

Volunteers: your questions answered - 8

*This series of information sheets has been developed to help you recruit, train and retain volunteers, both disabled and able-bodied, to support sailing programmes which include disabled people. To safeguard yourself and your volunteers, please ensure that you also read the series entitled **Volunteers - essential information**, available from www.rya.org.uk/AboutRYA/RYSailability/Bestpracticemanual.htm*

Recruiting and training volunteers

The way you recruit and train your volunteers will be a crucial factor in keeping them.

Mission statement

Ensure that your volunteers know the aims and objectives of your organisation. They should be aware of your vision or mission statement, which probably includes phrases like 'responding to need' and 'providing appropriate services'. Every person who works for the organisation - staff or volunteers - should have the mission as a priority. Users will expect the same high standards from all, and will not make allowances for volunteers.

Induction session

Provide every new volunteer with a proper induction (see overleaf for a suggested induction format). It should include an explanation of the aims and the rules of the organisation, their rights and responsibilities as volunteers, and your expenses policy if you have one. You will also need to tell volunteers about any individual members requiring special attention (possible seizures, communication difficulties etc) and explain what is appropriate terminology. Involve everyone in the session, so that they can get to know each other by name.

Screening and police checking

Checking if someone has a criminal record is one way of reducing the risk of recruiting volunteers who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable people. However, you should not assume that by screening volunteers you have done enough. It is vital to always carry out effective recruitment, training and supervision of staff.

The need to screen will depend entirely on what the volunteer is doing and who he/she is working with. The only legal obligation you have to screen is the 'duty of care' that requires that you do everything 'reasonable' within your power to protect others from harm.

Where work involves contact with 'vulnerable' people, you can require applicants to declare spent convictions as well as current ones. Vulnerable people include anyone under the age of 18, or anyone who could be described as having a substantial learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including addiction to alcohol or drugs, or a substantial reduction in physical or mental capacity.

You can find advice about screening and police checking of volunteers by following this link: www.volunteering.org.uk/952246056b49410ab756f3ff08cd3b56

Continuous training

Make it clear to your volunteers that they don't have to worry if they don't have the required skills, because the club will offer training in those skills, as well as the opportunity for further development in the future. For example, the person who starts by rigging boats could progress to RYA rescue boat crew training. In addition, RYA Sailability offers [disability awareness training](#), to educate volunteers about disability issues. The moving and handling element of the training shows them how to operate a hoist and put on slings, and will give new volunteers confidence in their role.

Don't forget ...

... to keep your own training needs under review. For example, do you need training in order to support your volunteers? Make sure that this need, budget and supervision time are written into your key tasks or business plan.

A suggested induction for new volunteers

Sailability group membership form	
Written mission statement	
Written statement of duties and role, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - concentrate on responsibilities, not what others are doing - do not leave your place or job without permission - do not consume, or be under the influence of, alcohol - remain courteous towards everyone! 	
Timetables	
Maps and plans	
Checklists	
Communication in an emergency	
Walk around site, noting location of ramps, accessible toilets, phones	
First aid arrangements	
Risk assessment	
Health and safety policy and procedures	
Guidance on decisions that volunteers can make and those to refer elsewhere	
Fire procedures and arrangements for evacuation	
Coded messages	
Appropriate terminology	
Equal opportunities statement	
Chain of command for all eventualities – a volunteer's supervisor and role specific supervisor	
Insurance cover	
Volunteer log book	
Signed by volunteer	
SupervisorDate	