

Personal safety precautions for job-seeking yacht crew

*Informing and empowering professional and
volunteer crew to understand their rights,
stay safe, and find the right support*



Version 1, September 2023



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- All crew ● Professional crew ● Volunteer crew

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The development and writing of this resource would not have been possible without the support and contributions of numerous individuals and organisations who recognise the urgency of addressing the personal safety issues being faced by many crew who work or volunteer on board yachts. Thank you for your willingness to give your valuable time and expertise to making this happen.

Thanks also to the Yacht Crew Help Steering Committee for their continued support; and to those organisations and individuals who have sponsored or donated to the project – your contributions have facilitated the design and publication of this important guidance.

Special thanks go out to those who shared their own personal safety experiences to provide additional insights into the intricacies of the challenges faced by being at sea when these issues occur, which helped to strengthen and broaden the guidance given, and to provide further justification for the need to act now. Your openness and strength will benefit crew everywhere and help to make the industry a safer place for all.

Those direct contributors who were happy to be named are listed below.



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Forewords

This resource was developed in direct response to an increase in calls to ISWAN's Yacht Crew Help service from crew who had experienced serious personal safety issues including bullying, harassment, and sexual violence, whilst working on board yachts. If crew are telling us that they need our help, it is our responsibility to respond with urgency and to engage the attention and cooperation of those who are responsible for their safety.

We have been overwhelmed by the willingness of so many to volunteer precious time out of their busy schedules to contribute to this resource. We recognise that it will not be all-encompassing, that updates and additions will need to be made, but we are very proud that it represents a coming-together of those who recognise the seriousness of these problems and want to see change. Far from trying to bring disrepute to the industry, by talking about these issues and working together to find solutions, we hope to make its future a safer, happier, more inclusive place for all those who love it and want to see it thrive.

Every seafarer has the right to work at sea without fear of abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence (ABHDV). Sadly, we regularly hear from both professional crew members and voluntary crew experiencing such treatment.

To try and combat this inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour, we welcome the

ISWAN is honoured to be involved in such an important initiative and we hope this will be just the beginning of many future projects, conversations, and collaborations to bring about change. We are extremely grateful to everyone who has inspired and supported this campaign, not least the individual crew who continue to be brave enough to reach out to Yacht Crew Help and ask for our help. We hope you take some comfort in the knowledge that your voices are being heard, and that your experiences have helped to shape this resource and will prevent others from being harmed in the future.

We hope that this resource and accompanying awareness campaign reaches as many crew as possible and helps to equip and empower you to understand your rights, be aware of what does and doesn't constitute acceptable behaviour and know where to turn for support and guidance should you experience harm whilst working at sea.

Georgia Allen, Projects and Relationships Manager, ISWAN

safety guidance provided within this document. We recommend anyone entering the industry to read the document thoroughly and retain it as a reference point throughout their career.

We want a successful Superyacht industry, but not at the expense of crew welfare.

Nautilus International

I was completely new to sailing when I decided to try volunteer crewing on a sailboat in 2020. Via an online crewing platform, I found a captain willing to host me in exchange for my work on his boat, in Tahiti, French Polynesia.

Unfortunately, on the first evening of my first night on board, anchored a few hundred meters away from a remote French Polynesian island, he sexually assaulted me. I was so distraught and shocked that I froze and went into dissociation, not knowing how to process what was happening to me, far away from home, in a vulnerable state of isolation and shame. To this day, I haven't healed from this experience.

I have since virtually met many women to whom this had also happened, and therefore decided to create a Facebook group to raise awareness of these criminal acts and provide safety precautions advice to new female volunteer crew. Since then, the group has grown to being more than 6,000 members strong and has reached out and helped more than 100 victims process what has happened to them and feel supported.

In 2021 I reached out to ISWAN as part of an advocacy effort to try and raise awareness of these crimes committed at sea and to promote a cultural change within the sailing community

to say, "NO TO ANY FORM OF ABUSE". I have received nothing but incredible support from ISWAN's staff and the Yacht Crew Help hotline. It was very healing for me.

This resource, developed based on my own list of safety precautions which I compiled with the support of the Sailing Safely for Women (SSW) Facebook community, is crucial in this effort and I hope will help to equip and empower crew to make the right choices, and to be fully informed when it comes to their safety. If I had seen these precautions prior to starting my own search for a boat to volunteer on, I can confidently say that I wouldn't have been assaulted. I wasn't aware, as I am now, that so many sexual predators were using their boats to isolate women and girls to assault them. The "surprise" effect is what allowed my victimisation.

Thank you ISWAN, and all the organisations/individuals who participated, for hearing my trauma and that of the other victims, for supporting me and this effort, and for participating in making the seas safer for all of us.

Chloe Russell, Sailing Safely for Women (SSW)



Yacht Crew Help

the lifeline for crew

ISWAN'S Yacht Crew Help

About

ISWAN's Yacht Crew Help is a free, confidential, multilingual helpline available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Yacht Crew Help provides practical, emotional and wellbeing support, with an additional short-term counselling facility where necessary, to yacht crew of any nationality. We offer a safe space and a non-judgmental listening ear for you to share your thoughts and feelings, and we provide support, information and/or resources to empower you to make the best decisions to find a resolution.

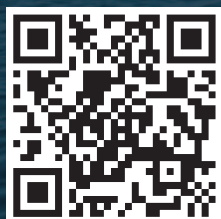
Contact details

For more information or to talk to one of our helpline team, visit: www.yachtcrewhelp.org or contact: **+44 203 713 7273**.

Yacht Crew Help is
operated by ISWAN



Find us here:





CREW

Introduction and background

Working on yachts is a rewarding experience for many, offering fantastic opportunities to learn new skills, travel the world, and form lasting friendships. However, living and working in the same environment can be intense. Being a long way from home, isolated from friends and family, and in close confinement with the same people day in and day out is often tough for even the most familiar crew mates.

There are many similarities between the circumstances of professional yacht crew and those in voluntary/nautical hitchhiking¹ roles, so this resource has been produced with the safety and wellbeing of all those who sail, of all gender identities, in mind.

Deciding to cross an ocean with others is a significant commitment and one which should not be made without due caution. Once you embark it can be too late to change your mind, so it is wise to always research any new employer² or role thoroughly. Whether you are entering paid employment or signing up to a voluntary role you are entitled to transparency, professionalism, and clear boundaries on board. You do not need to agree to anything that will make you feel

inadequately protected and cared for. A responsible employer will not shy away from discussions about the conditions of your employment or voluntary role.

Although there are many reputable and responsible employers out there who care about the health and safety of their crew, there are some crew who unfortunately have negative experiences on board. The first annual report for ISWAN's 24/7, multilingual, confidential helpline service Yacht Crew Help³ highlights that almost a quarter (24.3%) of yacht crew who contacted Yacht Crew Help in 2022 in relation to mental health challenges (16.6% of all issues) also raised an experience of some form of abuse. Overall, experiences of abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination, or violence (ABHDV) accounted for 9.2% of the issues raised. Amongst women, experiences of abuse accounted for 13.5% of issues raised to Yacht Crew Help, as opposed to 5.8% of issues raised by men. In many cases, yacht crew contacted the helpline for support to cope with bullying, aggression and at times assault, frequently by more senior crew members. Amongst women, half of all ABHDV-related contacts involved sexual abuse or harassment.

1. Voluntary crew, sometimes called 'nautical hitchhikers', usually join smaller boats – which may be owned and captained by the same person – in exchange for experience-gaining or passage. Such individuals are not always looking to transition to a professional role, rather they form part of a distinct community.

ISWAN advocates for all crew to be fairly compensated for their work on board yachts; we therefore encourage all crew to reflect on what fair compensation looks like to them and to ensure they never settle for less.

2. For the purposes of this resource, 'employer' is used to refer generally to those in charge of your employment on the boat – whether as a paid professional, dayworker, or volunteer. Depending on your individual circumstances this might be the boat owner, captain, crew manager, Head of Department, or someone else. This also applies to smaller vessels which are owned, managed, and captained by the same individual and which may be more likely to be recruiting specifically for voluntary crew.

3. <https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/resources/publications/yacht-crew-help-2022-a-year-in-data>

However, not all incidences are reported and it's important to highlight that they can be had by women, men, and by those with different gender identities. They can affect crew who are both green and experienced, young and mature, and of every rank and level. This resource has therefore been written with the personal safety of all yacht crew in mind. It sets out some steps that you can consider taking to help you find a role that is safe, positive and has all the right protections in place to ensure a great experience. Always remember that going through a negative experience – such as experiencing abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination, violence, or a crime – is never the fault of the victim or survivor, and [organisations like ISWAN are here to support and guide you if you do.](#)

There is a glossary at the end of this resource which should be able to help if you come across any words or terms that are unfamiliar or if you are not sure of their meaning.

ISWAN has consulted with multiple expert individuals and organisations for the writing of this resource and we hope it provides accessible, inclusive, and accurate information about personal safety for those working or volunteering in the yachting industry. We intend for this resource to be regularly reviewed and updated as new information related to crew personal safety and wellbeing is made available. However, if you do come across anything within this resource that you believe to be inaccurate, misleading, incomplete or to require revision, please do not hesitate to let us know at iswan@iswan.org.uk, citing 'Personal safety precautions for job-seeking yacht crew' in the subject line.



From an early age, we are encouraged to exercise caution around strangers and to think twice before entering their home alone. It is useful to apply this same logic and caution when thinking about going to live with a stranger or group of strangers on board their nautical home.

ISWAN's resource is here to help guide and support all crew to increase your awareness of the potential risks associated with job-hunting in the yachting industry. We aim to empower crew by providing you with the guidance and tools necessary to make informed, aware, bounded, and safe decisions about your next role, for what we hope will be an enriching and positive experience.



Preparations

All crew

Personal boundaries

It is good practice in life, and not just as crew, to take time to reflect on and define your own personal boundaries with regards to acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.

- It is useful to set personal limits regarding which behaviours you won't tolerate. This includes setting boundaries around your own behaviour, as well as that of others.
- Some examples of external behaviour which you may find unacceptable are being touched, asked personal questions, or told sexualised or offensive jokes. Some examples of internal boundaries you might set are deciding not to drink alcohol at work, or not to engage with guests who are flirtatious.
- Boundaries are personal and unique to you and do not need to be influenced by the opinions of others.
- An awareness of your own personal boundaries will help you to realise when they are being disrespected or threatened by the behaviour of others and may assist you with recognising early warning signs or red flags of behaviour that could later threaten your safety. You will then be able to make an informed decision about whether to try to remove yourself from the situation (if you can) or to seek assistance.
- There are many internal and external factors which can have an influence on your personal boundaries, including (but not limited to) your culture, background, education, and family values. Working in such a diverse industry means that you might meet people whose perceptions clash with your boundaries because of their own personal histories. The most important thing is that you spend time getting to know what feels right to you.
- It can be a good idea to write your personal boundaries down, so that you can revisit them whenever you feel unsure or pressured to compromise them. The more confident you are at communicating your boundaries, the more likely others are to respect them.

Make informed decisions

- It never hurts to do your research before entering a new industry – especially one that will take you away from home and into international waters. A quick internet search will retrieve plenty of articles, websites, books, and films which can give you an insight into what it's really like to live and work on board and some useful coping mechanisms. Learning about the different benefits and risks, roles and ranks, and types of boat and on-board cultures, will provide you with the required awareness to make an informed decision about whether a job in yachting is right for you.

Professional crew

- If you are planning to look for a professional role, be aware that you will be required to possess (as a minimum) the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) and an ENG1 medical certificate, and that there is a fee associated with acquiring these.

Create a robust CV or profile

- Avoid putting more than essential personal details (full name and email address is often sufficient) on your CV or profile. Do not include your passport, visa(s), or certification numbers – it is sufficient to only state the document titles and expiration dates.
- If adding a phone number, consider investing in a 'work' SIM card to help keep your professional and personal life separate. Many phones are now dual-SIM.
- Never share sensitive personal information, such as social security/National Insurance numbers, bank account information, or copies of your passport/visas, until you are sure of the identity of your employer.
- Legitimate employers will only ask for sensitive personal information after hiring you, not before your employment contract or volunteer agreement is signed.



Seeking a job

All crew

Research reputable agencies or job sites

- Ask around, read reviews, and get a feel for different recruitment agencies or job sites.
- If you can, speak with friends or mentors who have industry experience and ask for their recommendations.
- Ask to speak with someone over the phone first to get a feel for the approach, before committing to listing your profile or CV.
- Check the terms and conditions and confirm that your CV/profile will not be shared without your explicit consent. Aside from the fact that these contain personal details, this blanket approach to job-seeking looks unprofessional and can lead to duplication, diluted applications, and immediate rejection.
- Keep a record of the roles you apply for, including contact details and any other relevant information.

Professional crew

Agencies and the MLC⁴

- Check that any recruitment agency is certified Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 compliant. The UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has a [list](#) of recruitment and placement agencies it has approved under Regulation 1.4 of the MLC.
- The MCA has published [MGN 475\(M\) Amendment 1](#), which sets out guidance on UK implementation of MLC Regulation 1.4 on recruitment and placement, and includes forbidding agencies from directly or indirectly charging you a fee for finding you a job.
- Many other countries forbid this practice. You can visit your government or maritime authority website for information.
- If a recruitment agency is a member of the [Recruitment and Employment Confederation \(REC\)](#) it must comply with the REC Code of Practice, and you can complain to them about any non-compliance.
- Complaints about UK agencies can also be reported to the [Employment Agencies Standards Inspectorate](#).
- If you're worried, consider checking with a crew agent. These are the professionals who may be able to give you some insight about a boat's legitimacy.

4. If you are a stakeholder who can help us to expand the information in this section to include more countries and regions, please get in touch.

Applying for positions via social media or unregulated websites

ISWAN recommends avoiding applying for positions via social media or other unregulated channels. However, we recognise that the volume of jobs listed on these platforms, combined with steep competition, can make this difficult to avoid – especially if you are inexperienced/green or volunteer crew and lacking in experience or industry contacts.

- If you must apply for a role this way, exercise extra caution. Keep an eye out for [red flags](#), do your research, and be extra-vigilant for fake or exploitative profiles.
- If you have an existing, good relationship with an agency they may be happy for you to reach out and ask for their experienced opinion on the listing. You may even find that they have an existing connection to the employer and can help with putting in a good word.
- There are many growing online communities available to crew which offer best practice tips, warnings about untrustworthy employers, and peer-to-peer guidance and support. You can find some suggested links at the end of this resource.
- Be aware of the risks associated with getting a job abroad. Thoroughly research individual immigration laws ahead of travel, make sure you have all necessary up-to-date documents with you, and apply for any required visas related to your nationality. It may be advisable to consult with an immigration lawyer.
- Even though the yacht owner should pay for any visas or work permits required once on board, if you are looking to apply for a new position you will likely need certain visas and permits to even become eligible. Most yachts will only apply for visas and permits for crew that are already on board and have proven to be an asset to the vessel and/or are entering regions where they require new documents.
- Be prepared with somewhere to stay, as popular yacht destinations get very busy - particularly during peak seasons. Many green crew find themselves staying in packed-out hostels full of others in the same position.
- Take the opportunity to connect with other aspiring crew and form relationships. Not only can you make new friends, but you can also look out for one other and explore new areas more safely as a group.
- If you do go dock-walking, prepare by deciding in advance what sort of work you want and what you will/won't accept in terms of remuneration. This could be money, experience-gaining, safe passage, and/or guarantees of future work. Setting your boundaries in advance will empower you to only say yes to the opportunities which are right for you.

Practise safe and informed dock-walking

Although officially on the decline, dock-walking is still a common practice for crew – particularly those who are green or looking for volunteering roles. However, this does not mean it is safe or even legal. Due to ever-changing visa regulations, visiting another country with the intention of finding work by dock-walking puts you at risk of breaking the law. It is also never a reason to not ask for adequate acknowledgement and protection of your rights.

- If you engage in paid daywork it is still advisable to request a contract which lays out your rights of employment and insurance cover in case of an accident. You can find more on contracts in the next section.



Your rights and terms of employment

Professional crew

Know your employment rights and check they will be met

- Consider becoming a member of a trade union, such as [Nautilus International](#). They will be able to offer you advice and support in times of crisis.
 - The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) applies to all commercial yachts, regardless of their size.
 - For professional crew to work on a boat where the MLC applies, a legally enforceable Seafarers' Employment Agreement (SEA) is required which should have been approved by the state which the boat is flagged to. You should be provided with time to study and take advice on the content of a SEA before signing with an employer, and then receive a signed copy for your records.
 - All commercial yachts should also be carrying a Maritime Labour Certificate and a Declaration of Maritime Labour Compliance, unless it is exempt from this requirement because: it is under 500 gross tonnes, not operating on international voyages, or not operating from a foreign port. If in doubt, ask to see both.
 - Many larger, non-commercial yachts apply MLC on a purely voluntary basis, but these yachts will not carry such documentation and a flag state will not have approved the form of SEA. In these cases, you could ask to see their employment policies to assess for yourself the degree to which they take their employment obligations seriously.
- However, if a non-commercial yacht has been certified as being in voluntary compliance with the flag state, it is then still subject to the MLC in the same way as a commercial yacht.
 - You are strongly advised to ensure that you only seek employment on boats which are registered with an MLC-ratifying country. Check which country the boat is flagged to by asking or looking it up online. If the boat is flagged to a country which has not ratified the MLC, then you should still check if the SEA they offer is acceptable to you. You can check which flag states have ratified the MLC 2006 [here](#).
 - The UK MCA has published [MGN 476\(M\) Amendment 1](#), which sets out important advice for seafarers signing on to boats flying the flag of a state which has not ratified the MLC.
 - It is a good idea to do your own research on flag states, as some are more proactive than others. You can then actively look for work on board boats which are flying the flag of your preferred choice(s).
 - Read the employment/jobs act of your home nation – it helps to have a broad understanding of your rights in relation to this as some laws are applicable to maritime.

Agree an employment contract

- Always agree on employment expectations before travelling to join a boat.
- An employment contract will help to clarify expectations and boundaries, and to protect you if there are future disputes.
- Even if you are day-working, having a contract is good practice and any responsible employer will ask for one to protect both parties. At the very least, a short letter or agreement which lays out exactly what is expected from you, how long for, and what you will receive in return, can help to protect you from potential issues down the line.
- Make sure the following important details are covered in your contract:
 - Salary/pay (if paid employment)
 - Specifics of any probationary period
 - Insurance cover, including sickness and accidents
 - Associated costs (e.g. travel to the boat, repatriation at the end of your contract)
 - Hours of work and rest
 - Holiday/leisure days
 - Shore leave
 - Provision of food
 - Expected duties
 - Training requirements and provision
 - Tax and social security
 - Sick pay including compensation for disability and accidental death
 - Medical care
 - Compensation for a yacht's loss or foundering
 - Termination clause setting out the applicable notice period for each party
 - Country of governing law and jurisdiction for resolution of disputes of employment contract
- The yacht owner should pay for any visas or work permits required to undertake the job.
- Discuss potential issues – such as the need for repatriation due to unsuitability of role, health issues or injury, or if the yacht is bound for a war zone – up front. Agree on how such situations will be handled and your port of repatriation and build this into any written agreement.
- Be aware that repatriation costs will usually not be borne by the employer or yacht owner in cases of crew gross misconduct.
- Under the MLC there are owner obligations with regards to providing crew medical/health insurance.
- If the role is on a boat this is not under the MLC, and insurance is not provided or is not adequate, you may need to find your own cover. A good employer will be happy to openly discuss this with you.
- For UK and EU crew, be aware that the UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) or European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) are not replacements for having your own insurance cover and it is strongly advisable to have both.
- Policies on drugs and alcohol, bullying and harassment, mental health/wellbeing, and on accepting tips and gratuities should be included in a separate crew handbook. These policies will not be contractually binding but will still serve as guidance should such issues arise, and lack of such policies may indicate an unsafe on-board culture.

Volunteer crew still have (human) rights

- Although the law is less clear for voluntary crew, it is still strongly advisable to agree and sign a volunteer agreement which sets out a clear statement of what you can expect from the employer and what they can expect from you.
- Always agree on expectations before travelling to join a boat.
- A volunteer agreement will help to clarify expectations and boundaries, and to provide reference if there are future disputes. It should lay out exactly what is expected from you, how long for, and what you will receive in return.
- Make sure the following important details are covered in your volunteering agreement:
 - Insurance cover, including sickness and accidents
 - Associated costs (e.g. travel to the boat, repatriation at the end of your position)
 - Hours of work and rest
 - Holiday/leisure days
 - Shore leave
 - Provision of food
 - Expected duties
 - Training requirements and provision
 - Medical care
 - Termination clause setting out the applicable notice period for each party
- The yacht owner should pay for any visas or work permits required to undertake the job.
- Discuss potential issues – such as the need for repatriation due to unsuitability of role, health issues or injury, or if your yacht is bound for a war zone – up front. Agree on how such situations will be handled and your port of repatriation and build this into any written agreement.
- Be aware that repatriation costs will usually not be borne by the employer or yacht owner in cases of crew gross misconduct.
- If insurance is not provided or is not adequate, you may need to find your own cover. A good employer will be happy to openly discuss this with you. For UK and EU crew, be aware that the UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) or European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) are not replacements for having your own insurance cover and it is strongly advisable to have both.
- Attitudes towards drugs and alcohol, bullying and harassment, mental health/wellbeing, and on accepting tips and gratuities should be openly discussed, and a reluctance to do so may indicate an unsafe on-board culture.



Red flags

All crew

Trust your instincts and look out for red flags, such as:

- Advertising specifically for lone, novice, and/or women crew, or crew of a particular race or nationality. Reputable employers will not discriminate based on sex, race, or nationality.
- A recently created or empty social media profile.
- Unprofessional or personal email addresses. This is particularly applicable to the professional yachting space, as most superyachts now have boat-specific email addresses, e.g. name@yachtname.com
- Glaring grammatical or spelling errors in the listing, and/or inconsistency of information.
- Vague or missing details about the voyage and/or lack of clarity about when the yacht is leaving or where it is going.
- Offering something that seems too good to be true, e.g. unusual/extreme benefits and/or compensation that is much higher than the normal range.
- An unexpected offer of a position that you did not apply for – especially if this offer comes via social media.
- Offering you the job immediately without verifying your work experience, qualifications, related skills, or asking for references.
- Offering to pay for an airfare/travel to the yacht without you having seen or signed any contract or volunteering agreement first.
- Requesting advance payment for ‘costs’ associated with the position.
- Asking for money for background checks, recruitment fees, review of qualifications and experience, or anything else. As the jobseeker you should never be required to pay anything towards the process of your recruitment – this is solely the employer’s responsibility.
- Advertising for crew who are interested in exploring a romantic relationship.
- Asking for swimwear photos or wanting to assess your figure/physical appearance, including asking you to change your attire or to remove clothing during an interview.
- Advertising as a nudist or asking if you are comfortable with nudity on board – such behaviour may be used to blur boundaries and create an atmosphere of sexual ambiguity, which can lead to abusive behaviour and sexual harassment later.
- Unprofessional or rude communication, or using language that makes you feel uncomfortable, e.g. excessive swearing or sexualised terms/jokes.
- Defensive or shifty body language, e.g. folded arms, lack of eye contact, eye-rolling if you ask questions.
- The smell of alcohol or signs of intoxication, e.g. slurred words.
- Asking to meet in a non-public setting or bar for any interview/first meeting, and/or the presence of alcohol at such a meeting. An acceptable setting could be a café or restaurant, but always tell someone where you are going regardless.
- Recording an online interview (e.g. over Zoom) without your permission and providing clear justification.



Additional precautions for voluntary crew / nautical hitchhikers

The following safety measures apply particularly to crew who are seeking voluntary or nautical hitchhiking roles, often on smaller yachts and via crewing websites or social media pages – although it is still good practice for all crew to take note.

Volunteer crew

Check references and reviews

- Look for employer profiles which have received several positive reviews, particularly from women, and be wary of those with no reviews.
- Ask for references and/or to be put in touch with other crew they have sailed with. If they refuse to cooperate, treat this as a red flag.

Carry out basic identity and personality checks

- Ask the employer or captain for their full name and boat name to help you cross-reference online.
- Request to video chat in advance of meeting in person to gauge the compatibility of your personalities and to check that their profile picture matches who they say they are.
- Ask them to show you their boat whilst on video chat or to send a dated photograph of them on board to verify that this is the same boat you will be sailing on.
- Ask to see photos of their ID and sailing qualifications – the details should match those on their profile and can help you to cross-reference online.
- Do some basic research online and across social media. Look for photos of them with other people and try a reverse-image search to check that their profile isn't using images that belong to someone else.

Before you embark

- Arrange to meet the employer or captain, and anyone else you will be sailing with, somewhere public at least a day (preferably longer, and ideally more than once) before you depart, so that you can assess their character.
- Ask for a day sail to get to know one another and have a taster of how you might work together. Take this opportunity to also inspect the safety standards and maintenance of the boat, as well as the accommodation and recreational facilities.
- Request to see a video and/or photos showing the boat interior and deck, and the living quarters, bathroom, and crew cabin(s), so that you can establish their condition and general hygiene standards.
- Try to make some trusted, local connections – they might be able to help you in the event of a problem.

Always remember that it is normal and acceptable to ask a lot of questions before joining a new boat or starting a new position. If your questions or requests for transparency are met with hostility or vague answers, then this probably isn't the right role for you. It is important to ask questions that will lead you to know if the position fits with your non-negotiable boundaries.

Trust your instincts. If something feels off, or you feel uncomfortable for any reason, you hold the power to walk away. There are plenty of jobs out there and this will never be your one and only opportunity to work on a yacht, so don't feel intimidated or pressurised into doing something you don't feel comfortable with. The truth is that scammers and predators are masters at what they do, and take advantage of crew inexperience and credulity.





Personal safety during your time on board

All crew

Do not embark on any job alone

- Never sail with just the employer, even if you think that you know them quite well.
- Always look for positions with at least one other crew mate. Ask to be put in touch with them beforehand and if possible, arrange a face-to-face introduction ashore.
- Do not embark before any other crew do.

Request a safety briefing

- No boat is exempt from potential safety issues. Whether you will be on board for an hour or a year, make sure you receive a thorough safety briefing and are made aware of all policies, emergency contacts, and the appropriate chain of command (including those with first aid training) before starting work.
- This briefing should include fire safety and deployment of lifeboats.

Put personal safety mechanisms in place

- Let those you trust, such as family or friends at home, know as much information as possible about who you will be sailing with, including:
 - Their name(s), address(es), nationality(ies), and contact details
 - Photograph(s) of good likeness
 - The yacht name, registration details and registered flag
 - Where you are sailing from/to, your expected arrival date(s)/time(s), and any planned stopovers
- Research the reputation of the captain, owner, Head of Department (HoD), and any other key positions, or ask for word-of-mouth reviews.

- Consider travelling with a spare mobile phone in case one breaks or is lost, so that you always have a personal means of communicating with those on shore.
- Carry paper and electronic copies of contact details for local police and coast guards for the regions you will be traversing, and of other important contacts, and keep these with you somewhere safe and private.
- If you can afford it, equip yourself with a satellite communications device to ensure you are always connected, even in remote areas.
- As an additional precaution, consider signing up to self-defence classes or similar to learn useful skills and boost your confidence. Regardless of whether you find the need for them, they are a great investment in personal skillset, fitness, and self-development.

Avoid combining crewing and dating

- Predators frequently exploit the romantic fantasy of a relationship at sea. Even when time has been spent building up a connection before joining a boat, they can exhibit sharp changes of personality after departure.
- If creating an online profile on a crewing website or similar, state your position on dating very clearly and filter out any listings which highlight romantic connection as a desired attribute.
- Avoid entering romantic relationships with someone senior to you or who has line management responsibility for you. As well as the inherent power-imbalance, potential for exploitation, and unprofessionalism, difficulties can arise when romantic relationships between crew members break down and they must continue working with each other.

Alcohol and drugs

- Consider staying away from alcohol and drugs, or at least limiting your intake, when sailing with people you do not know very well. They can slow your reactions, reduce inhibitions, and lower boundaries – making it more difficult to spot or refuse inappropriate behaviour.
- Intoxication also poses a significant risk to safety and increases the likelihood of potentially fatal accidents.
- Be aware of the laws and risks associated with possessing or using drugs in different jurisdictions. Many countries have low tolerance and high penalties for those caught with drugs.
- Be aware of the dangers of having your drink spiked, both on board and when enjoying leisure time on shore. Cover your drink with a lid or hand, never leave it unattended, and don't accept drinks (or drugs) from strangers. If someone offers to buy you a drink, accompany them to the bar where you can keep an eye on it being poured.
- Be wary of any employer who does not respect the different cultural or religious views of crew members concerning alcohol consumption.

Gifts and expenses

- Whether in a paid or voluntary role, it is never your responsibility or obligation to spend money on your employer or on the maintenance of the boat.
- Be wary of requests to bring parts or gifts with you; you could have trouble getting your money back and such requests can be a precursor for more manipulative behaviour.
- Ask for clarification on what tips or gratuities you can or can't accept and ensure that this is written into your contract or volunteer agreement.

Safety on shore

Getting off the boat for a while and exploring the local area can be a great opportunity to relax, unwind and soak up some new experiences. However, remember to remain mindful of your surroundings and to exercise caution around strangers.

- Always avoid sharing too many personal details with strangers e.g. your full name, the name of your boat/hotel, etc.
- Have a pre-prepared emergency plan for what you would do should you feel in danger or uncomfortable whilst on shore.
- Check in advance that your employer's insurance will cover you for incidents which occur whilst on shore, otherwise if an accident occurs the P&I provider might not respond. If you're unsure, you should purchase insurance for yourself which covers this.
- Consider staying away from alcohol and drugs or limiting your intake. Be aware of the dangers of being spiked and don't accept drinks or drugs from strangers. More on this can be found in the section on alcohol and drugs.
- If you're heading out alone, tell another crewmate (or text a friend at home) where you're going and when to expect you back.
- Make sure you have a fully charged mobile phone that can accept calls and/or messages using the local service provider.
- Consider carrying an alert whistle or rape alarm in your pocket or handbag.
- Research reputable taxi companies ahead of time and consider pre-booking your transport. Avoid using unlicensed taxis or those that refuse to run the meter. If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts, and don't get in. For extra protection, you can always send a photo of the licence plate to a friend or have someone call you for the journey duration.
- Stick to busy, public places and don't accept invitations to go back to a stranger's house alone.



Accessing support

All crew

If you do you find yourself in an unsafe situation or if you are the victim of physical or emotional harm, below are some steps that you can take to get yourself to safety and to seek help. Whatever happens, you are not alone. There are many agencies available which offer advice and support to crew. A suggested list can be found at the end of this [resource](#).

ISWAN's Yacht Crew Help is available 24/7/365. Visit: www.yachtcrewhelp.org or contact **+44 203 713 7273** to talk to someone now.

The following guidance is for information purposes only and is not legal advice. If you require legal advice, please speak to a lawyer.

Personal safety in the moment

- If you experience a personal safety incident on board, the first step is to keep yourself safe, take care of yourself and decide what is best for you.
- You are the best judge of whether it is safe to talk to or remain in the company of any perpetrator.
- If this is a first-time, minor incident and (most importantly) you feel comfortable, you may decide to tell them that you found their behaviour unacceptable. If the incident was serious (remember – you get to decide what is serious to you) or you simply don't feel safe, it may be better to try and remove yourself or ask to be removed from the environment.
- If you can, talk to a trusted friend, crewmate, or anyone else that you feel safe with. This can help to share the burden and shape any next steps. They can also act as a supportive witness if you do decide to make a report later.

We recognise that this section is not all-encompassing and that there may be some information that feels incomplete or does not apply to your current region. ISWAN, in partnership with other key stakeholders, is working on improving crew access to up-to-date, clear, quality information about what to do if your personal safety is compromised. We commit to regularly updating this resource with the latest best-practice.

- If you are a stakeholder who would like to contribute your expertise, please contact georgia.allen@iswan.org.uk.
- If you are crew and cannot find the answers you need, please reach out to ISWAN's Yacht Crew Help, where our experienced team will work with you to plan your options.

Recording your experience(s)

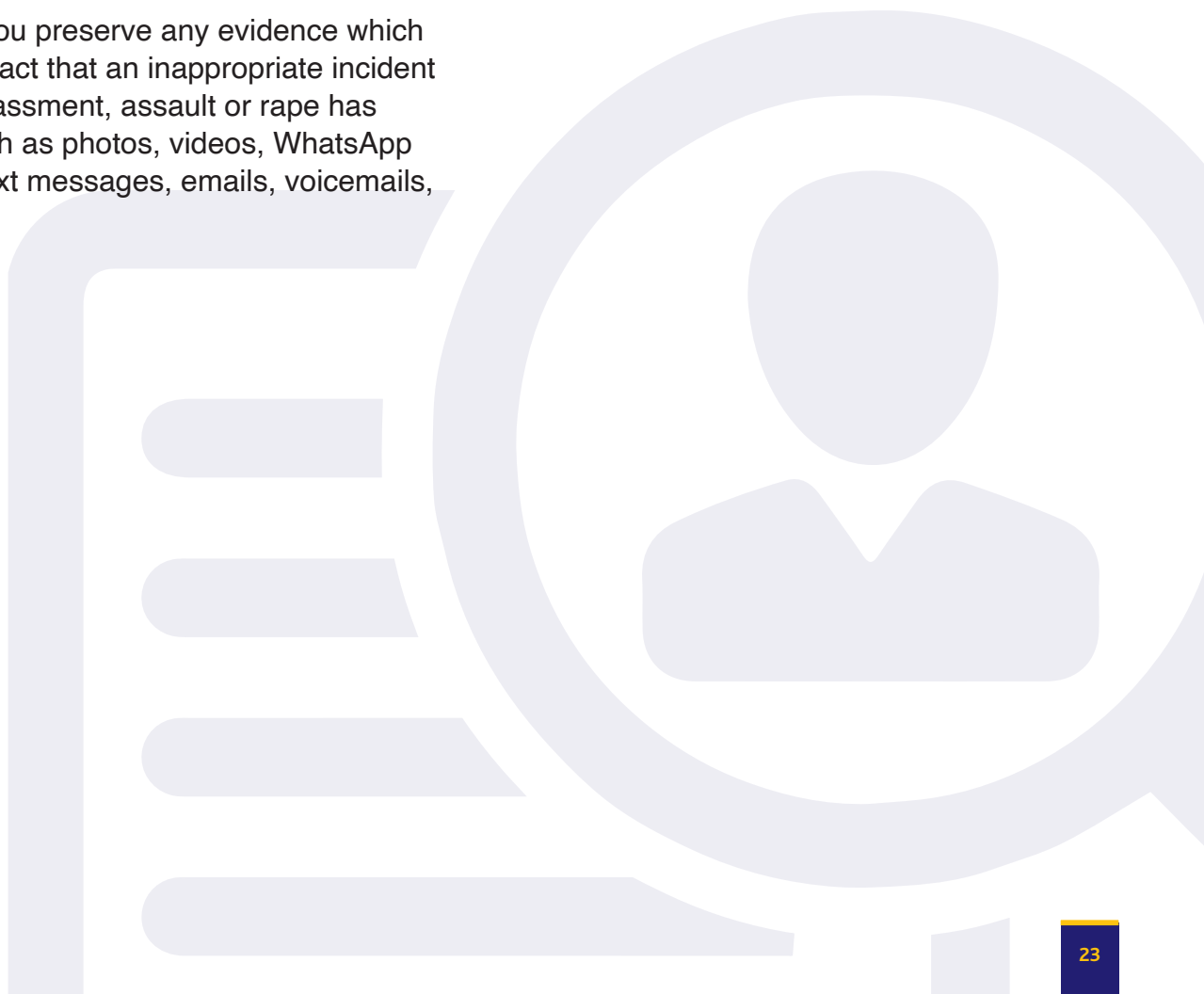
Making a private record of your experience(s) can help you to process what has happened and will serve as an accurate record of events if you decide later to make a report.

- Write down your experience(s) as soon as possible after any incident, using first person statements such as 'I saw', 'I heard' and 'I told'. Include times and dates, who you told, and what the outcome was if there was one.
- Aim to write your account on a digital device so that you can email it to yourself or take a photo. Both options have the additional benefit of adding a time and date stamp.
- If you are still in an unsafe environment, endeavour to keep the written account private to help preserve your safety.
- Sometimes, keeping a written account like this can help you to see a pattern of small events that together demonstrate a larger issue. This can aid you to make decisions about asking for help or removing yourself from an unsafe situation.
- Ensure that you preserve any evidence which supports the fact that an inappropriate incident or sexual harassment, assault or rape has occurred, such as photos, videos, WhatsApp messages, text messages, emails, voicemails, call logs, etc.

After sexual assault or rape

If you've been sexually assaulted or raped, it was not your fault. Sexual violence is a crime, no matter who commits it, where it happens, or how it happens.

- If it's possible, get yourself to somewhere that feels safe. See if someone that you trust can stay with you or connect with a person you trust for support.
- If you can, go to a hospital, clinic, or sexual assault referral centre (SARC) as soon as possible. They will be able to treat you for any physical injuries, and can provide emergency contraception, tests for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) – a medicine taken to prevent HIV.
- If you don't know whether you want to make a report, they will also be able to safely record and preserve forensic evidence on your behalf, which will allow you time to decide what you want to do.



Forensic evidence: Sexual assault and rape

- The decision whether to undergo a forensic medical examination after being sexually assaulted or raped is always yours alone.
- However, it can be useful to do so if you want the incident to be investigated or are undecided.
- Collecting or photographing forensic evidence does not mean that you must make a report, but it does provide you with a choice to present evidence later.
- Forensic evidence can include:
 - things from the scene, e.g. condoms
 - evidence on your clothes or body, e.g. injuries or blood
 - genetic evidence, e.g. fingerprints or DNA
- The sooner forensic evidence is collected the better, and some types are best collected during the seven days after the assault or rape happened. However, if it's already later than this please do not worry that your chance to collect evidence has been missed. Some types of forensic evidence, like photographs of injuries or hair samples if you may have been drugged, can be collected later.
- If you want a forensic examination, try to avoid showering or changing clothes – although it is worth noting that some forensic evidence can still be collected for seven days after a sexual assault or rape, even if you have showered or changed clothes.
- Any underwear worn for 24-hours post-assault can provide evidence, even if you showered during that time.
- If possible, it is advisable to seek the help of the captain or another trusted senior member of crew (perhaps someone of the same gender identity as you, if that makes you feel more comfortable) to help with the collection and preservation of evidence related to the incident – whilst always prioritising your immediate safety and the need for ongoing pastoral and medical care.
- To arrange a medical examination, you will likely need the help of the captain, crew agent or your head of department (HoD). If this is dangerous for you or you are unwilling to talk to them, you could try contacting one of the services/organisations listed at the end of this resource for free, confidential advice and signposting.
- The [2013 IMO guidelines](#) on preserving and collecting evidence can be further consulted for more complete guidance on this.



Taking action

All crew

Deciding whether to report bad behaviour or abuse

Experiencing abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination, violence, and crime on board can be a very distressing experience. You may just want to forget what has happened to you as quickly as possible.

Whether or not you report an incident or seek medical attention, your experience is no less valid. Nobody should make the choice for you or pressure you into reporting or being medically examined. The most important thing is to ensure you feel as safe as possible, as soon as possible, following the incident.

If a crime has been committed against you or another, you should be able to report this and seek support and justice from the relevant authorities. However, you are the best judge of what is right for you and of whether it is safe for you to follow official reporting routes when on board or in the next port of call.

ISWAN's Yacht Crew Help is available 24/7/365 if you would like to talk through your options in a safe, confidential space. Our team can help you to think through how to keep yourself and others safe, decide whether to report the incident(s), and plan for supporting yourself.



Making a report

- Keep copies of any relevant messages, texts, emails, photos, videos, voicemails and write a concurrent diary to keep track of your experiences – these may be useful as evidence later. [The Record your experience\(s\)](#) and Forensic evidence sections have more on this.
- If you do make the decision to report a safety incident, check the yacht's grievance, harassment and/or whistleblowing policies and comply with the process for raising a formal complaint.
- If you're not sure which policy applies or which process to follow, check with the captain, your line manager, or other appropriate person.
- Flag all cases of unacceptable behaviour to the appropriate person or agency.

Professional crew

- For professional crew this could be your line manager, captain, Head of Department (HoD), Designated Person Ashore (DPA), and/or crew management agency.

Volunteer crew

- For voluntary crew this could be a trusted senior figure on board and/or the platform where you first came across the advert.

All crew

- A good manager or agency will treat your complaint with confidentiality and respect, without victim shaming or blaming.
- Be prepared to give details and to submit any supporting information and evidence you feel is helpful, but also be aware that you are under no obligation to answer uncomfortable questions or to provide details that you are not happy to share.

Serious offences

- Report more serious criminal offences to the authorities.
 - If the incident happened in a country or its territorial waters, this will be the police and the port/maritime authorities.
 - If the incident happened on the high seas, this will be the flag state which the yacht is registered to and its port/maritime authorities.
- Unless the incident very obviously occurred within the jurisdiction of the port state or its territorial waters, they will defer to the flag state as they have jurisdiction.
- For smaller flag states it is common for them to lack the resources necessary to investigate and in such instances the police in your home country may be asked to get involved.
- Although it is highly unlikely that a yacht will be arrested in such circumstances, it is possible that the flag state might require the port state to detain it on their behalf whilst an investigation is conducted. Equally, if the port state does choose to get involved, they may detain the yacht until an investigation is complete. Detention is not the same as arrest.
- ISWAN understands that the prospect of liaising with so many different authorities could be daunting, and you may want to return home. In such a case you could report to the police in your home country/country where you reside and request for them to inform the authorities with jurisdiction to investigate the offence on your behalf.
- Investigations into allegations of serious criminal offences can be lengthy and place a great deal of stress on the survivor. It may therefore be better for your personal safety and wellbeing to be on familiar turf and liaise with your home authorities, with the support of nearby family and friends.



Further resources

Useful organisations*



The International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) is an international maritime charity working to improve the lives of seafarers and their families worldwide through services, resources, strategies, and advocacy. The website provides resources and information about common issues faced by seafarers, as well as guidance on mental and physical wellbeing.



ISWAN's Yacht Crew Help website provides useful information and links for yacht crew around their wellbeing and safety, as well as contact details and live chat for the Yacht Crew Help helpline service.



The Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme (CHIRP) Maritime website offers the opportunity to confidentially report personal safety incidents and to learn from the experiences of others via their resource library.



Nautilus International is an international trade union which can provide advice and support to their yacht crew members during times of crisis. Their website also has resources and guides about crew rights and how to find safe employment. Their free helpline, Nautilus 24/7, is available 24/7/365 to their members.

* If you are aware of any useful resources or organisations which you feel are missing from this list, particularly those which will broaden the international scope of this resource, please contact georgia.allen@iswan.org.uk



Naviguer au Féminin en Sécurité / Sailing Safely for Women (SSW) is a Facebook community, founded by Chloe Russell, a survivor of sexual assault whilst volunteering on board. The group is heavily moderated and provides a safe space for women crew to share advice and offer support for others in the volunteering community.



The Professional Yachting Association (PYA) is a not-for-profit trade association which offers MCA-compliant sea service verification, career advice, and yacht rating certification for members. Their free Member Assistance Service is in fact open to all crew whether they are members or not, and offers confidential support on work-related issues such as contracts.



Safer Waves is a charity which offers support and information to seafarers who have experienced sexual violence or gender discrimination while working at sea. Their confidential email support service is manned by empathetic volunteers who understand the trauma such an experience can cause. They have also produced some valuable resources to help survivors, a list of which can be found in the Useful Links section on the next page.



Salute Her is a charity operating internationally and actively campaigning for 'gender specific' physical and mental health support services and trauma-informed care for women who have lived experience of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and sexual abuse. Originally targeted at women veterans, the charity has received new funding to expand their services to support those who work at sea.



Yachts Mermaids is a platform that provides work and self-development resources, tools, and support mainly to women yacht crew to encourage more women in yachting to create sustainable and safe careers at sea. A list of some of their most relevant resources is provided in the Useful Links section below.

Useful links

- [Bluewater Yachting guide on Starting out in yachting](#)
- [Dockwalk Online](#) is a useful source of news and information about the industry and crew life
- International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) joint guidance on [Eliminating shipboard harassment and bullying](#)
- International Labour Organization (ILO):
 - [Database on MLC ratification and implementation in different countries](#)
 - [List of MLC-related documents](#) including Maritime Labour Standards (MLS) and FAQs
- International Maritime Organization (IMO) [Guidelines on preservation and collection of evidence following an allegation of a serious crime... on board a ship... and pastoral and medical care of persons affected](#)
- International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) – [Find out more about 'The Seafarers' Bill of Rights'](#)
- [Marine Traffic](#) can be used to confirm the location of a vessel
- Metropolitan Police guide on [Grooming](#)
- Mind UK guide to [Trauma](#)
- Nautilus International [guidance for members on UK rights as new or expectant parents](#)
- NHS advice on your options [after experience sexual assault or rape](#)
- [Onboard Online](#) covers yachting news, interviews, and stories of interest to captains, crew and industry professionals worldwide
 - Article about [relationships on board](#)
- RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network) guide on [What is a sexual assault forensic exam?](#)
- [Rape Crisis England & Wales](#)
 - Guide on What is [sexual assault](#)
 - Guide on What is [sexual violence](#)
- Safer Waves:
 - [After Sexual Assault On Board Guide](#) provides survivor-centred advice on your options after experiencing sexual assault or rape
 - [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\) Guidance](#) provides definitions of the responsibilities of key authorities when a crime has happened
 - [Country fact sheets](#) detail how to report a crime, and the support that is available in the featured countries
- Seafarers' Rights International:
 - [Introduction to the Maritime Labour Convention \(MLC\)](#)
 - Video: [MLC – The right to be repatriated](#)
 - Video: [MLC – How to complain](#)
- Superyacht Content:
 - [Yacht crew guide to dealing with issues on board](#)
 - [Guide on different visas](#)
- Superyacht News article on [understanding repatriation rights](#)
- Talk to Frank:
 - [Flying the nest](#)
 - [Dealing with peer pressure](#)
- UKSA:
 - [What is an ENG1 Medical Certificate?](#)
- Yachts Mermaids:
 - [Basic seafarers rights guide](#)
 - [Interview guide and tips](#)
 - [Pro-choice pregnancy and termination at sea guide](#)
 - [Support directory](#)
 - [Uncensored podcast](#)
- Yachting Pages [global list of crew houses](#)
- YPI Crew free [yacht crew CV templates](#)



This image has been generated by AI and does not contain a real model. Any perceived likeness to any persons is strictly by coincidence and there has been no intent to portray any real person, living or dead, in this image.

Glossary

Abuse: Misuse of power through which the perpetrator gains control or advantage of the abused, using and causing physical or psychological harm or inciting fear of that harm. There are many types of abuse including physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and discriminatory.

Ambiguous work environment: A work environment or atmosphere defined by uncertainty and lack of clear tasks, goals, statements, or boundaries, which can result in very painful and confusing experiences for employees – including the experiencing of aggressive, manipulative, or harassing behaviour.

Boundaries (personal): Personal boundaries define a person's expectations of themselves and others in different kinds of relationships. They define what is appropriate behaviour that keeps both parties safe, and setting healthy ones is crucial for self-care and positive relationships.

Boundaries can be very different depending on the type and context of the relationship – for example whether it is romantic, friendly, or professional. Most people have a mix of different boundary types, and the appropriateness is often dependent on the setting. Some cultures have very different expectations and responses when it comes to boundaries.

Bullying: Behaviour repeated over time that inflicts harm through physical contact, verbal attacks, or psychological manipulation. Bullying involves an imbalance of power.

Commercial yacht: A commercial yacht is any yacht engaged in trade, commerce, or on charter, and carrying no more than 12 passengers. The registration of commercial yachts is limited to those of 24 metres (m) or more in length.

Consent (in physical touching): Consenting to someone touching you sexually means agreeing to it by choice and having both the freedom and capacity to make that choice. It is not consent if you or someone else was asleep, unconscious, drunk, drugged or under the influence of drugs; pressured, manipulated, tricked, or scared into saying yes; and/or too young or vulnerable to have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Consent can be withdrawn at any time, including during sex or a sexual act. Just because someone consented to something before doesn't mean they consented to it happening again. If someone's unsure whether the other person is giving their consent for something sexual, they should always check with them.

Consent (in medical care): A patient/client's explicit agreement to the care and treatment to be provided, based on full information on his or her condition/diagnosis, the existing options for treatment and the possible beneficial and adverse effects of those options.

Country of jurisdiction: Refers to the right and power of a country to administer justice within its defined territories. This includes the powers of legal courts to hear cases concerning persons, property (including yachts) or events and the authority to intervene, such as the arrest of persons or the seizure of property.

Daywork: Temporary work on a yacht to assist permanent crew in the areas required. It can last anywhere from one day, to several weeks, or even a few months.

Discrimination: Any measure or attitude intended to give unfair treatment (positive or negative) to individuals or groups of individuals in similar circumstances and offer an advantage or a disadvantage to some over others. Discrimination can be based on gender identity, race, ethnic origin, religion, socioeconomic status, or other factors.

Dock-walking: The act of walking along a dock where superyachts are moored, looking for work on board. The aim is to secure day work, permanent work, or to leave a CV for consideration of employment.

Designated Person Ashore (DPA): A key individual on shore responsible for providing the structure and support for an efficient and effective Safety Management System on board a vessel. The DPA is especially designated to ensure a reliable connection between the company and the crew, to supervise the safe operation of the vessel, and to ensure all parties understand and correctly implement the safety and environmental protection policy. Safety should include the personal and psychological safety of the crew.

ENG1 Medical Certificate: A comprehensive medical examination regulated by the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). It determines an individual's fitness and capability to perform their duties on a seagoing vessel. More information can be found [here](#). There are accepted international alternatives and variations, a list can be found [here](#).

Flag state: The flag state has overall responsibility for the implementation and enforcement of international maritime regulations for all vessels granted the right to fly its flag. The flag state is the jurisdiction under whose laws the vessel is registered or licensed and is deemed the nationality of the vessel. A merchant vessel must be registered and can only be registered in one jurisdiction but may change the jurisdiction in which it is registered. The main yachting flag states are the UK-MCA, Cayman Islands, Isle of Man, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Italy, and Luxembourg.

Forensic evidence: Criminal evidence acquired through scientific methods.

Forensic medical examination: Sometimes known as a 'rape kit', a forensic medical examination provides sexual assault and rape victims with important medical care and is used to collect and preserve forensic/DNA evidence.

Gender identity: How a person feels about their gender. For many people, their gender identity corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth. For others, it does not. Some people see gender identity as more of a spectrum, rather than binary. There are many expressions of gender identity, including non-binary and genderfluid.

Grievance policy: A business document which lays out the processes for filing a formal complaint regarding a workplace, job, and/or crewmate dispute or issue. The existence of a grievance policy helps to ensure that all grievances are dealt with in a fair and structured manner and provides transparency to the complainant in advance in terms of knowing what to expect from the process.

Grooming: Grooming is when a person builds a relationship with someone so they can intentionally abuse them and manipulate them into doing things. The abuse is usually sexual or financial, but it can also include other illegal acts. Grooming can take place online or in person, by a stranger or someone you know or by someone pretending to be someone else, and it can happen over a short or long period of time – from days to years. A person usually won't know they're being groomed; they will trust their abuser who is giving them lots of attention and gifts and who may also have warned them not to talk to anyone about it.

Harassment: Words, conduct or actions (usually repeated or persistent) that, being directed at a specific person, annoy, alarm, or cause substantial emotional distress in that person and serve no legitimate purpose. There are many types of harassment including verbal, written, visual, and physical.

Head of Department (HoD): The lead person in charge of a particular department on board, for example deck, interior, and engine. The primary role of the HoD is to provide leadership, support and safety management to the department.

Intoxication (including appearance of): The condition of having physical or mental control markedly diminished or altered by the effects of alcohol or drugs.

Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006: Otherwise known as the 'Seafarers' Bill of Rights', the MLC 2006 is an international labour convention which sets out seafarers' rights at work including employment terms, health and safety, living and working conditions, access to medical care and social security. It came into force in August 2013 and sets out in one place minimum requirements for how a seafarer should be treated in recognition that the global nature of the maritime sector means that seafarers need special protection. Many states that ratify the Convention may have higher standards.

The MLC applies to all commercial seagoing vessels (including commercial superyachts) operating in international waters or between ports of different countries. The MLC covers any seafarer who is employed, engaged, or working in any capacity on board one of these vessels.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA): An Executive Agency of the UK Department for Transport (DfT) which provides a 24-hour maritime and coastal search and rescue emergency coordination and response service for the UK. The MCA produces legislation and guidance and provides certification to vessels and seafarers, as well as enforcing standards for ship safety, security, pollution prevention and seafarer health, safety and welfare.

Mental health policy: A written document that outlines an organisation's approach to mental health. It provides benchmarks for ensuring mental health issues can be prevented or treated, as well as ensuring positive mental health is promoted. The policy should detail what procedures and support are available should a crew member report an issue with their mental health or ask for help, including things like medical care, counselling, and repatriation.

Nautical hitchhikers: See 'Voluntary crew'

Personal safety: Freedom from, and perception of freedom from, perceived harm, the threat of harm, and actual harm. Often personal safety in maritime is considered only from a physical standpoint, but psychological health is an equally important influence on crew seafarer wellbeing.

Port state authority: The authority in any country assigned the responsibility under Article V of the MLC 2006 for the inspections of ships of other flags in its territory. The port state authority is authorised by the government of the port state to administer guidelines and enforce standards and regulations relevant to the implementation of national and international port control measures.

Predator (including sexual): A person who looks for other people to deliberately use, control, or harm in some way, including the intention to commit sexual violence against them.

Private yacht: A pleasure vessel solely used for the recreational and leisure purpose of its owner and their guests. Crew working on board private yachts are not legally classed as seafarers. However, if a non-commercial yacht has been certified as being in voluntary compliance with its registered flag state, it is then still subject to the MLC in the same way as a commercial yacht.

Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Club: A P&I club is a non-governmental, non-profitable, mutual insurance association that provides risk pooling, information, and representation for its members.

Rape: The legal definition of rape in the UK is when someone puts their penis in another person's vagina, anus, or mouth on purpose, without the other person's consent. This includes if the two people are married or in a relationship, if the other person consented to one type of penetration (e.g. vaginal or oral sex), but not another (e.g. anal sex), or if someone removes a condom without the other person's permission or lies about putting one on (commonly known as 'stealthing').

Many people have experiences of sexual assault or sexual abuse that do not fit the legal definition of rape. However, that doesn't mean their experience isn't as serious. All cases of sexual assault and sexual abuse are a serious crime.

ISWAN acknowledges that legal definitions of rape may be exclusionary to the experiences of some survivors of serious sexual violence where penetration by a penis did not occur but where the survivor identifies as having been raped. As an organisation we will not question self-definitions of experience, but it is worth being aware that the law may. It is also worth being aware that other countries will likely have different legal definitions. We include the UK definition here as we are a UK-registered organisation although we will always support crew of any nationality.

Ratifying: To ratify a treaty or contract is to officially approve it by signing or voting for it. In the case of the MLC, ratifying countries are those who have approved its principles. However, the MLC covers all seafarers working on board commercial yachts, including those from non-ratifying countries.

References/reviews: People who can attest to the professional skills, experiences, and personality/character of an individual.

Repatriation: The personal right of a seafarer to return to their country of nationality under specific conditions. Under MLC 2006, seafarers have the right to be repatriated at no cost to themselves if their Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA – see below) expires while they are abroad or is terminated by the employer or seafarer for justified reasons; and when the seafarer is no longer able to carry out duties under their SEA or cannot be expected to carry them out in the present circumstances.

Seafarer: Any person who is employed or engaged or works in any capacity on board a ship or commercial yachts and whose normal place of work is on a ship or commercial yacht. Historically, superyacht crew working on board commercial yachts have not always realised that they are legally seafarers and the rights that this awards to them.

Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA): Under the MLC, every seafarer working on a commercial yacht must have a clearly written and legally enforceable flag state approved Seafarer Employment Agreement (SEA). The SEA is a contractual agreement between the individual crew member and the vessel's owner, representative or owning company. It must be in a language understood by the crew member and a signed copy kept by both the crew member and the employer.

Sexual abuse: Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Sexual abuse is a term used mainly to describe sex crimes committed against minors under the age of 18. It generally refers to ongoing sex crimes against a child, which form a pattern of abuse. Legally, children cannot give their consent to sexual activities. Sexual abuse does not always involve physical contact.

Sexual assault: An act of physical, psychological, and emotional violation in the form of a sexual act, inflicted on someone without their consent. Touching can be done with any part of the body or with an object. Sexual assault can involve forcing or manipulating someone to witness or participate in sexual acts. Not all cases of sexual assault involve violence, cause physical injury or leave visible marks. Sexual assault can cause severe distress, emotional harm and injuries which can't be seen.

Sexual harassment: A form of sexual violence consisting of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which annoys, alarms, or causes substantial emotional distress to the receiver.

Sexual violence: Sexual violence is any kind of sexual activity or act (including online) that took place without consent, and was unwanted or involved pressure, manipulation, bullying, intimidation, threats, deception, and/or force. There are lots of different types of sexual violence, including child sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault.

Spiking: When someone puts alcohol or drugs into another person's drink or their body without their knowledge and/or consent. Signs of being spiked include confusion, nausea or vomiting, hallucinations or paranoia, disorientation or poor coordination, loss of ability to communicate properly, and unconsciousness. If you think you have been spiked, it is important to seek medical attention as soon as possible.

Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention: A global convention that ensures a set standard of training is achieved across all countries in the world. Its intention is to keep the maritime sector safe for all, including crew and the environment. As of 2018, 164 nations, representing 99.2 percent of world shipping tonnage, had ratified the STCW. The standards are enforced by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Trauma: Going through very stressful, frightening, or distressing events, and the lasting emotional and/or physical response that often results from this. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Everyone has a different reaction to trauma, so you might notice any effects quickly, or a long time afterwards. You can find out more about trauma [here](#).

Violence: Words or actions that intentionally threaten, inflict, or attempt to inflict harm on another person or group of others.

Violent crime: When someone physically hurts or threatens to hurt someone, including crimes where a weapon is used. A crime is considered violent if the offender clearly intended or intends to cause physical harm, regardless of whether it results in a physical injury.

Voluntary crew: Sometimes called 'nautical hitchhikers', voluntary crew are individuals who take unpaid work on board yachts in exchange for experience-gaining, training, passage, travel, networking, or for other personal reasons. Voluntary crew are more likely to be working on small boats which are often owned and captained by the same person. Whilst many voluntary crew are looking to gain experience to find future paid employment, not all are trying to transition into the professional space and there is a distinct voluntary community in yachting.

A volunteer is unlikely to fall under the definition of 'seafarer' as the vessel will not be their 'normal place' of work and/or is not categorised as a commercial vessel. However, it is recommended that volunteer agreements are put in place between the owner and the volunteer crew members.

Whistleblowing policy: A set of principles about the reporting of wrongdoing within an organisation. It is used to inform procedure and should be readily accessible to all employees.



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