



Setting up a Sailability Group in ten steps

If you are a sailing organisation enthusiastic about the prospect of being able to offer regular sailing to disabled people, then we can offer support and advice. This information helps to stop sailing organizations re-inventing the wheel, and to help smooth the pathway towards the integration of disabled people into the sailing community.

These steps will go some way to ensure that continuity between sailing organizations is maintained and you can concentrate on delivering the goods.

Step 1 - Make the commitment

Experience has shown us that one vital ingredient is common to all successful groups: A lead person. This is the main contact of the group – A link between the group and the outside world. It has to be someone who is prepared to be at the end of the phone, as well as ready to scrub down a boat at the end of the day.

You need recognition within an organisations constitution or mission statement of a 'Sport for All' policy of integrating disabled people into the sailing community. For clubs this would mean going to the membership for agreement, which is sometimes the hardest task.

Step 2 - Contact RYA Sailability

RYA Sailability and the Regional Organiser's are ready to help you with information and pay you a visit. We would recommend that you consider visiting a disabled sailing group that is already running and learn from their experiences.

Become a Foundation site and have your club details included in our **Where to go Sailing** leaflets. The Foundation Assessment and advice from Sailability and Regional Organisers will give you the most appropriate way forward and allow you to see where improvements to your site could be made.

We also suggest you become involved in our Disability Awareness Training and Volunteer Management Training, which will help you learn more about working alongside disabled people and how to recruit new volunteers/members.

Step 3 - Which disabilities?

It is necessary to consider what disabilities you can cater for. Some groups are in a position to offer opportunities to all categories of disability. Some can offer sailing for just one category. Disabled people are just like non-disabled people, everyone has individual requirements. Unfortunately society has generally created many barriers making non disabled people believe that disabled people are special and different. This is a misconception.

Step 4 – When?

Decide when your sailors could meet and how often. Remember that your organisation has the opportunity of extending opening times and days with the creation of the Sailability group. However, avoid excluding your group from interacting with other people and enjoying the life of your organisation by arranging too many sessions outside general sailing times.

Step 5 - Where

An appropriate base on shore as well as the right sailing area is essential. Keep it simple is our best advice here.

Step 6 - What boats

If you are a sailing club you will have club owned boats for anyone to use or privately owned boats that members might be willing to lend. There are no special insurance implications with lending a disabled person your dinghy. With only minor modifications, (often none needed) many boats can be sailed by many disabled sailors. You might consider contacting other local groups and clubs to see if they would be prepared to lend their boats to help you get started.

Step 7 - Finance

Look at how much it will cost you to get going and sustain activity. Membership fees and boat hire costs are all acceptable, but keep it realistic. On average, disabled people earn a third less than their able bodied counterparts.

Step 8 - Marketing

There are lots of disabled people wanting to go sailing, but they need to be aware of the opportunities. The best way to do this is to make contact with local disability organisations. Research has shown that disabled people who take up new sports learn about them through friends and relatives, not expensive advertising.

The golden rule is not to promise something you cannot deliver. If you only have two boats do not invite twenty people to go sailing. Some clubs are concerned that when they open their doors, hundreds of disabled people are going to take over the club. This will not happen. In our experience, it generally starts with a handful of sailors and the word spreads over the following months and years.

Step 9 - Name the group

It is essential to give the group an identity.

Step 10 - Review / evaluation date

Finally, set yourself a review date in the short term. Look at the goals that you have set yourself from the above and evaluate. You may need to set up a small committee to run the group. Who can in turn consider a group constitution?