

## Volunteers: your questions answered – 1

*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](http://www.rya.org.uk/AboutRYA/RYSailability/Bestpracticemanual.htm)*

### Who volunteers, and why?

You probably already know the people who could volunteer at your club:

- members
- members' friends or relatives
- carers
- spectators
- students
- retired people

Whether they are motivated by an interest in sailing or by a disability interest, they are likely to have several reasons for wanting to volunteer, ranging from very personal aims to career ambitions. For example, they may want to:

- help others
- involve the whole family
- fight boredom
- learn more about disabilities
- gain status
- have fun
- gain self-confidence
- show that they can do a job better than others
- mix with like-minded people
- use their natural leadership skills
- learn new skills and knowledge
- share skills
- make friends
- take a new direction in life
- give back to sailing
- feel needed or that they belong
- enhance a career
- to make changes to something they feel strongly about
- complete a project
- gain power or influence

Disabled people may also have more specific reasons to volunteer:

- Volunteering is a way to develop independence and reduce isolation.
- Disabled people may volunteer to give themselves a voice and to show their capabilities. Volunteering provides a position from which they can express real needs, instead of accepting what other people offer.
- It is very like paid work – it offers many of the same benefits, except for the wage.
- Many disabled people are unemployed with time to spare (69% of disabled people under pension age are out of work).
- Volunteering can be a way to acquire skills or training in a search for paid work.

As you can see, the motivations for volunteering are many and varied. People volunteer through a mixture of unselfishness and self-interest, but they all want something out of it - you need to find out what, and work out a way of letting them have it!