Framework for UK Cruise Operations for the Management of Seafarers during COVID-19

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to identify measures and provide recommendations **for the management of seafarers** on the resumption of cruise ship operations from the UK, in the context of Coronavirus (COVID-19). This framework has been developed by the UK Chamber of Shipping in partnership with key sector stakeholders and provides information for cruise lines and operators. The UK cruise sector covers a diverse range of ports, ships, and voyages. It is up to each organisation to arrive at a suitable risk control strategy based on the range of ports, ships, voyages and operations it provides.

The document outlines general measures which may be taken to enable a phased reopening of cruise travel during the COVID-19 pandemic and provides that the safety and well-being of employees is paramount. The scientific understanding of COVID-19 is being constantly updated, and the response to it will likewise have the ability to evolve to reflect those changes to match associated risks.

Where applicable and practical this document will adopt or reference pre-existing UK Government COVID-19 guidance issues by the UK Government. In other words, UK guidance designed for situations ashore will be replicated on board cruise ships, where appropriate. It is important to note that many of the guidance sources provided throughout this document apply to England only. There may be different guidance in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as other countries. Operators and seafarers should check the equivalent guidance depending on area of operation.

Fundamental to this approach is the completion of a risk assessment which helps organisations identify appropriate measures to control or manage the risks in workplaces and the services they provide. There are various types of risk assessments available to control different types of risks. This document mainly focuses on health and safety risk assessments to manage the risks of COVID-19 transmission. It is for this reason that the following information has been produced in a way that encompasses risks to be assessed for the seafarers' process journey, to allow the introduction of appropriate mitigations to manage these risks. Due to the rapidly evolving pandemic situation it is anticipated that risks will need to be periodically re-assessed, and the appropriate mitigation measures will change appropriately over time and be updated.

This information will be supplemented by company specific COVID-19 Management Plans[1] containing policies and procedures which will cover operational requirements, including ship to shore interfaces. These company policies and procedures will enable an itinerary and vessel specific risk assessment and document the mitigation measures for those identified risks to provide operator, seafarers and passengers reassurance.

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[1] A unique code has been given to each of the section headings and paragraph headings to allow operators to use this framework when creating their COVID-19 management plans

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1. SEAFARERS *(CRS1)*
Reference documents:

- [Maritime Labour Convention, 2006](#)

A seafarer is defined as *any person who is employed or engaged or works in any capacity on board a ship.*

1.1 Seafarer selection *(CRS1.1)*
The selection of crew should not be restricted based on nationality nor the place of ordinary residence.

1.2 Seafarer embarkation *(CRS1.2)*
The following guidance should be taken into account:

- [IMO Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.14 (5 May 2020) – Recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus pandemic](#)
- [IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.4/Rev.1 (28 May 2020) – ICS Guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers](#)

Prior to embarkation, seafarers joining the ship must comply with the health precautions and requirements provided by the IMO, flag state, port state and national authorities. As these requirements are updated, so will the operator protocols.

Whilst not a requirement within UK legislation, it would be considered prudent to quarantine seafarers upon arrival in the UK. Such seafarers will be permitted to start work upon completion of the self-isolation period and confirmation of a negative test result towards the end of the self-isolation period. Any individual who tests positive will be required to be referred to the national health authority and to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the positive test.

Operators should use the *[IMO Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.14](#)* and *[IMO Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.4/Rev.1](#)* to assist in guiding their embarkation protocols.

The protocols for joining a ship have been split up into 6 key locations:

- ***Location 1** – Place of ordinary residence*
- ***Location 2** – Airport of departure*
- ***Location 3** – Aircraft*
- ***Location 4** – Airport of arrival*
- ***Location 5** – Seaport*
- ***Location 6** – Ship*

1.2.1 Place of ordinary residence *(CRS1.2.1)*
Operators should provide seafarers with detailed information on their COVID-19 Management Plan prior to departure, including any new changes to protocols. Seafarers should inform the operator of any changes to their health or the health of members of their household during their time at their place of ordinary residence immediately before leaving to travel to join a ship and must follow any national requirements applicable in the country prior to departure.

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1.2.2 Airport of departure *(CRS1.2.2)*
The following guidance should be taken into account:

- [UK Government safer aviation guidance for passengers](#)

Seafarers should be informed to:

- Maintain social distance
- Wash hands regularly
- Avoid touching their face
- Wear a face covering or mask that covers nose and mouth (following local protocols)
- Keep all relevant documents required for travel to ship accessible

1.2.3 Aircraft *(CRS1.2.3)*
The following guidance should be taken into account:

- [UK Government safer aviation guidance for passengers](#)

Seafarers must follow the UK guidance on how to travel safely in airports and on aircraft during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

1.2.4 Airport of arrival *(CRS1.2.4)*
The following guidance should be taken into account:

- [UK Government travel corridors](#)

The operator will instruct and require seafarers to comply with any instructions and procedures from relevant local or national authorities, regarding self-isolation or quarantine in a hotel, or another place of accommodation that might be determined by the local or national authorities. If done onboard, the seafarer will be accommodated in a single cabin with private facilities as not to interact in any way with the general population onboard.

1.2.5 Seaport *(CRS1.2.5)*
Operators should, where possible, manage the interaction between seafarers and port personnel to control the risk of seafarers becoming infected with COVID-19 by facilitating transport to the ship.

Upon embarkation, seafarers should comply with the operators COVID-19 management plans which may require medical testing.

1.2.6 Ship *(CRS1.2.6)*
Operators should, where possible, verify that seafarers are healthy and are not infectious prior to embarkation to mitigate the risk of infecting seafarers. This should be done in a way which follows the operators COVID-19 management plan.

Operators should determine the duration of time in which any special measure or requirements will be applied to seafarers that have recently joined the ship, taking into account any relevant requirements of the flag State.

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1.3 Testing *(CRS1.3)*
The following guidance should be taken into account:

- [UK Government guidance for contacts of people with confirmed COVID-19 who do not live with the person](#)
- [UK Government investigation and clinical management of COVID-19](#)
- [Public Health (Ships) Regulation, 1979](#)
- [International Health Regulations, 2005](#)

For newly embarking seafarers and prior to them returning to work or commencing their duties, operators should check that all crew have been tested for COVID-19.

Routine onboard health monitoring for all seafarers can help with early detection of symptomatic COVID-19 cases. Daily contactless temperature measurement should be considered, and all seafarers should immediately report to supervisors any symptoms compatible with COVID-19. Any seafarer with symptoms or a temperature at or above 37.8°C should immediately self-isolate, be tested, be provided with appropriate PPE (see [paragraph 1.10](#)) and inform their designated supervisor/manager and medical staff.

In addition to this, and where feasible, periodic PCR testing for COVID-19 may be used at regular intervals to help check there are no asymptomatic seafarer cases onboard.

If **one seafarer** shows symptoms of COVID-19, or if an asymptomatic person tests positive, the contingency plan should be immediately implemented. The individual should self-isolate alone in an isolation cabin, and those identified as close contacts must be quarantined (see [paragraph 1.4](#) and [paragraph 1.5](#)) until COVID-19 test results are available. Whilst a seafarer with possible infection is being tested, retroactive contact tracing should be started to identify where the suspected seafarer has been and to identify everyone who may have been a close contact. Persons with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 should be safely isolated away from the general population of the cruise ship. The outbreak management plan should not affect the ability of the vessel to safely operate and respond to emergencies as required. Therefore, the contingency planning for outbreaks of COVID-19 should include an evaluation of appropriate numbers of seafarers and appropriate locations of cabins to be used solely for isolation purposes.

In accordance with International Health Regulations and the subsequent requirement in the Public Health (Ships) Regulations, the Master of the vessel should contact the authorities of the next port of call to agree on the appropriate actions which need to take place in port.

Operators should promote a culture of self-reporting within the seafarers onboard with reassurances on the appropriate measures taken to manage and protect each case.

1.4 Social distancing *(CRS1.4)*
In order to limit interaction among seafarers, they should live and work in small cohorts. Seafarer cohorts should be based around job type and shift time. Each group may be given scheduled times for food service, domestic and lifestyle activities to minimise interaction between cohorts. Interaction between each cohort should be avoided as much as possible. This will help avoid possible infection transmission between more than small groups of people on board in the management of any potential COVID-19 case and their contacts and should help to limit the number of exposed persons, as well as tracing possible close contacts.

1.5 Living arrangements *(CRS1.5)*
Where possible, it is advised that the maximum number of seafarers living in the same cabin should be two. This is particularly important for seafarers where social distancing and interaction cannot be avoided. Cohorting in terms of living arrangements should be maintained with seafarers who are working together.

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1.6 Seafarer education and competence *(CRS1.6)*

All seafarers intending to work on board, as well as external contractors who interact with passengers or seafarers onboard or ashore should complete training on COVID-19 appropriate to their onboard role. For external contractors, this training may be conducted internally, or they may be supplied with written guidance describing the symptoms and requesting them to report symptoms, wash hands regularly, perform hand hygiene frequently, practise physical distancing and wear face coverings if unable to socially distance.

1.7 Training *(CRS1.7)*

Operators should provide training and instructions to their seafarers regarding the recognition of the signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19. Seafarers should be reminded of the procedures that should be followed when a passenger or a seafarer displays signs and symptoms indicative of COVID-19. Each seafarer should be trained in their role and responsibilities to implement measures as per the contingency plan.

As part of their training, seafarers should be instructed that if they develop symptoms compatible with COVID-19, they should not come to work. If symptoms develop while working, the seafarer should immediately self-isolate, wear a surgical mask to reduce infection to others and inform their designated supervisor/manager and medical staff immediately. Both self-reporting and reporting of other seafarers or passengers observed with relevant symptoms should be encouraged.

1.8 Appropriate manning *(CRS1.8)*

As part of the COVID-19 management plan, there should be clear definitions of roles and responsibilities of the seafarers in case of an outbreak situation onboard in accordance with the stated requirements of the COVID-19 management plan. Each ship should have a designated coordinator of the contingency plan who, without undermining the overarching authority and responsibility of the master, has the authority to execute the company's infection prevention and control program. The designated coordinator should also carry out monitoring and assessments to verify the operations are COVID-19 appropriate. It is recommended that during the period of restart the coordinator be an Environmental Health or Public Health Officer or an onboard medical person who is a coordinator for the company's contingency plan. In addition to this, if there is a suspected case the Master in charge of the ship should contact the authorities of the next port of call to agree on the appropriate actions which need to take place at the port.

1.9 Outbreak response training *(CRS1.9)*

Operators should provide training and instructions to seafarers regarding physical distancing measures, managing crowds, use of PPE, retroactive contact tracing onboard, as well as protocols for cleaning and disinfection.

Medical staff onboard should be trained in appropriate sample collection as well as storage and transport of the samples for testing. They should also be able to care for a patient until their reach their next key port.

1.10 Personal protective equipment (PPE) *(CRS1.10)*

The type of occasions and places where PPE should be used should be considered in the COVID-19 Management Plan. It is recommended that operators review the occasions and places where PPE is needed, both for the protection of seafarers, but also passengers.

Prior to sailing, operators should take steps to verify that the vessel has a sufficient stock of appropriate PPE based on their risk assessment, contingency planning, the duration of the voyage and number of person onboard.

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1.11 Hygiene *(CRS1.11)*

Seafarers should be advised of the criticality to maintain excellent hand hygiene, with frequent and thorough hand washing using soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, then alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be used. The use of gloves should not replace good hand hygiene as wearing gloves can provide a false sense of security. They should also take extra care to not touch their faces.

Stations with alcohol-based hand sanitiser solutions should be available at all entrances/gangways to the ship and in areas where seafarers work. As part of the risk assessment, seafarers may be required to disinfect their hands prior to moving around the ship.

1.12 Contact tracing *(CRS1.12)*

The following guidance should be taken into account:

- UK Government guidance on travellers exempt from border rules in the UK
- UK Government Passenger Locator Form

Seafarers arriving in the UK will need to check the current requirements around completing a Passenger Locator Form and self-isolation.

Upon arrival in the UK, seafarers may be asked to show a Seafarers Identification Document (SID). If they don't have a SID, they can show their joining papers, seafarers employment agreement or a seafarer's discharge book (Continuous Certificate of Discharge) instead. Alternatively, they could show a basic training certificate or declaration from the registered owners of the vessel that they are a crew member.

1.13 Seafarer shore leave *(CRS1.13)*

Seafarers who visit or stay in local areas at the various destinations should be informed in a timely manner about any national or local measures or laws regarding COVID-19 and what restrictions they may be subject to on disembarking and re-embarking the vessel.

1.13.1 Screening *(CRS1.13.1)*

Seafarers who go ashore at away ports should be appropriately screened before re-embarking on the ship. This is done to identify seafarers with unknown COVID-19 infection.

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