

Sailors' Society helps deliver Christmas to cruise ship crew

With the cruise industry on pause, cruise ships anchored off the UK coast have become a familiar sight since the spring.

Several ships, manned by skeleton crews of around 150, regularly come into Southampton port for supplies and maintenance, but crew movements are restricted.

International maritime charity The Sailors' Society stepped in to support the crews, inviting them to get their online shopping and post delivered to its Southampton seafarer centre and taking items to the ships when they come into port.

Centre manager Simon Mobsby delivered more than 200 parcels last month to grateful seafarers and makes trips to the supermarket for them if they need anything else. He's expecting the demand to be greater as Christmas approaches.

'Their faces light up when I bring them letters and gifts from family and friends. It's a privilege to be able to play Santa,' said Mobsby.

The charity is also wrapping its own Christmas gifts for the crews. And Mobsby is even delivering gifts from one cruise ship to the other.

'People who worked together in the past are now on different ships and they've not been able to see each other for nine months,' he said.

'One crew sent a gift order to me on WhatsApp and I delivered the presents to the other ship. When I explained who they were from, they were over the moon.'

The Sailors' Society has received donations of gifts for seafarers from its supporters, as well as a grant from the ITF Seafarers' Trust / International Christian Maritime Association to provide small Christmas parcels in a selection of additional ports.