

Coastguard

Coastguards direct search and rescue operations, watch over shipping and investigate illegal shipping activities and pollution incidents.

The Work

You could be:

- giving ships information about weather, tides and sea conditions
- receiving radio messages, including distress calls, from ships
- handling emergency calls and sometimes directing or taking part in search and rescue operations
- requesting emergency help from lifeboats, helicopters, other ships and from emergency services including the police
- training and supervising rescue teams, which may include coastguard rescue officers (CROs) – volunteers who support the work of their full time colleagues
- checking for, reporting and reacting to illegal activities such as smuggling, pollution incidents, or to problems of coastal erosion
- maintaining high technology equipment
- giving information on navigation, safety and coastguard matters to individuals (including small boat owners), groups, the media or the government
- observing and recording weather conditions and sea conditions, and keeping logs of daily activities.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on where you work. The details are for coastguards at the start of their career. Pay for Coastguard Watch Assistants (CWA) is around £17,000 to £18,500 a year, and Coastguard Watch Officers (CWO) earn around £21,000 to £24,000 a year. You would also receive a shift allowance.

A Coastguard Watch Manager earns around £25,500 to £32,000 (plus shift allowance). You might earn more through performance bonuses or if you are based in the islands. Coastguard rescue officer (CRO) is a voluntary role, however you are entitled to claim expenses for training and responding to emergencies.

Conditions

Coastguards work for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), a UK government agency. It has 15 Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCCs) around the coast of Britain from Shetland in the north to Falmouth in the south. Three are in Scotland: Aberdeen, Shetland (Lerwick) and Stornoway.

- You would work mainly indoors at these centres.
- You would have to take part in investigations or search and rescue operations, outdoors in difficult weather conditions. You may have to work at heights, particularly if you are involved in cliff rescue work.
- The work can be hazardous and physically demanding.
- You would work a shift pattern of 4 days on/4 days off, consisting of two 12-hour day watches, two 12-

hour night watches and then 4 days off.

- You would wear a uniform and, when necessary, protective clothing.

Getting In

You can start in one of two ways.

- Most entrants start as a coastguard watch assistant (CWA). There are no set entry requirements although you should have a good standard of literacy and numeracy. It helps if you have 3 subjects at National 4 or 5, including English and Maths or the equivalent.
- As a coastguard watch officer (CWO). For this you need extensive experience of the sea or experience in a professional search and rescue role, together with an acceptable standard of literacy and numeracy.

You could also apply to be a voluntary coastguard rescue officer (CRO) to gain experience, which may be of benefit when paid jobs become available. Whichever level you start at you must note the following information.

- You must be a British national, a citizen of the Commonwealth or of the European Economic Area.
- You must be at least 18 years of age.
- You must have a driving licence.
- For CWO posts, the need for experience of the sea or search and rescue means that this is often a second career.
- You must be very fit and pass a medical examination – you need stamina and strength for rescue work.
- You need good eyesight, hearing and a clear voice.
- CROs must live or work within 20 to 30 minutes travelling time from the rescue station.
- Previous experience as a CRO may be helpful – contact your nearest coastguard station for details.

CWAs are recruited locally and you should contact your nearest coastguard station if you are interested. Vacancies may also be advertised on the MCA website. CWO posts are advertised in local Jobcentre Plus offices, on the Universal Jobmatch website (formerly Jobseekers Direct) and on the MCA website.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- a strong sense of responsibility and reliability
- an awareness of safety issues at sea and in dangerous situations
- a good knowledge of the area.

You need to be able to:

- judge a potentially dangerous maritime situation
- work alone or as part of a team
- make decisions that affect others
- remain calm under pressure
- give clear instructions to others who may be in danger.

Training

- Initial training for CWAs and CWOs is mainly on the job, together with self study and periods of attendance at the Coastguard Training Centre at Highcliffe, Dorset.
- CWA training lasts for up to 10 months and CWO training for between 9 and 12 months depending on whether the officer has already worked as a CWA.
- Coastguards sit an examination on completion of their training.
- There is a probationary period of 12 months.
- CROs are trained in search and rescue techniques including first aid, rope rescue and water rescue.

Getting On

- If you take further MCA training courses it may help you to gain promotion.
- With experience you could be promoted from CWA to CWO.
- You might then move on to become a deputy station officer and possibly a rescue co-ordination centre manager.
- You may be able to become a trainer with the MCA.
- It helps if you are willing to move location – sometimes it is essential.

More Information

The MCA Region called 'Scotland and Northern Ireland' covers almost 19,500 nautical miles of coastline.

The coast is divided into 3 sectors:

- West – the Mull of Galloway to Ardnamurchan plus Northern Ireland
- North – Ardnamurchan to Cape Wrath, the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland
- East – Cape Wrath to the English border at Berwick-on-Tweed.

Coastguard stations in Scotland are at Aberdeen, Stornoway and Shetland (Lerwick). Addresses are on the [MCA website](#).

Contacts

Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)

Email: infoline@mcga.gov.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MCA

Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)

Tel: 0300 300 9990

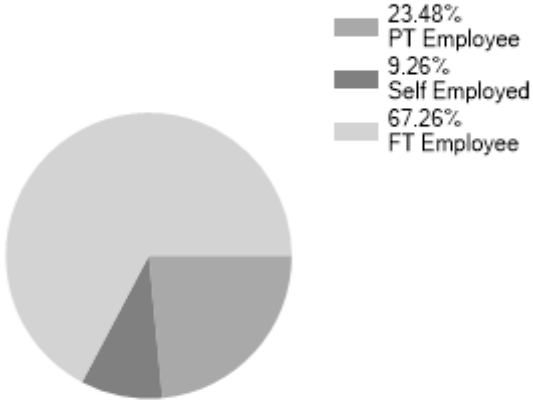
Website: www.rnli.org.uk

Twitter: @RNLI

Facebook: www.facebook.com/rnli

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

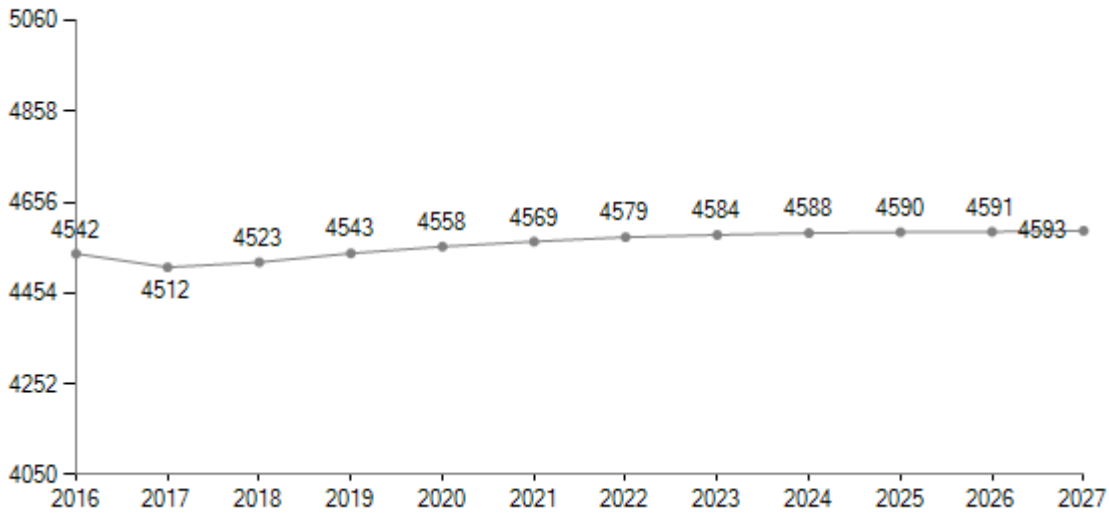


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)