

## Event and activity management

### Introduction

Events are an intrinsic part of a club structure and have many benefits including:

- A good way to offer a fun day out
- Attract new participants and spectators – today's spectators could be tomorrow's new members
- Introduce people to new activities, experiences and skills
- Get more people committed to your activity
- Fund raising

Making events more accessible to disabled people will improve service for everyone. Disabled people represent a large pool of people who may want to go to a sailing event, but many are likely to assume that what is on offer will not be accessible to them, you can help eliminate this opinion:

- Think about the needs of disabled people in advance of the event;
- Encourage them to become involved in planning and making it happen;
- Publicise accessible events through both mainstream and specialist media

Some disabled people see the water and the waterside as an unwelcoming place. Organising suitable events can be an exciting way of overcoming these negative feelings. Other barriers may include the following:

- Lack of positive images in publicity material
- Planning which does not take into account the needs of disabled people.
- Not promoting the event to disabled people

Consider running an event or open day for disabled people as a normal occurrence, not simply as a "special offer". It can introduce disabled people to new activities in a safe environment where they do not feel that they are being judged.

This can play a valuable role in developing skills and confidence.

For some, taster and have-a-go events can act as stepping-stones to taking part in mainstream activities.

As a provider, the club's choice will depend on objectives and the likely demand for a particular event. You need to be able to present your event in such a way that potential new members or participants can make informed choices (consider differing age groups).

Planning to take into account the needs of disabled people should be part of planning the whole event. Organise a cross-section of disabled people to establish their needs and to help you plan the event. In choosing whom to work with it is important to get people with a variety of disabilities on board. Find out what they think about your ideas and what expertise they can bring to planning and developing the event. This will help decide on a list of improvements that are achievable.

## Preparation - Key points

- Set your objectives
- Have a clear plan of action for your budget, people and equipment you need to achieve your aims.
- Decide the target audience and what resources you have in terms of people, equipment and money.
- Set out the important tasks to be carried out.
- Outline the activities needed to achieve these tasks.
- Appoint an overall project leader, and state who has which responsibilities. For mainstream events it is better to share the knowledge and expertise across the organising team than choose one person to be the 'disability officer'.
- Set up a contact with local disabled people.
- Set your overall timetable, and schedule the tasks and activities within it. Include regular review dates and monitoring controls.
- Keep control of your event plan. It will help you recognise any short falls and take necessary action to put it right at an early stage.
- Use your networks to find out if anyone else has run a similar event before. Get their help and advice on how to get started.
- Be realistic about your planning time-scale, and the scale of the event you have planned.
- Assess whether or not you know enough to be able to handle the event.
- For larger events you may wish to find partners to run particular activities.
- Draw up an action plan of who needs to do what and when by.
- Include 'contingency' planning in your preparation. Look at the things that can go wrong. Do all that you can to avoid the drama becoming a crisis.

## **Event timing**

- Plan your event for when people can get there.
- Events during the week may attract school parties and people who use day centres, especially if they receive publicity material targeted at them well before the event. This will allow time for parents to give permission, and to book staff and transport; weekday events will also attract retired people, who may be able to attend using their own transport.
- Bear in mind that many disabled people will be at work during the week, so may prefer mainstream weekend events.
- Seasonal changes will have an affect on how many people come to an event. Choose a date that avoids inclement weather. Have a plan 'B'

## **Providing transport**

Think about how people are going to get to the event, and if they can get there using public transport. The event start and finish time could tie in with the public transport timetable. Club members may be willing to organise a rota to transport people to and from the club. Work with your local community transport organiser so that you can also offer adapted transport for groups of disabled people who cannot use mainstream services. Provide some reserved parking for orange badge holders as close as possible to the activity.

## Promotion of the event

Disabled people will assume that events are not accessible to them unless they are told otherwise. Publicise the features of your event widely, and well before it takes place, so that people can choose whether or not to come along. Consider the following points.

Promoting events by using positive images of disabled people will reassure disabled visitors that you have considered their needs and that if they go they will have a fun day out.

Not everyone who will benefit from good access will necessarily consider himself or herself to be disabled, or belong to a disability group. For both mainstream and disabled-only events, make sure to use relevant normal mainstream outlets and specialised disability links to promote the event. To attract as many people with disabilities as possible aim to contact local:

- Organisations for disabled sports
- Organisations that offer any other activities
- Schools and colleges
- Rehabilitation Centres and units

Marketing outlets include libraries, doctor's surgeries, dentist surgeries, hospitals, local supermarkets, sports centres, parish and church halls and tourist information centres. Free newspapers reach a large part of the local population, and can be effective in targeting people who don't go out and buy newspapers.

Marketing through the disability press will reach more disabled people. Most areas of the country are now covered by 'Talking Pages' which put news and other information on tape. People with a variety of disabilities will use this service.

For details of your local service contact the Royal National Institute for the Blind. Talking Newspapers will require a longer lead time for stories than the mainstream press. There may also be local disability groups which produce regular news letters for their members, and which may be willing to advertise your event. Ceefax and Teletext offer an excellent service for deaf people, and it's free.

Positive publicity on the disability grapevine is worth any amount of paid advertising. If you get approval from local disabled people that your event is really accessible, it will go a long way towards persuading others to give it a try.

When you produce your publicity material bear in mind the needs of people who are partially sighted. Use clear bold type, large print with good colour contrast with the background.

Make sure your posters are attractive and contain the key information. Put the main text in a mixture of upper and lower case writing.

Tell the people that the event is accessible, and where possible include a contact point or a phone number from which people can get more information. If you have a minicom or fax number, include that as well.

They will also need to know the venue, date, cost and if there is any transport available. Have an application form and information sheet ready to send when enquiries are received.

People will also want to know what to bring and what the club will be providing.

Include directions on how to get there and where the reception desk will be on arrival.

## **Staffing for the activity**

The success of the event will depend on the team running it, and the imagination in adapting the activities planned to make them accessible.

Take advice from people with disabilities

If you and your organisation are new to managing accessible events, take advice from people who have done it before. Or encourage the most 'people friendly' people you know to 'meet the public'. Care about the image and the service that you are perceived as offering.

### **Selecting your Team**

Most worthwhile activities are more successful with a team. Sailing with disabled people is no exception. Sailors and helpers work together to enjoy a common sport. The reasons why people volunteer to help are as numerous as the helpers themselves. So is the range of ages, from young students or retired people.

A team of well briefed, awareness trained and enthusiastic people is essential for a successful event. Don't rely on club members who just happen to be around.

Ensure you involve disabled people/sailors on your committee.

### **Identify a Leader**

Past experience has shown that to identify an organiser/co-coordinator/leader with the responsibility of managing the team of volunteers is essential.

### **Role of volunteers**

It is important to emphasise that a volunteer does not have to be a sailor or a paramedic to help someone get afloat. Every job is important, including making the tea. It is essential to identify what job is best for each individual. Don't waste 'on the water' skills of sailors by using them to undertake the equally important 'on shore' activities which can be performed by a volunteer with no sailing experience.

### **Staffing Levels**

To make the event run smoothly you will need a higher number of staff and volunteers than with events not designed to be accessible to disabled people. It is up to staff on the day to check with people that they do want help! Consider having some spare volunteers who can give directions, provide respite support and generally pitch in to help with any hitches which may arise on the day.

You need to have one person whose specific job is to direct solutions to any problems that may arise on the day. Everyone must know who this person is and how to contact them.

All helpers should be readily identified – try name badges so that visitors know who to approach for help and information.

Uniforms help visitors see who the event organisers are, but they can also be off putting for less confident people. A compromise is to provide all staff with name badges and maybe sweatshirts or caps to help identification.

It's all too easy to take volunteers for granted, so it is important to look at why people are motivated into becoming a volunteer.

Volunteers want to:

- Put something back into an activity they have enjoyed.
- Feel needed
- Feel worthwhile and regarded
- Have a sense of belonging
- Enjoy the company of like-minded people
- Work as part of a team
- Accompany family or a friend
- Enjoy a role that gives them status and power
- Enjoy the social company the activity offers.

Remember that it is essential to identify a key person or people to take on the role of volunteer care and management. Volunteers become effective and enjoy their participation far more if they:

- Have a clear brief of their role
- Take ownership of their role
- Feel valued by the organisation
- Are offered reassurance so they feel secure
- Receive feedback to know they are doing a good job
- Feel their role is a worthwhile use of their time.
- Finally and most important of all – receive a thank you

### **Organisation**

Most events will have one person – the event organiser – in charge, although of course for large events you may have an Event Committee. The Event Organiser may be responsible for staff, volunteers and contractors. Don't assume that these people have much experience of working with disabled people. Make sure that you give everyone detailed instructions as to what you want them to do, and how you want them to do it.

Involve everyone in setting the objectives, and in the planning process. That way everyone knows what they have to do, and they know what support you are providing to help things go smoothly. For example if you are arranging wheelchair hire or sign language, everyone needs to know this so that they can plan for this support in their activity. They can then point those who might want to use such services in the right direction.

### **Training and forward briefing**

All staff and volunteers helping with accessible events need to feel confident about being with disabled people. Provide everyone involved with awareness training in disability and the environment. Offering training like this is one way of recognising the value you place on the role of staff and volunteers in making an event a success.

# HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?

RACE OFFICER, MARK LAYING, FIRST AID, ONSHORE SUPPORT



PROVIDING FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS, TRANSPORTING SAILORS

RIGGING, LAUNCHING, SAFETY COVER

## **What the programme should offer**

### **Physical Accessibility**

Make sure the event and as many of its activities as possible are held in an accessible place. Start with a basic site audit, to see what you have got. Draw up a realistic order of improvement needs in order of priority. Your disabled advisors should be able to help you with this and provide ideas of what is needed.

### **Including all visitors**

Common perceptions are that sailing is a participation sport, not a spectator's sport. But, today's spectators may well be tomorrow's new members, so if you are able to, provide facilities for spectators, even if only a few, afloat near the action or from a look out point. Do consider the opportunities.

Have an experienced sailor on hand to explain what is going on. Offer a range of doing and watching activities, so that people can choose how they want to take part. People who cannot do very much still enjoy themselves and feel part of the event.

Many will be new to the activity so keep instructions simple. Keep a supply of simple written instruction to hand which you can give to someone who cannot hear or who has difficulty in following, or remembering, verbal instructions.

If you have a number of deaf people taking part, then the Royal National Institute for Deaf will be able to give you advice on getting hold of sign language interpreters.

Plan the length of sailing sessions in accordance with individual needs, taking into account the weather, distance from the shore etc. For taster events it is best to keep the sessions short, it is important that the person's first sail is an enjoyable experience.

Allow additional time for a changing clothes and moving locations, if there are people with mobility considerations.

Allow periods of rest, as some sailors may tire very quickly, losing concentration and co-ordination.

Exercise care; people themselves are not always sure of all the implications of their own impairment, especially when introduced to a new activity.

Slide shows and talks are a great way of introducing people to what your organisation has to offer. Giving informative and interesting talks will help to make disabled people (and where appropriate their care assistants) feel more comfortable and more confident about going on to try something new.

Make sure that you hold the talk in an accessible environment. Provide a hearing induction loop for people who are hard of hearing. Remember to talk through slides or overheads so that people who are blind or partially sighted continue to be included.

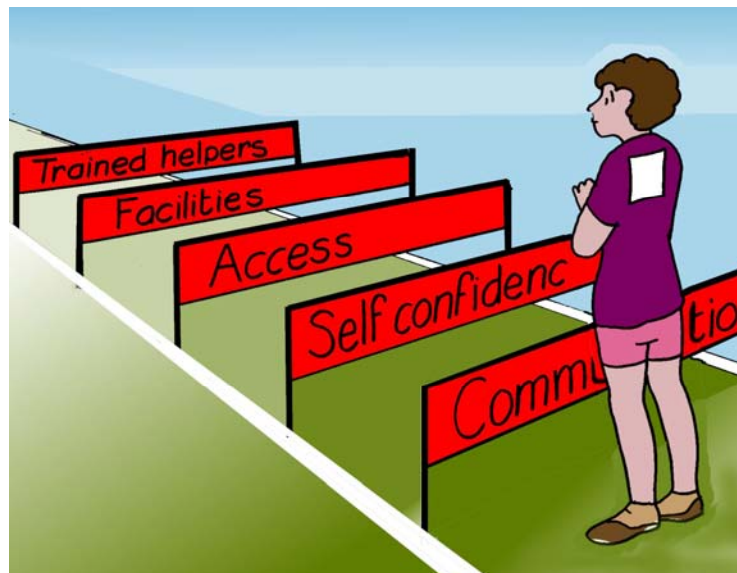
Seeing a familiar face also makes a big difference, and helps to maintain and increase confidence. So make sure everyone who has given a talk to the group are at the club to welcome them when they come to the site for the first time.



## Avoid creating financial barriers

How you price an event is a factor in how accessible it is to a wide range of people. In disability terms:

- Disabled people are likely to have less disposable income than some other visitors;
- They may have extra living costs associated with being disabled; and
- They may in some cases only be able to go to events with support from a personal assistant or carer. Too high a charge, or having to pay for the personal assistant to come too, may put some people off.



*Solutions include:*

- *Offering low-priced or free events as a way of attracting more visitors from a wider range in the community to the countryside; and*
- *Charging the disabled person at the full rate, and a personal assistant at half rate or no charge.*

## **On-site planning and facilities**

Sign post the site. You may need to put up temporary direction signs. Your promotional literature should also include a map and clear directions. A basic uncluttered map will be easier for everyone to read including people with visual impairments.

If you expect groups to arrive in coaches then you should check that the vehicles can get to the site easily without risking damage to them or surrounding hedgerows.

Having accessible car park spaces is crucial for disabled people to take part. Within your car parking plan you should include parking places for orange badge holders close to where the activities are to take place. Make sure that the person on the gate knows about it so that they can direct vehicles to the right place. Each accessible parking place should be wide enough to allow people to transfer in and out of wheelchairs. Allow generous space for getting in and out of minibuses, which may be carrying passengers, which may require access to a tail lift. Make sure that your car park attendants are aware of these needs so that they can deal with casual or thoughtless parking if necessary.

If you cannot provide parking close to the activity area, provide a dropping off point at the entrance for disabled car passengers.

### **Reception point and site information**

Prepare and staff your information point well before the event is due to start. Put it close to the entrance point most likely to be used by disabled people, and on level ground, with wheelchair access.

Have an information pack available to hand to visitors on arrival. Include in this details of where sailing can be continued in the future.

Where appropriate provide a hearing induction loop so that hearing impaired visitors can hear any instructions or directions that they are being given. Your local Royal National Institute for the Deaf office will be able to give you details of local contractors who will be able to install a temporary loop systems for you. Some people with hearing impairments may prefer written rather than spoken instructions. Remember to keep the language fairly basic so that it is easy to understand. Railway Stations and Airport Terminals are typical examples of poor public address communications. Good lighting will also make lip reading easier for people with hearing impairments.

Make sure that you have sufficient turning space for wheelchair users.

Any displays should be at a height suitable for wheelchair users and should use large print against a plain contrasting background.

Provide a large uncluttered map of the site, marked with the place of each site of each major activity. The map should be placed where wheelchair users can stop and read it without causing obstruction to other people. If this is not possible produce photocopies of the site plan, which visitors can use around the site.

Contact a local blind or partially sighted group or school to get some hand - held tactile site plans produced if appropriate. These can be very valuable in helping people have confident and independent access around the site. And to be able to make their own choices about where to go and what to do.

### **Interpretation**

Interpretation is an important way of explaining to visitors about the event. The most effective way of doing this is through direct personal contact one to one talking to the newcomer. Don't get carried away and talk too long. Be prepared to repeat information, or phrase it in a different way to allow newcomers to understand it more easily. If you are producing a leaflet to go with the event, bear in mind the visitor will often keep it and read it again later. Don't try to use it to explain absolutely everything that is going on. Concentrate on important points.

### **Signs**

On-site signposts need to be clear and use good colour contrasts against the background. Fluorescent colours work best for people with visual impairments. Some people will need to get really close to signs before they can read them, so don't put them too high. Signs are also essential for people with hearing impairments, who may find it difficult to ask for directions and hear the answer against what may be a noisy background with lots going on. Include distance information on signposts. This is particularly useful for people who get tired easily.

## **Equipment and adaptations**

It may be necessary to provide some adapted equipment to give disabled people the chance to take part. At the planning stage consider speaking to specialist activity leaders or a teacher at a local special needs school, to get their advice on practical adaptations and help for the event.

If any on site buildings have steps at the entrance, provide a portable ramp so that wheelchair users can get in and out. Ramps maybe hired and/or bought from sources of equipment for disabled people.

If boats are being launched from the shore, it is essential that a firm smooth beach is selected for this purpose. This does not need to be expensive. Old carpets can be laid over soft muddy surfaces. Heavy duty rubber matting provides a long lasting solution.

Organise the loan of suitable boats and sufficient support craft.

Have an area close to the boats that people can safely leave their wheelchairs.

Make sure that an adequate supply of additional equipment is available and this should include:

- Buoyancy aids/life jackets
- Water/windproof clothing

(unclaimed lost property is a good source, or put an advert on the club notice board asking members to loan old sailing clothing etc).

It is a good idea to have the following available:

- Chairs in areas where people may have to wait
- Wheelchairs available for people who do not normally use them, but may have difficulty with distance or terrain.
- Resting places at designated places around the site.
- Extra cushions for protection, comfort and stability.

## **Toilets and changing areas**

Providing accessible toilet facilities and changing areas will make all the difference to people's ability to stay at the event longer. There should be at least one unisex toilet. so that a personal assistant of the opposite sex can provide help if necessary. If your site does not have any toilets, or the loos are inaccessible, then hire some accessible portable toilets. Place them close to the main activities so that people don't have to go far from the action to be able to use them. It is also worth considering providing a 'respite tent', which your visitors can use if they need to rest for a while.

## **Catering**

It is important to have tea, coffee, soft drinks and food available. Ask the caterers or your site volunteers to offer help to customers if necessary with carrying trays or cutting up food. Some people will find it easier to eat sitting down, so provide some tables and chairs. The tables will need to be big enough for wheelchair users to get in close. Large plates, drinking straws and strong cutlery can also help make the difference between eating and going hungry.

## **First Aid**

All events need first aid cover. The bigger the event the more cover that you need. Agree with the first aiders how much cover you need, including:

- Accommodation needs
- A register of cases attended; and
- The availability of phones for an emergency

## **Communications**

If you are going to use radio or mobile phones check beforehand they work on that site and think about other options if they fail on the day. Make sure that visitors know where the pay phones are.

## Insurance

Confirm your insurance cover before the event and be aware of specific exclusions, such as upper and lower age limits on volunteer and visitors. If you are going to use specialist equipment to give disabled people the chance to take part it is worth taking a few precautions to avoid possible problems:

- Take out extra insurance on specialist equipment
- Provide hirers with the safety information and the basic training on how to use the equipment.
- Depending on what your insurance company asks for, get people hiring your equipment to leave their name and address in case of any problems. You may also want to include a statement, which the hirer signs to say that you have explained all the equipment to them.

## Health, safety & welfare

Do all that you can to plan for possible dangers or factors that may affect the health, safety and welfare of the event organisers, helpers or visitors. Read local authority or voluntary organisation guidelines. You should also read any relevant codes of conduct relating to managing particular activities and information on choosing staff to work with particular groups. Involve the local Access Officer in any site safety audit, to make sure that you follow any specific disability requirements.

## Evaluating the event

After an event, a good debrief and evaluation is an important part of the overall project. Highlight good and bad points of how it all went, to help you plan the next: Ask those who took part and helpers what worked and what didn't, and what if any adaptations they made to their activities to make them accessible.

Include the following questions

- Was the activity staged in an accessible place?
- Did the equipment work?
- Was there sufficient volunteer support?
- Did the event work?
- Was it enjoyable?
- Some disabled people may lack the confidence to make negative comments. Often they feel any services for disabled people are better than none. So give a postal address for comments to be forwarded after the event. This option also allows people more time to reflect on the day and come up with wider ranging feedback, or to respond using computer or audio tape.