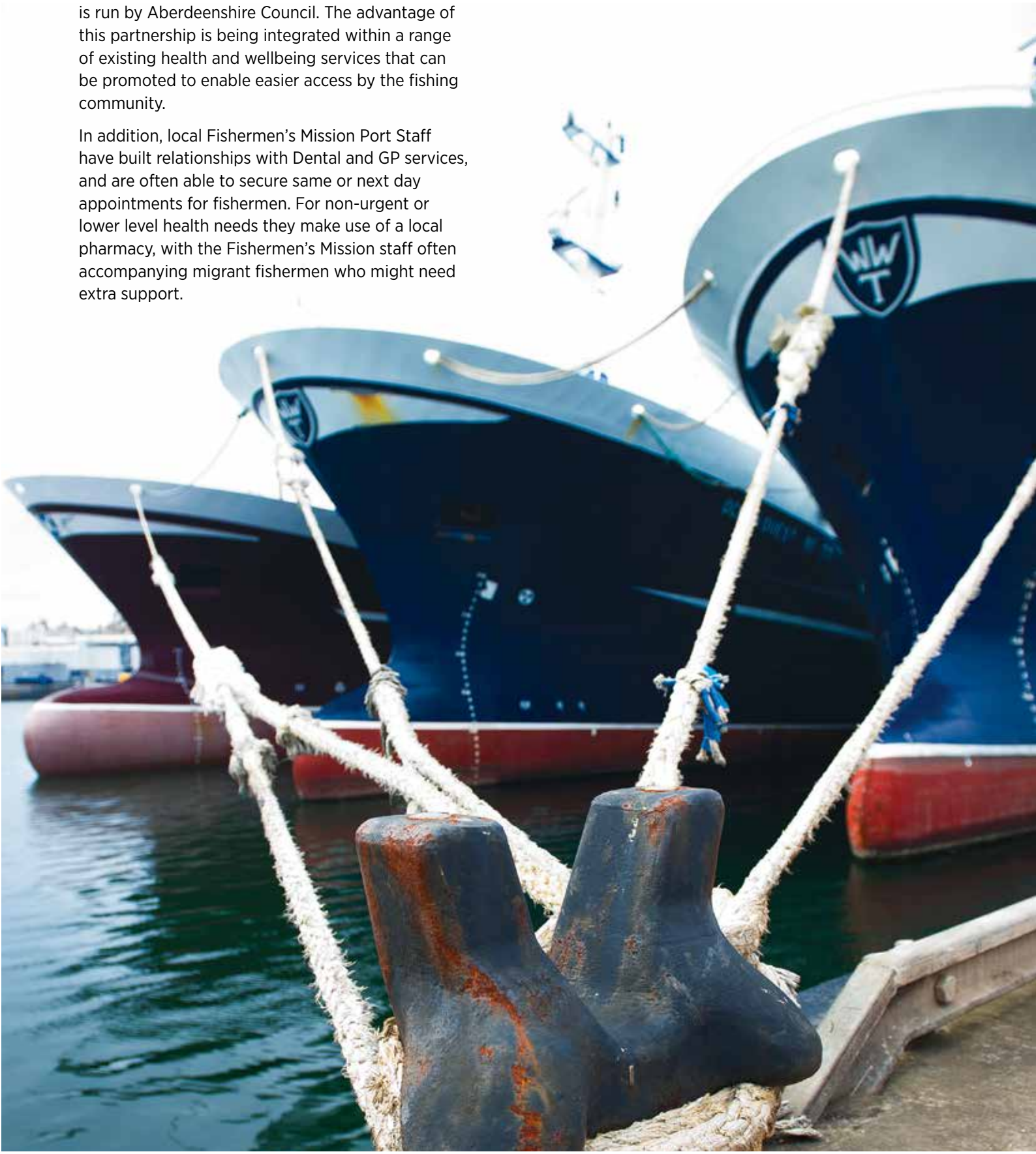
'From the first time I came in I could see I was going to be able to benefit from this (service) and it was vital. At the start, it opened my eyes to some things health wise and helped me make a number of changes for the positive. In all honesty I'm not quite convinced I'd still be around if this hadn't have come along when it did.'

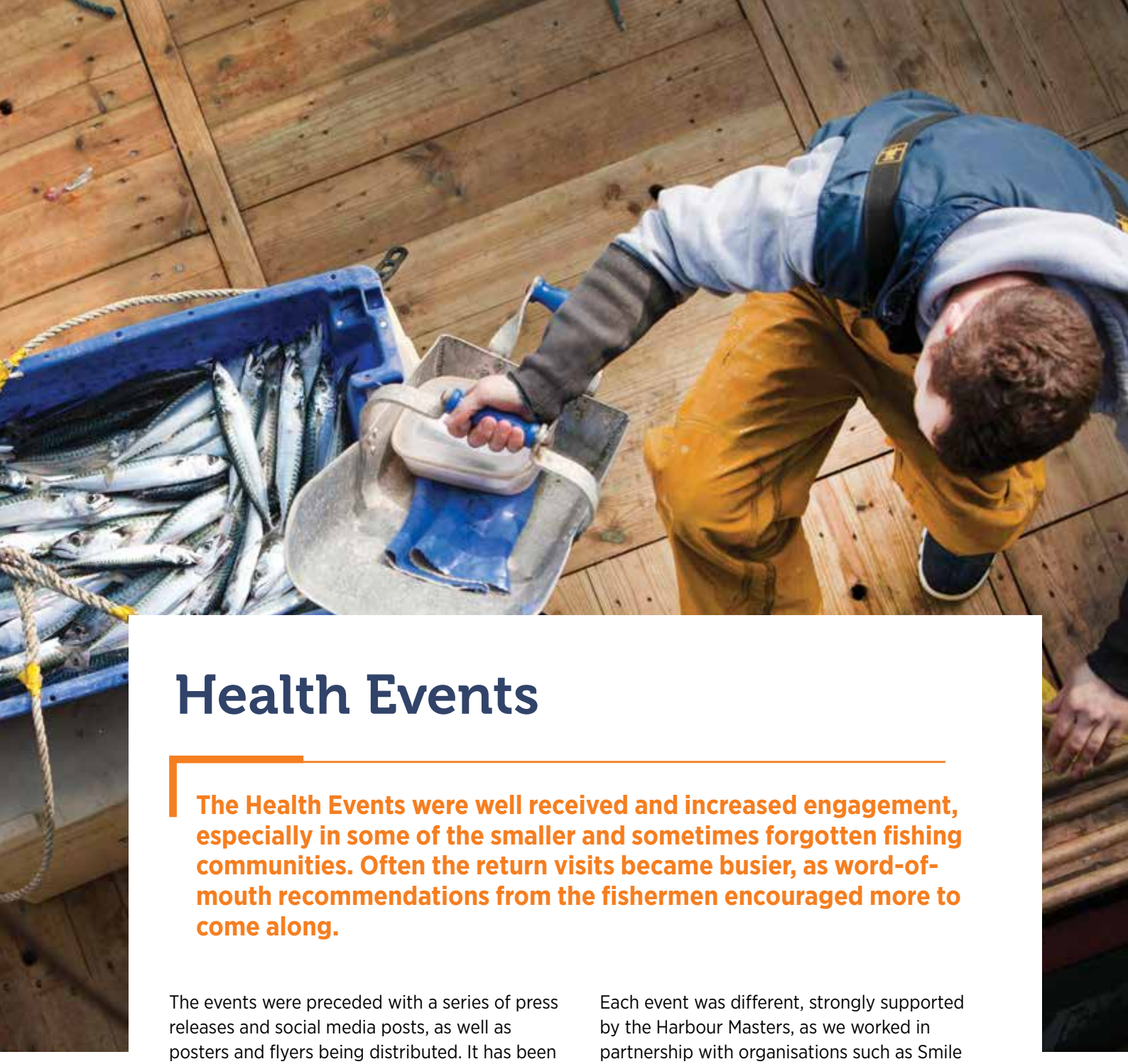
Fisherman, Bridlington

Aberdeenshire

It has taken time to get a Healthy Lifestyle Advisor in post covering Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Aberdeen, with the post only being created in August 2020 to run for two years. We are working in partnership with the Live Life Aberdeenshire programme which is run by Aberdeenshire Council. The advantage of this partnership is being integrated within a range of existing health and wellbeing services that can be promoted to enable easier access by the fishing community.

In addition, local Fishermen's Mission Port Staff have built relationships with Dental and GP services, and are often able to secure same or next day appointments for fishermen. For non-urgent or lower level health needs they make use of a local pharmacy, with the Fishermen's Mission staff often accompanying migrant fishermen who might need extra support.





Health Events

The Health Events were well received and increased engagement, especially in some of the smaller and sometimes forgotten fishing communities. Often the return visits became busier, as word-of-mouth recommendations from the fishermen encouraged more to come along.

The events were preceded with a series of press releases and social media posts, as well as posters and flyers being distributed. It has been vital to have the support and input from local Fishermen's Mission staff and volunteers, as they drew upon their considerable contacts.

Some of the Fishermen's Mission staff reported back that they then received more welfare requests for support immediately after a SeaFit health event had taken place, as fishermen became less embarrassed at asking for help.

Each event was different, strongly supported by the Harbour Masters, as we worked in partnership with organisations such as Smile Together, Dentaid, Macmillan and Prostate Cancer UK. Some events offered healthier breakfast options, providing fresh fruit and healthy snacks for the fishermen to enjoy on their rest breaks. This created a friendly, relaxed, and informal environment within which to offer support and answer questions.

Mental Health

Often fishermen never seek help, even those who have been through exceptionally difficult traumas. We were told many times that asking for help can be seen as a sign of weakness.

Poor mental health and/or constantly living with anxiety is an issue for many fishermen. The Seafarers Charity Fishing for a Future report highlighted evidence of mental health issues and depression, with over 95%of respondents indicating they regularly suffered from stress.

There are many factors that adversely affect fishermen's health and wellbeing such as the uncertainty of being fit to fish, perception of being weak when asking for help, boat or equipment failure, quotas, safety, unable to plan for future, financial insecurity and loneliness for retired fishermen and widows.

Some fishermen told us that their main concerns are related to the uncertainties around the future of the fishing industry as a whole. These stressors do not usually happen in isolation and an accumulation of issues can ultimately result in someone taking their own life.

'If Seafit had not have existed – worst case there could have been a couple of suicides especially with all this stress of the pandemic at the moment.' ***Fisherman, Newlyn***

There is still so much stigma associated with mental health. The majority of fishermen have told us that they would not ask for help, saying 'it's a case of bottle it up and get on with it'.

Even so we conducted almost **400** counselling sessions, engaging with **700** people. A stark reality is that unless we can change this mindset, more people will struggle with anxiety and depression that is likely to result in more fishermen taking their own lives.

Mental Health

'I would not have asked for help; it was actually Eddie from the Fishermen's Mission who suggested that I get help.

Probably would have just tried to carry on, it's only the fact that you were so easy to access' ***Service User***

Fairwinds

Fairwinds was commissioned to provide mental health support to fishermen and their families in Newlyn. As with other services it took time to become established. However, demand for a specialised Fishermen's Mental Health service has meant expanding to work with fishermen across Cornwall and reaching into Devon.

We have been able to respond quickly, an example being a young fisherman who attempted to take his own life was assessed, a treatment and risk management plan agreed, and his GP updated within 48 hours of contact. In recognition of the services Fairwinds is providing, NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly have provided funding for a separate Suicide Prevention project.

'Some fishermen have come forward and been willing to speak out in public about the support they've been given.

This is slowly beginning to break down the stigma associated with asking for mental health support, but there is a lot more to be done to break down barriers'.

Ceri Summers, Fairwinds

'The fishermen go through a lot of things in secret that they do not really speak about. Having a confidential service quayside has been beneficial'. ***Service User***

Having a bespoke service has helped in developing close ties within the fishing community and built key relationships with other support organisations such as local Fishermen's Mission staff, the Penlee Lifeboat, Seafood Cornwall Training, Harbourside Physiotherapy, Cornish Fish Producers Organisation, Local GPs, Fathom Podcast.

Participating in events such as the Fishermen's Family Couch to 5K and engaging with the Healthy Lifestyle Advisor has also helped to demonstrate a joined-up approach between physical and mental health.

FishWell

The FishWell project began in 2019 in partnership with the Mentis Tree CIC and has engaged with statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations, to identify and support the fishing community in Norfolk and Suffolk.

They have had a direct influence on local statutory service providers and successfully raised awareness of the fishing community across all levels, from front line staff to senior management.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation NHS Trust featured the project in their staff newsletter and sent staff to the portside events, which as well as giving fishermen direct access to local statutory services, informs NHS employees of the barriers fishermen face in attending appointments.

The FishWell team delivered Parcels of Kindness food parcels, at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. This raised awareness of the support available, covered by local press, radio and TV. There is also an online presence with a Fishwell website and Facebook page, which will remain after the project end for information and signposting to the Fishermen's Mission **www.fishwell.org.uk**

Fishwell wanted to establish a baseline indication as to how fishermen were feeling during this time. 95 fishermen returned a Wellbeing questionnaire using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS):

- **56% scored positive on the wellbeing scales, meaning 44% of people's wellbeing was at risk**
- **50% of the sample had a negative response to "I've been feeling relaxed"**
- **75% of the sample had a negative response to "I've had energy to spare"**
- **36% of the sample had a negative response to I've been feeling optimistic about the future"**

Six months later we requested they complete a second WEMWBS questionnaire with a 64% return rate. The results show a marked decline in the wellbeing and mental health of this small sample. The uncertainty of the fishing industry, the impact of the Covid pandemic, and at the time anecdotal evidence around Brexit fishing rights, all impacting on how fishermen are feeling.

Two fishermen were happy to talk openly about the support received as they wanted to help reduce the stigma around mental ill health, and to promote the importance of accessing available support.

Steve in Lowestoft
www.youtube.com/watch?v=1baACFws6kY

Gerry in Southend
www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4tS5h8qW3g

'I didn't even want to be here anymore... I felt useless and decided it would be better for everyone if I weren't here... Through the counselling I'm in a much better place. I'm still here.' ***Gerry, Fisherman Southend***

"He's such an amazing guy. My partner said 'what's matter with you? You look different.' After only 1 hour I felt so much better and will continue to see him."

Steve Retired Fisherman, Lowestoft speaking about Peter, the Fishwell Counsellor

Optician

The optician who supported events in Northern Ireland noted a high number of fishermen having uncorrected refractive errors.

Astigmatism was also a common finding which causes squinting and eye strain if not corrected, as well as reduced vision. Presbyopia was prevalent, where the fishermen struggled with near vision, which is exacerbated by physical fatigue and long working hours. When they relax at night to use their phones, vision is often blurred.

Within all the fishermen, but particularly the Ghanaian fishermen, there were high levels of UV exposure, causing conjunctival hyperaemia and associated inflamed irritable eyes. Pterygium can grow across the visual axis causing significant loss of sight requiring corneal surgery.

Chronic UV exposure to the eyes is not only known to be causative in pingecula and pteryigium development, but also causing Basal Cell Carcinoma and Squamous Cell Carcinoma, skin lesions around the eye area, as well as premature cataract development and macular degeneration. Dry Eye was also a common occurrence, exacerbated by a dry, windy work environment and long working hours.

These conditions are all sight threatening and so early detection and prevention was highly recommended. This includes regular eye tests, wearing a cap with a peak or brim and use of UV protective lenses in glasses or sunglasses.

As a result of these findings during the second year of the SeaFit Programme we secured funding from Trinity House to implement an ongoing project called SightFit in partnership with Vision Express. Offering free eye tests and discounted glasses to fishermen who would normally have to pay for eye tests.

Physiotherapy

The Physiotherapy Network was operational in Mevagissey, Padstow, Newlyn, Plymouth, Looe, Newquay, Falmouth, Brixham, Mourne N.I., Peterhead, Oban, Kilkeel and Tarbert.

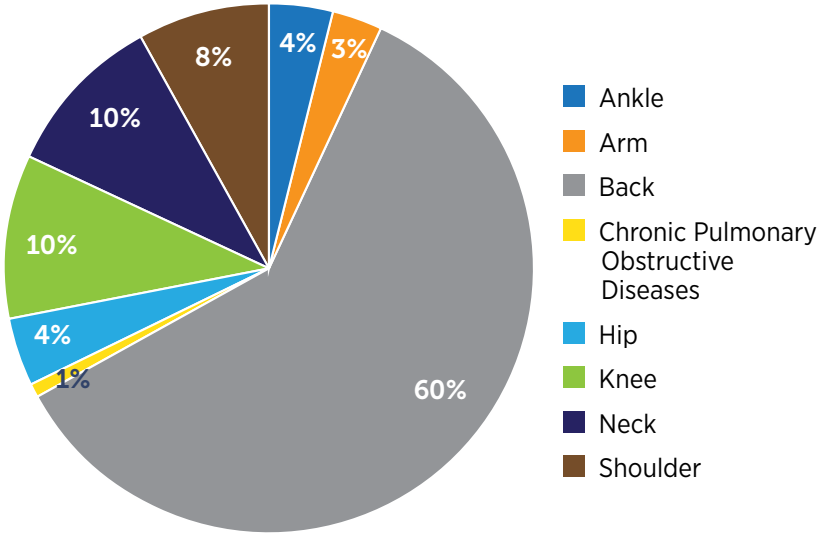
The physiotherapists were able to offer a flexible service to ensure the fishermen got the treatment they needed as soon as possible. Those who proactively marketed their service received a higher uptake of clients, some spent time on the quayside and attended health events to promote the services on offer.

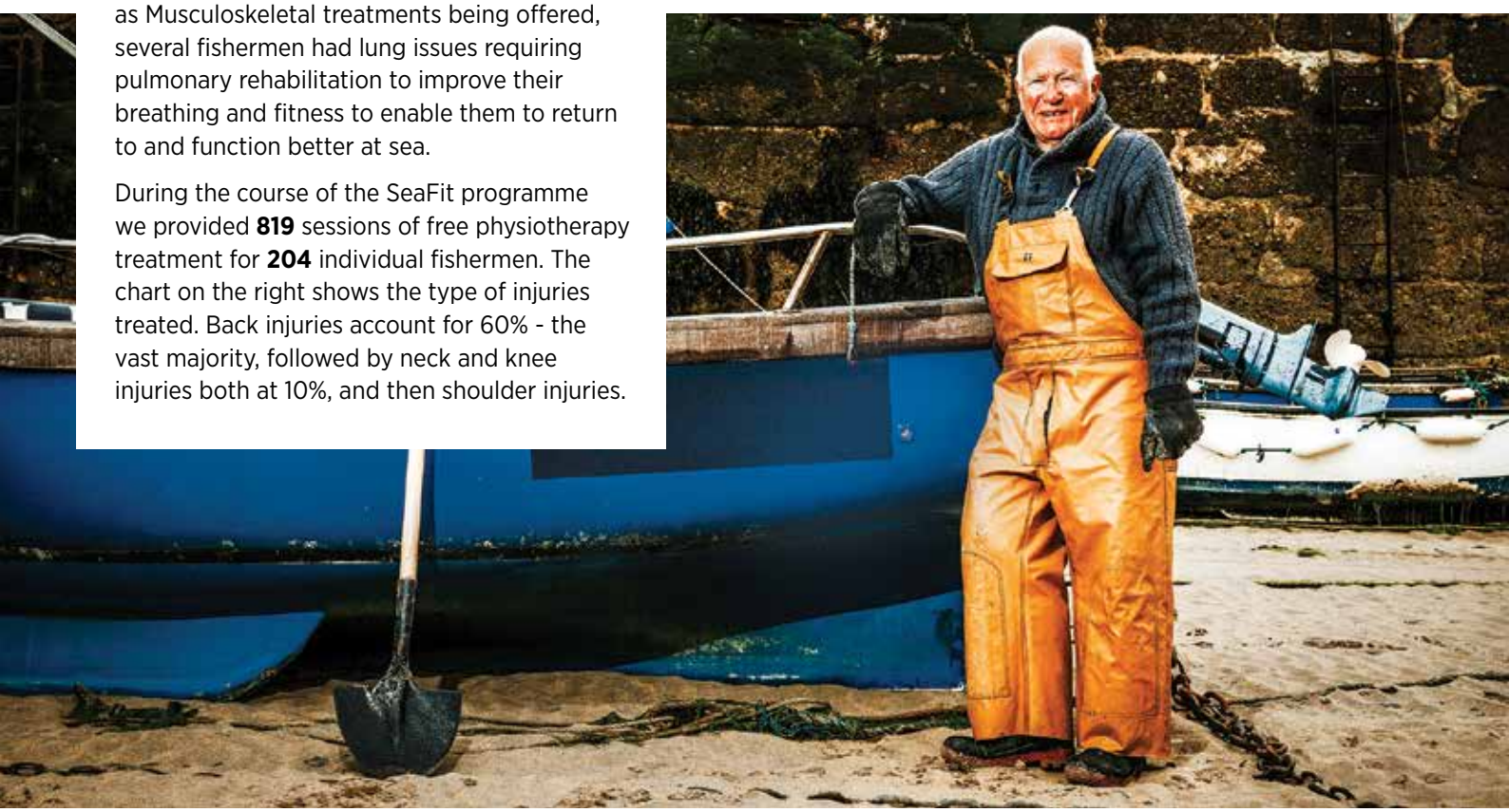
There was a supportive partnership between the Physiotherapy Network and the Seafarers Hospital Society, enabling a fast and responsive service, with queries answered and treatment authorised within 24 hours. We now have 14 physiotherapists who are able to work together developing best practice, for example, developing an exercise sheet for the shoulder injuries that fishermen are prone to, and that they might follow.

In addition to treatment the Network also provided a focus on prevention, which is something the NHS does not offer. As well as Musculoskeletal treatments being offered, several fishermen had lung issues requiring pulmonary rehabilitation to improve their breathing and fitness to enable them to return to and function better at sea.

During the course of the SeaFit programme we provided **819** sessions of free physiotherapy treatment for **204** individual fishermen. The chart on the right shows the type of injuries treated. Back injuries account for 60% - the vast majority, followed by neck and knee injuries both at 10%, and then shoulder injuries.

Types of injury treated





Dentistry

We noticed significant trends in the need for mobile dentistry, appalling oral hygiene and advanced gum disease meant that multiple extractions and fillings were needed.

Our primary aim was to alleviate any immediate acute dental pain, whilst delivering services that met the needs of the fishermen's irregular working hours.

Some fishermen were in constant pain from ill-fitting or broken dentures, ulcers, untreated fillings, bleeding gums, and infections resulting in tooth loss because they could not access or pay for treatment.

It was not only the physical impact of losing teeth, lack of dental care also affects self-confidence and mental health with some struggling to eat, smile and speak.

Several people told us that they were ashamed of showing their teeth to a dentist after years of neglect.

We trialled 4 different dental models:

1. **Dentaid Mobile Dental Unit** (MDU) providing emergency/urgent harbourside treatment.
2. **Troon Dental Studio** provided specifically reserved appointments for fishermen.
3. **Bridlington Dental Practice** conducted harbourside assessments, with follow up treatment at their dental surgery.
4. **Smile Together MDU** providing urgent treatment, dental surgery and follow up treatment.

There were limitations in all 4 models, particularly around appointment-based treatment, with only half the fishermen who required additional treatment attending appointments. The treatment needed for those who did attend was extensive, over 70% of those treated hadn't seen a dentist in the last five years and resulted in higher than expected dental costs.

Those we spoke to said the reason for not seeing a dentist was mainly due to work commitments or not being able to find an NHS dentist. Several admitted they were fearful of the dentist, and some were still pulling their own teeth out when the pain became too much.

Some dental sessions were emotional, as providers received tearful thanks. One fisherman, when he received his first set of dentures, said it gave him confidence to smile again. The dental nurse, dentist and receptionist were all in tears with him.

We are acutely aware that there are not enough NHS dental services being commissioned, making it even more difficult for fishermen and their families to access affordable dental treatment. Even with subsidised payments some of the costs prevented fishermen completing their treatment.

In some locations those that required on-going treatment were referred to NHS dentists, however, the dentist was not optimistic about their chances of receiving treatment due to the acute shortage of NHS dental services. In Cornwall the average waiting time to see an NHS dentist is around three years.

Whilst we couldn't provide dental treatment in 2020 due to the pandemic, in line with Covid-19 safety measures Smile Together brought an experienced qualified Oral Health Dental Nurse to the harbours to:

- Improve knowledge and awareness of good oral health
- Share ways to reduce sugar intake and change eating habits
- Provide toothbrushing advice to improve dental health
- Signpost to emergency dental provision if required

Of the total **495** people who received treatment, we have made a start in providing an accessible service, but there is a long way to go to make dentistry more accessible, affordable, and less frightening for many fishermen and their families.

‘I haven’t been to the dentist for almost 30 years. I had a bad experience once and just didn’t go back. After all this time I can’t get a dentist anyway, I did phone some, but they couldn’t see me’.

Sarah, Fisherman

‘I’ve not been able to eat on one side for about a year now because it hurts too much. I’ve got a couple of broken teeth and half a tooth missing. I haven’t been to the dentist for 10 years and I’m nervous about the whole thing. I just put up with the toothache because I’ve had it long enough.’

Luke, Fisherman, Poole

Partner Feedback

Smile Together CIC

Smile Together CIC worked with the SeaFit Programme running their Smiles at Sea project. They took a mobile dental unit to harboursides across Cornwall and Devon, providing free check-ups, urgent and emergency dental treatment and oral cancer screening for fishermen and their dependent family members

This partnership has led to Smiles at Sea winning the national Dental Awards 2019 for 'Best Outreach or Charity Initiative' and being shortlisted in the Third Sector Business Charity Awards 2020 for 'Project of the Year'.

Most recently their Quality Assurance and Compliance Lead, Joy Callender won 2 awards in the Society of British Dental Nurses Annual Awards 2020, for Long Service and Contribution to Charity Work based on her commitment to projects such as Smiles at Sea.

Smile Together have said that the outcomes from our partnership not only make a very real and sustainable difference to fishermen and family members but help raise awareness of the importance of oral health care – for example, the BBC filmed their work at the harboursides and in local schools.

'We regard this as a fantastic example of organisations working in partnership, making a real difference to a traditionally hard to reach community'.

Tracey Wilson, Smile Together

'There is nothing more meaningful than reaching people in their own world. Working on the harbourside permitted us to reach right into the fishing community. Given the working patterns of the fishing community accessing such services ordinarily can be difficult so bringing information to them is of such great importance'.

Elaine Perry, Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan Information and Support Service

The Macmillan Mobile Information and Support Team have hugely valued working alongside Seafit as it enabled them to access fishing communities that they may not have otherwise reached. The Macmillan team attended events at harboursides across Cornwall, Devon, and Dorset to reach out to hundreds of fishermen and their families.

They said that this way of working enabled them to reach fishermen in their own working environments. They were able to raise awareness of signs and symptoms of cancer, signpost to medical teams, offer emotional support, talk to people with cancer, their friends and family, offer bereavement support and financial support.

Bridlington Quayside Health Trainer

'I think the biggest lesson I have learnt from this project is the need to build a rapport with the fishermen first of all. They can be hard to engage and do not take kindly to a stranger dictating a healthy lifestyle law. Building this trust can be a long task, but by taking an interest in their work, asking open-ended questions and making ourselves available on the quayside regularly, this has soon broken down the barriers for us to be able to engage in health and lifestyle discussions.

I have built up some fantastic relationships with fishermen and now feel we're being pro-actively engaged as and when issues occur. For example some skippers are sending crewmen to us for support on specific issues'.

Richard Beecroft, Senior Health Trainer, Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust

'A lot has been learnt from the SeaFit model and the Health Improvement Team will use SeaFit as a way to inform new services towards this way of working.

Maintaining quayside presence is vital in keeping the fishermen engaged.

The model will be used as an example for a culture shift in community teams and is likely to be rolled out to different vulnerable communities such as farming which is great news'.

Team Lead Healthy Cornwall

NHS Cornwall

By extending the SeaFit programme for a further 12 months into Year 3 the Team Lead for Healthy Cornwall believes we will continue to see a positive impact on the fishing community. Giving us time to focus more on the sustainability of the project outcomes to support the health and wellbeing of fishermen across Cornwall beyond 2021.

The group work and engagement we've undertaken with some fishermen's partners and dependents has also highlighted a new approach to influence uptake and service promotion, leading to greater engagement and service use.

NHS Cornwall have told us that by reviewing our model they can see opportunities for similar applications in other hard-to-reach communities.

Case Stories

Sarah's Story

Finding time to visit the dentist is very difficult when you work at sea. Sarah hadn't been for 29 years before Dentaid visited Poole Quay with the SeaFit Programme.

Sarah said she was almost ashamed to show a dentist her teeth after so long, but because Dentaid had come to the quay she decided to definitely take the opportunity.

Sarah received a full check up, scale and polish and now feels much more confident about her smile.

Dentaid first provided dental treatment at Poole Quay in 2018 and on the return visit in 2019 people were already waiting on the quayside for the mobile dental team to arrive, seeing a steady stream of people all day

'The problem is when you work at sea you can't take time of work to go to the dentist. When the tide is right you go to work and you work a long day.

You're part of a team and you have to fulfil your orders for your customers otherwise they'll go elsewhere.

It's the same with medical appointments, we just don't take days off sick. We do get toothache but we just take painkillers and go to work'.

Sarah, Fisherman, Poole

'Fantastic, brilliant, Ceri's an amazing lady. Had an accident, a fire that sunk my boat.

Afterwards I knew I had to talk about it and what was going on in my head, but in this industry you can't show weakness or you're thought of as weak.

I've recommended it to other people; once came out nearly in tears, someone asked me what was wrong so I told them.

You have to talk about things, not bottle it up. If not I'd have had a drink, probably become self-destructive.'

Nigel, Fisherman, Newlyn

Nigel's Story

Nigel met with our Fairwinds Mental Health Counsellor two weeks after his boat caught fire and has had regular counselling sessions.

He was on board his boat with a crew member, when an explosion resulted in an horrific fire. They had to paddle away from the boat and, thankfully were successfully rescued.

He has not been back on a large boat since the accident, but has managed to make adjustments and gone back to work on a small punt.

Because of the support Nigel received he has gone on to speak on podcasts and to journalists, including Hakai Magazine in Canada about his experience. He has also put himself forward for the Mental Health First Aid Training to become a Mental Health Champion in Newlyn.

Insights and Conclusion

The SeaFit Programme has enabled us to gain further insight into issues faced by fishermen in accessing health and wellbeing services. These insights confirm findings from recent reports that fishermen's health needs are not being met within current health service structures. Given the unique pressures faced by the fishing industry, having to pre-book appointments, when not being able to plan for time off, does not offer enough flexibility for many fishermen, whose work and lifestyle put them at risk of developing chronic and serious health issues in later life.

It has taken over two years of constant port visits to gain the trust of the fishermen. Through normalising informal health conversations on the quayside, we know that fishermen have engaged more, and actively sought support from our Healthy Lifestyle Advisors and Mental Health services. What is also encouraging is that some are openly talking to the media and to other fishermen about the support they've received.

Fishermen are more likely to engage with health services that are promoted and delivered on the quayside by known and trusted providers from their community. Having one person, who is locally recruited, and who can build rapport as a single point of contact provides essential continuity. Delivery staff/ volunteers need to be able to engage in quayside banter, as well as being empathetic, approachable, and flexible with working hours.

We know that any behaviour change takes time, through our regular drip-feeding of information and our constant visibility we have seen fishermen begin to engage in healthier behaviours. Nevertheless, the Healthy Lifestyle Advisors have told us that even though fishermen are aware of the services available they are often reluctant to directly ask for help and will wait until support is suggested. Therefore, if you want fishermen to engage with you, you must go to them, but more importantly you must first build trust. Time spent having a cup of tea and regular informal chats builds relationships crucial to engagement.

We have heard time and again from the fishermen that after many quayside conversations they would eventually 'pop-in' for a health check with our Healthy Lifestyle Advisors but would never have made an appointment at their GP surgery. Several individuals who were then referred to their GP as urgent 'red

flag' cases requiring immediate medical advice and input, shows the critical role these checks play in identifying potential life-threatening illnesses, which would otherwise have gone undetected. For example, one of the events revealed that 11% of those examined had high blood pressure while 17% had a high risk of diabetes.

It has been essential to obtain buy-in from other port users, staff, fishing associations, local businesses, and port offices. Using existing local networks, we developed collaborative methods to demonstrate alternative models of practical healthcare delivery. Providing fishermen and their families with free, confidential, health advice, mental health support, information, and guidance. We were able to offer a range of services such as our newly formed Physiotherapy Network, along with Opticians, Dentists and specialist Cancer support. These services all provided much needed flexible access by coming to the quayside, working around tides, shift, and seasonal fishing patterns, the likelihood of fishermen being in port and the availability of venues.

Working with maritime leaders enabled key health messages to be incorporated into fishing industry organisations. The Healthy Lifestyle and Mental Health Advisors provided presentations within both mandatory and refresher health and safety courses. Targeting skippers and boat owners to lead by example can also encourage crew members to stop smoking/drinking, lose weight, have regular health checks.

The SeaFit Programme Manager has played a key role in establishing and maintaining relationships and referral avenues that unify with Public Health England's Place Based Service approach. At a time when statutory services are under immense financial pressure, some locations are looking at integrating roles within their core health services, particularly where the Healthy Lifestyle Advisors are based in Cornwall, East Yorkshire and Aberdeenshire. There is also commitment for the joint Wellman clinical model run in Mevagissey to be replicated in other Cornish fishing towns and the SeaFit model to be taken into farming communities, thus linking in with more GPs and Primary Care Networks.

The dentists we've worked with have said that the oral health of the fishing population generally consists of gross neglect and is worse than those who are homeless. Most of the fishermen and family members treated by the dental teams had not accessed any dental care for years. Some fishermen have been suffering from continual pain and infection, even when offered subsidised treatment they refused because they needed to be at sea or were either too scared, or too embarrassed by the state of their teeth. Others are not seeking treatment because they cannot find an NHS dentist, there are long waiting lists for appointments and no flexibility to fit around working patterns. Of the four dental models we trialled the most cost effective was providing immediate quayside treatment; however, this omits vital follow up treatment which can run into thousands of pounds per person.

The Fishermen's Mission port staff has been invaluable when engaging with fishermen to promote health events. Their local knowledge attracts support from other port users, staff, fishing associations, local businesses, and port offices. They are also able to engage with fishermen and their families on the day and they report that they see an increase in demand for further support, picking up additional welfare needs after an event.

Such collaborative methodologies have demonstrated that alternative models of delivery do provide easier access, and consequently increase engagement with health services. Our health provider partners, and individual fishermen, have told us that there have been clear health benefits when using these models. Breaking down the stigma and barriers of seeking help for poor mental health is also possible, albeit a much slower process. However, there is still a long way to go, being able to change traditional mindsets, behaviours, and cultures, not only of the fishermen, but also of statutory health providers takes far longer than a two-year programme.

Trajectories

No one should have to face living in unbearable pain, contemplate suicide, or resort to extreme actions, because health or dental care is not available at a time and place specific to their traditional way of life.

We hope to continue to raise awareness of health and well-being support for as long as we can through our multi-agency partnerships. We are planning more health events on topic related health matters, such as prostate cancer, diabetes and stopping smoking. The work we've started in reaching out to Migrant crew members also has potential for us to work together to encourage more of them to register with a GP, and a possible competitive campaign to find the healthiest crews.

As part of the Fishermen's Mission core outreach approach, frontline port staff have been invaluable to the programme. They have a standing objective to identify and introduce initiatives to improve early intervention and prevention services. As and when local opportunities arise, these could be absorbed into the programme to enable stronger brand visibility.

We would like to establish Healthy Lifestyle Advisors in other locations, with thoughts of a hybrid model being run for other seafarers from two or three seafarers' centres, linking to an existing seafarers health and wellbeing app. We would also like to run a campaign for fishermen and their families to take up pre-paid dental plans to spread the costs of treatment.

It may be useful to tap into more informal routes of support through Peer Champions who would have a greater understanding of their local fishing community to form part of a longer-term legacy. An example being offering Mental Health First Aid training to fishermen to increase knowledge in recognising when crew mates were struggling.

There is need and opportunity to continue the work of the SeaFit Programme with statutory and local health services. Perhaps extending the programme to include gathering clinical evidence to show that changing service provision can accommodate and benefit the specific health needs of fishermen through bringing services to the quayside and offering repetitive drop-in sessions that don't require appointments.

'It would be a shame if it didn't exist, it has made it more accessible to a close-knit fishing community / industry, who wouldn't usually ask for help. It is very male orientated, so if it is not easily accessible then they would prefer to keep quiet and ignore it'.

Fisherman, Newlyn

Recommendations

Commercial fishing is renowned as being one of the most dangerous peacetime occupations, that impacts on both the physical and mental health of fishermen. So how do we ensure health services accommodate fishermen's needs?

The SeaFit Programme has demonstrated practical solutions, using place-based quayside models to make a significant impact in improving access to health and wellbeing services. Healthy Lifestyle Advisors, Mental Health Counsellors, Dentists, Opticians, Physiotherapists, and bespoke Health Events have demonstrated increased engagement through providing support on the quayside at times that suit the fishermen.

The following recommendations are aimed at providing extended flexibility to bring about change and add value to the contribution the voluntary sector already makes in improving health outcomes for fishermen and their families.

Recommendations for Voluntary Sector Organisations:

Recommendation 1: Fishermen are more likely to engage with health services that are promoted and delivered on the quayside by known and trusted providers from their community. Having a locally recruited person who can build rapport as a single point of contact provides essential continuity. Delivery staff/volunteers need to be able to engage in quayside banter, as well as being empathetic, approachable, and flexible with working hours.

Recommendation 2: Tackling the intricate issue of access requires progressively strengthening partnerships that enable organisations to work together. It is important to build on existing local networks, as well as welcoming new partners, to increase access. This in turn would help to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of fishermen and their families, enabling viable fishing communities to thrive.

Recommendation 3: Behaviour change takes time and requires long-term commitment. Only within the past few months have we been able to secure commitment from statutory organisations to absorb quayside services into their core business going into the fourth year of the programme. Therefore, organisations need to be willing to invest in longer-term programmes.

The Fishermen's Mission and the Seafarers Hospital Society are continuing to fund the SeaFit Programme, acknowledging that now is not the time to bring the programme to an end. Investing in services already in place will save costs, provide staff continuity, and further establish partnerships in different locations with trusted industry experts, welfare groups and local health providers.

Recommendation 4: The SeaFit Programme is complex, utilising cross-agency, collaborative partnerships between the NHS, public health, voluntary organisations, and the fishing industry.

Several providers have expressed interest in holding annual health events, however they want these to be coordinated and promoted via a central management point. Bringing together specialised teams that can proactively dovetail with other welfare and social support services, ensures maximum visibility and sharing of best practice.

Continuous messages on social media, local press, and radio also help raise awareness of the unique needs of coastal communities and promote the services and events available to support fishermen. Having a central point of management, accountable for all elements of programme delivery, reporting, coordinating, and monitoring enables many individual projects to be branded under one name.

Recommendations for Government and Statutory Organisations:

The NHS and Public Health have a significant role to play, not just in terms of commissioned services, but through changing policies to enable services to become more accessible. The Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) Annual Report 2021 Health in Coastal Communities acknowledges that these communities have been neglected and overlooked, resulting in some of the worst health outcomes in England, with lower life expectancy and higher rates of many major diseases.

Continued funding is needed; however, it is not just a question of financial resources. If we are to enhance our ability to engage with a wider cohort of the fishing population, we need to modify systems and approaches to meet them.

Recommendation 1: We agree with the CMO report and would welcome a much-needed national strategy to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in coastal communities. The strategy would need to be inclusive of active and retired fishermen, along with support for migrant crews working aboard UK fishing vessels. Ideally co-produced with fishermen and the organisations who support them.

The strategy also needs to recognise the diverse nature and needs of the fishing community for sustained improvement of fishermen's health and wellbeing, considering the many differences between coastal areas, not forgetting the smaller, less affluent ports and seasonal variations.

Recommendation 2: Addressing health inequalities are at the heart of NHS values, higher level discussion is needed with commissioners and providers working together to initiate health service change for the fishing industry.

The NHS Five Year Forward View sets out an expectation through the Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STP) and Integrated Care Systems (ICS) that clinical commissioners are to think creatively as to how service provision can be improved to suit local circumstances to reduce health inequalities.

A strategic proposal needs to be presented to coastal Health and Wellbeing Boards, who can bring together Local Authority and NHS representatives responsible for developing joint health and wellbeing strategies for their local populations

Recommendation 3: We are aware that there is an acute shortage of NHS dentists, with long waiting lists and private dental fees often beyond the reach of many fishing families. The fact that many fishermen have teeth in worse condition than people who are homeless is indicative that current appointment-based services do not work. In order to address the lack of NHS Dental provision a call for a national campaign is needed to allocate flexible quayside drop-in services and the continued use of mobile dental units to provide easier access to dental care for those fishermen and their families with the greatest need.

Recommendation 4: As stated in the King's Fund report place-based approaches require system changes that take time to deliver. Local and national leaders need to make a long-term commitment to the development of such place-based activities. We would agree that increased recognition and support from government officials and local authorities would help tackle specific difficulties fishermen currently face in accessing and attending health appointments.

The CMO's Annual Report 2021 acknowledges that attracting NHS and social care staff to coastal areas is difficult with foreshortened catchment areas for health services and limited transport, which in turn limit resources. Mobile place-based services are vital in these locations, particularly within mental health and dental sectors. They would reduce waiting times and help turn around what has become a major problem, given appointment-based services do not offer the flexibility that fishermen require.

Recommendation 5: The SeaFit Programme has begun to lay down a foundation for culture change amongst a hard to reach, predominantly male, workforce. Fishermen and their family members who received support are benefitting from improved health and are encouraging peers and crew members to also seek treatment or advice.

There is need and opportunity to continue the work of the SeaFit Programme with statutory and local health services. Perhaps extending the programme to include gathering clinical evidence to show that changing service provision can accommodate and benefit the specific health needs of fishermen through bringing services to the quayside and offering repetitive drop-in sessions that don't require appointments.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities

Partner Organisations

We would like to thank the following organisations for their support of the SeaFit Programme:

Main Partners:

The Fishermen's Mission
Seafarers Hospital Society
Funded by The Seafarers' Charity

Programme Partners:

Dentaid
Fairwinds Cornwall Psychological Therapy Service
Harbourside Physiotherapy
Healthy Cornwall, Cornwall Council
Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust
Mentis Tree CIC
Smile: Together CIC
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Health Event Providers:

Aberdeenshire Council/Live Life Aberdeenshire
Addaction Penzance
Alcoholics Anonymous
Alverton GP Surgery
Bridlington Dental Studio
British Red Cross
Community Energy Plymouth
Compass House GP Surgery
Cornish Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Credit Union
East Coast Community Health Trust
Eastern Seafish Training Association
Environment Agency
Faith Donaldson Optometrist
Faye Pedlar Physiotherapy
Girlyfisherman-Sarah Ready
Harbourmasters
Harwich Haven Authority
Henry Blogg Museum Cromer
Jen Cardew Physiotherapy
John Lake Shellfish
Kernow CCG
Kings Lynn Sea Food
LILLYS
Local PCSOs
Lynn Shellfish
Macmillan Cancer Support
NHS Grampian
Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
OneYou Plymouth
Peterhead Physiotherapy
Prostate Cancer UK
Plymouth Trawler Agents
Public Health Scotland (Aberdeenshire North)
RNLI
St Austell Health Care.
St Clare GP Surgery
Sandy Hill Physio, St Austell
Seafarers Advice Information Line (SAIL)
Seafarer Support
Seafood Cornwall Training
Social Prescribing Link Workers
Stephanie Murray Physio
Suicide Liaison Service
Tesco - Kings Lynn
The Fishing Amateurs
The Real Cornish Crab Company
Torbay Healthy Lifestyles
Troon Dental Studio
Turning Point
We Are With You
Western Maritime Training

SEAFIT PROGRAMME

Fit Body + Fit Mind = SeaFit

The Fishermen's Mission and the Seafarers Hospital Society, working in partnership to improve the health and wellbeing of fishermen and their families around the UK. Providing support via; face-to-face, phone, email, video.

Contact: Carol Elliott, Project Delivery Manager on **07486 319621**
email:**PDMSeafit@fishermensmission.org.uk**

Fairwinds Cornwall

Free, confidential advice & support for both active & retired fishermen & their families.

If you are feeling low or struggling to cope call **07934 720429** to book an initial appointment or email: **fairwinds781@outlook.com**

Fishwell Norfolk/ Suffolk

Helping to improve the mental health and wellbeing of active & retired fishermen & their families.

Contact: **01284 765854**
email: **info@fishwell.org.uk**

Physiotherapy Network

Are you suffering from muscular or joint pains? Neck or back pains? Tears, sprains or strains? Whiplash?

Fast, free advice and treatment

www.seahospital.org.uk/fast-access-physiotherapy/

Healthy Lifestyle Advisor Cornwall

Free NHS health checks plus help to stop smoking or lose weight

Contact: Healthy Cornwall on **07753 460957** or **01209 615600**

email: **healthy.cornwall@cornwall.gov.uk**

healthtrainers working with fishermen

Health Trainers Yorkshire Coast

Free support & advice to make healthier lifestyle choices

Contact: **0800 9177752** or **07816 863581**

email: **hnf-tr.healthtrainers@nhs.net**

Healthy Lifestyle Advisor Aberdeenshire

Free healthy lifestyle advice & support to help stop smoking, drinking or lose weight

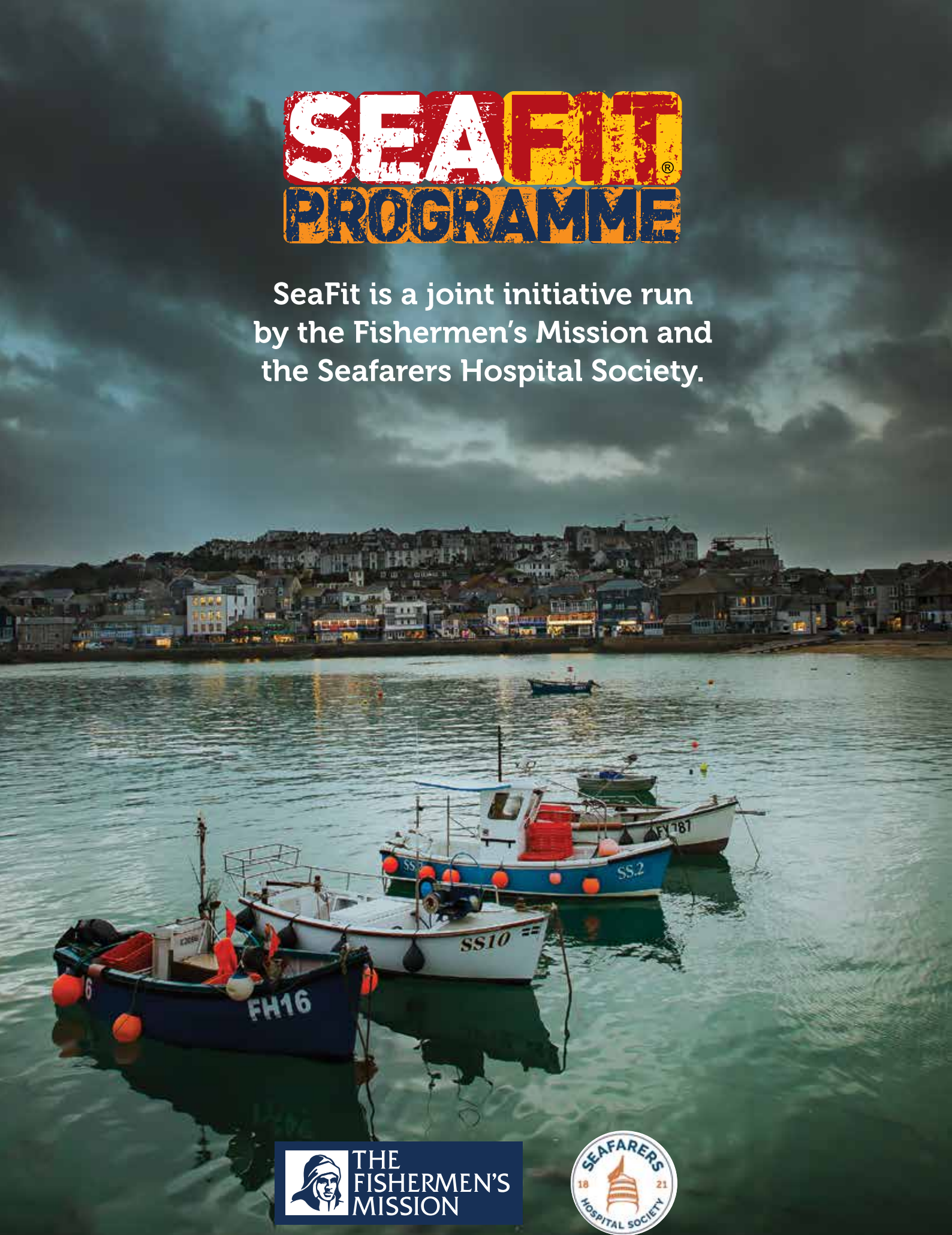
Contact:
07436 020165 or **01467 468915**

email: **healthylifestyleadvisor@aberdeenshire.gov.uk**

Fishermen's Mission, Registered Charity England & Wales No. 232822. Seafarers Hospital Society, Registered Charity England & Wales No. 232822.

SEAFIT® PROGRAMME

SeaFit is a joint initiative run by the Fishermen's Mission and the Seafarers Hospital Society.



THE FISHERMEN'S MISSION

SEAFARERS 18 21 HOSPITAL SOCIETY

@GetSeaFit • @seahospital • www.fishermensmission.org.uk • www.seahospital.org.uk

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