

Organising A 'Come and Try It' Day

One of the most effective ways of getting started is to organise a day when people with disabilities can come and try various types of sailing. The day could be regarded as either an enjoyable, isolated experience, or the start of a whole new pastime - good reasons for careful planning, promotion and publicity.

Planning

Like all new activities, every effort should be made to ensure that the first experience is a good one:

- Have at least one disabled person on your planning committee
- Involve the members and committee of the sailing club
- Start planning as early as possible; make an action timetable
- Choose the date with care to avoid other major events at the club or in the area.
- Try to avoid extremes of weather, i.e. organise during the summer.
- Persuade people to make their boats available.
- Check facilities at the club.
- Organise catering.
- Consider additional activities for those waiting to sail, i.e. explain parts of boat and rigging.
- Develop a plan for alternative activities if the weather is bad, i.e. Powerpoint presentation available from IDSA.
- Enlist a team of competent helpers.
- Know who will make decisions on the day, particularly in relation to safety and weather.

Promotion

To reach as many people with disabilities as possible, contact:

- Local and national organisations for disabled sports and other activities e.g. Irish Wheelchair Association.
- Local and national rehabilitation centres.
- Local authorities/council and Community Associations.

Publicity

To promote sailing for people with disabilities and report on the activity, contact:

- Newspapers.
- Television and radio e.g. Seascapes.
- Disability newsletters, of which there are many.

Advance Information

Make sure that everyone knows:

- What to expect from the day, the programme, club facilities, catering, etc.
- How to reach the venue and at what time.
- To bring spare clothing and waterproofs.
- Likely expenses during the day.

Volunteers

A team of well briefed, competent and enthusiastic boat owners and helpers is essential for a successful day. Be sure that they:

- Know what is expected of them in terms of time and activity.
- Know how best to help (disability awareness, transferring in/out of boats, etc.).
- Are competent for their allotted tasks.
- Can be easily identified as volunteers with badge, T-shirt, etc.

Club Facilities

There is no such thing as a 'perfect venue' for disabled sailing. It is not essential to have ideal, accessible facilities before you host a 'Come and Try it' day. Much can be done with temporary ramps, etc. but try and liaise with IDSA with regard to what facilities may be involved. Have a clear understanding of what disabilities you will be dealing with on the day.

It is helpful to check that the following can be made accessible for wheelchair users and those with walking difficulties, visual impairment, etc.

- Jetties and foreshores (beaches).
- Toilets.
- Change rooms.
- Refreshment areas.

Extra Equipment

It's a good idea to have:

- Chairs in areas where people may have to wait.
- Cushions for protection, comfort and stability. (Avoid using wheelchair cushions which should be kept dry).

Clothing

Be sure that you have an adequate supply of:

- Buoyancy aids/lifejackets.
- Water/windproof clothing.

Safety & First Aid



People with disabilities are no more likely to need first aid or medical attention than anyone else. But with extra people at the club, it is sensible to check that you have adequate first aid and rescue facilities. There is no requirement for extra safety cover for on the water activities (assuming experienced sailors/instructors are skippering the boats).

Follow-up Information

It's useful to prepare an information sheet for people to take away with them. Include details such as:

- Contact names, telephone numbers and email of the organisation.
- Encouragement to join the club/participate in further activities with friends and family.
- Programme of organised training/sailing events.
- Membership details.
- Costs involved.
- IDSA/ISA Contact information.

