

Poole Sailability - Volunteers

Frequently Asked Questions



I have no sailing experience but am willing to learn, can I join as a Volunteer?

Because we sail out with disabled members on board you will need some basic sailing skills to be able act as a crew member. We would ask that you would have sufficient skills to take over the running of the Hawk if the skipper became incapacitated for any reason. We do however, provide on-going coaching and would expect our crews to progress towards becoming skippers. Those without any sailing skills should consider a basic sailing course before joining us.

I am not a sailor, can I still volunteer?

We also need volunteer "Meet and Greeters", or support assistants as we call them. The job involves reception, signing in, fitting of lifejackets and subject to fitness, the option to travel in Safety Boat as dedicated First Aider. We will provide the necessary training.

When do you sail?

Our regular sessions are on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings for about two hours. We also have a session on Friday mornings that is for volunteer training and trial sails for people thinking of joining us. Morning sessions start at 10.00 with a view to setting off at 10.30. Evening sessions start at 17.00 with a view of setting off by 17.30 dependant on wind being below 16 knots. If wind speed is above this or heavy rain is forecast the session will be cancelled, but you can always check our booking line where a message will be put out two hours before.

Where do we sail and how long will we be out?

We sail within the confines of Poole Harbour; the exact area will be dictated by the tide and wind. All the boats will set out for a sail lasting about 2 hours within Poole Harbour.

If I volunteer, what will be the commitment?

Once a month, volunteers send an email giving their availability for the forthcoming month so it's up to you to nominate the time you can spare. If however, you change your mind for any reason, you may withdraw your availability up to 24 hours before the session. We have many volunteers who attend most of the sessions, ideally we would ask that you commit to a minimum of two sessions each month. Like so many other things in life, you get out what you put in! What's most important to us though, is that you honour any commitment you've made, to avoid disappointing others. Many of our volunteers have their own boats and other sailing interests, and find time for a couple of sessions a month with Poole Sailability.

Do you offer any training?

We currently run a limited number of courses which are funded by the RYA including First Aid which we encourage all of our volunteers to take. If you would like to acquire further training such as Powerboat Level 2 or Marine Radio Operation we have links to local training organisations who offer our members a discount.

What sort of boats do you have?

We have four identical Hawk 20 keel boats, backed up by a Pioneer safety boat. The Hawks have a slab-reefing mainsail, a furling gib and a spinnaker. They've also got a 5hp outboard to get us in and out of the berths. We operate the boats with up to five people, i.e. a skipper, number two, and up to three of our disabled sailors. The boats are wonderful to sail, having terrific performance at all points of sail, and yet they're very forgiving.

What disabilities?

Our members are all ages, and have a range of disabilities and impaired health problems that make it difficult to sail without our help. We can't take wheelchairs, and sailors must be able to sit up unaided, and get on and off the boat without a hoist.

What ages do you take?

Anyone aged 12 or over is welcome to join us for a sail. Children under 18 and Vulnerable Adults must be accompanied on site by a parent or carer. We currently have sailors as young as 13 and some in their

70s. All that we ask is that our disabled members are able to get onto the boat, with some help if necessary, and are able to move around the boat as required.

Do I need a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check ?

Yes , we require a DBS check for all our volunteers, we will also need two references.

How do I get to you?

We are based at Rockley Quay which is part of Rockley Holiday Park. You come into the park then continue down the road and down the hill with Rockley Boat Yard on your right. A little further along on the left is Rockley Watersports and the Beach Cafe. The pontoon where our boats are moored is opposite Rockley Watersports.

What do I wear or bring?

As a volunteer you will need your own buoyancy aid although we can provide one for your trial sail with us. You will also need clothing for inshore sailing including waterproofs. If it is forecast to be very hot, bring sun cream and a hat.

Is there any space on the boat for my bag?

Each of the Hawks has large storage lockers where you can stow your bag, drinks etc. These are dry but like anything on a boat may have a bit of salty water in them. A good plastic bag is as good as anything.

Do we sail in windy conditions?

We sail in winds up to Force 4 which is a moderate breeze. If wind strengthens the session shall be curtailed and all boats will return to shore. Heavy rain, rough water and electrical storms will also mean automatic cancellation of the session.

Am I covered by your insurance?

Poole Sailability has insurance but there are limits to our general liability. Sailors with Poole Sailability, and their guests use the boats and any other facilities entirely at their own risk.

What does it cost?

Poole Sailability is a charity with significant overheads so we ask each of our members to make a donation towards the running of organisation. £40 for Sailing Volunteer Helpers and £50 for Disabled Sailors for a full years sailing. There are no costs for non-sailing volunteers

Are there any other benefits?

There are a number of benefits in becoming a member of Poole Sailability:

- We run free training courses including First Aid and Safety Boat skills.
- Our members get a reduced membership fee at the Lake Yard Yacht Club.
- You have the opportunity to join in with our race training and participate in Poole Week at Parkstone Yacht Club.
- You also have the opportunity to join in with social events at both Parkstone and Poole Yacht Clubs
- We are able to offer RYA courses such as Powerboat 2 and VHF Marine Radio at a reduced cost.
- Those rated as a skipper can take the Hawks for private hire at a reduced rate

How do I get started?

The first step is to arrange a trial sail with us to assess your sailing skills and your suitability for sailing with our disabled members. After that you may be invited to join us and take part in our sailing schedule.