

UK SEAFARER TRANSIT – CARRIER LIABILITY BRIEFING

For airline legal, compliance, risk and carrier liability teams

Purpose of this Briefing

This document explains the UK Home Office position on seamen (seafarers) transiting the United Kingdom en route to a third country, with a specific focus on airline carrier liability, boarding decisions, and risk exposure.

Home Office Legal Position (Summary)

UK Home Office guidance confirms that seamen travelling in the course of their employment are assessed under seafarer-specific immigration provisions.

They are explicitly excluded from the UK Transit Visitor route and are not subject to DATV or Visitor-in-Transit visa requirements when transiting the UK to a third country, provided they do not undertake work in UK territorial waters.

Carrier Liability – Key Risk Point

- Seamen are not assessed under passenger transit visa rules
- UK carrier liability penalties arise only where a passenger is refused entry on arrival
- Bona-fide seamen in transit are assessed by Border Force under seafarer guidance, not Appendix Visitor
- Refusing carriage where Home Office guidance permits travel creates operational and contractual risk rather than mitigating liability

When Carriage Is Permitted

A seaman may be carried through the UK to a third country where:

- Travel is in the course of employment as a seafarer
- The UK is solely a transit point
- No work is undertaken in UK territorial waters
- Onward travel to a third country is confirmed
- Seafarer status is evidenced (employment contract, seaman's book, vessel or joining details)

When Carrier Liability May Arise

Carrier liability considerations may arise only if:

- The individual intends to work in UK territorial waters
- The individual is not travelling in a seafarer capacity
- There is no credible onward travel or employment evidence
- The individual seeks entry as a visitor rather than in transit as a seaman

This briefing reflects current UK Home Office guidance applied by Border Force officers



Authoritative UK Home Office Sources

UKVI – Seamen arriving in the UK: caseworker guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/seamen>

UKVI – Transit: caseworker guidance (confirms ship crew are not Transit Visitors)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transit-guidance/transit-caseworker-guidance-accessible>

Carrier Liability Statement

Denial of boarding based solely on the absence of a UK transit visa, where the passenger is a bona-fide seaman transiting the UK to a third country, is not supported by UK Home Office guidance and does not reduce carrier liability exposure.

Carnival UK Statement

Seamen travelling to sign-on or sign-off a vessel operated by Carnival UK's brands P&O Cruises and Cunard meet all UK Home Office requirements and will either:

- Sign-on or sign-off a vessel in the UK prior to departing internationally by sea or;
- Transit the UK airside, or landside to proceed directly to:
 - Sign-on or sign-off a vessel in a third country or;
 - Be repatriated to their home country following sign-off from a vessel

All Carnival UK seamen carry evidence of their status (employment contract, seaman's identification, vessel or joining details).

Queries can be directed to Carnival UK: fleettravel@carnivalssi.com / 44 (0) 808 3043749

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