

FACTSHEET

Careers in the UK Ports sector

The ports sector is diverse, embracing a wide range of activities that are critical to many parts of the UK economy. The UK ports sector is made up of the ports themselves, harbours, private terminals, stevedoring companies and specialist labour supply organisations. In total there are around 500 companies, employing approximately 25,500 people.

The sector's employers are located around the coastal regions of all four UK nations. The largest numbers are located in the South East and Eastern regions of England.

Some 40% of sector organisations employ between 11 and 49 staff, whilst a further 30% of organisations employ between one and 10 staff. All but 5% of organisations are Small or Medium Enterprises (SMEs), with less than 250 staff.

Ports are part of the vital transport networks, which support domestic and international trade. They also embrace fishing, passenger, leisure, car ferry operations and support for the offshore industry as well as the provision of coastal defences, conservation and environmental services. In total, well over 90% of the UK's international trade by volume (75% by value) moves through them. Freight movements through UK ports have increased by 33% over the last 20 years and several UK ports rank amongst the top European ports by freight volume

What about careers in the ports sector?

Ports and harbours employ a range of specialist people to ensure that they are operated efficiently. For example: **Harbour masters, marine pilots, operators of vessel traffic services** and other marine personnel are employed to ensure the safe navigation of ships in harbour waters and the safety of those engaged in other activities such as yachting and windsurfing.

Port operators are engaged to ensure that freight is moved efficiently from a ship moored at the quayside directly to a road vehicle or train for onward transportation, or to a warehouse or holding area for temporary storage.

Port operatives are sometimes required to operate large items of mobile and fixed lifting plant and other vehicles, such as forklift trucks and mobile cranes.

People are also employed in passenger operations helping to ensure that customers of ferry services or cruise liners pass through the port in a safe and efficient manner whilst maintaining a high level of customer service.

Passenger facilities at ports can be similar to those at airports, providing catering and other recreational services for passengers waiting to board the ship. **Engineers** are employed to ensure that plant, vehicles, boats and infrastructure are well maintained and repaired when necessary. There are **mechanical, electrical** and **civil** engineers working in ports on a wide range of specialist equipment and structures.

Other people are employed in ports and harbours in work that is common to other industries. For example, in **administration, finance** and **personnel-related roles**

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