



Introduction

Traditionally, sport has been the exclusive reserve of the physically and mentally able. There is a growing awareness, both within New Zealand and internationally, of the need to open up sporting and recreational opportunities to all, regardless of their physical or intellectual ability.

At the highest level, this can be seen with the success and ever growing popularity of the Paralympic movement. At the broadest level, all sports clubs and recreational groups are being encouraged to adopt a more inclusive approach to membership and coaching.

Sailing offers unique opportunities for those with disabilities. Unlike many other recreational pursuits, sailing can be one of the most accessible sports for people with disabilities. Anyone can enjoy the freedom of the open water. Unlike many other sports, sailing offers the opportunity to take part in open competition alongside those without disabilities. There are Yacht Classes that offer world-class regattas at national and international level, either organised specifically for those with disabilities, or open to all sailors.

Learning to sail can give confidence, self-esteem and a general sense of well-being to all participants. Sailing as part of an all inclusive club further encourages social contact and personal development.

These series of resources have been developed by Yachting New Zealand and is based on best practice guidelines issued by the International Association for Sailors with Disabilities. It is designed to help individuals and sailing clubs get started in opening up the sport to all.

There is no universal blueprint for getting started and building a robust, vibrant organisation for sailors with disabilities. These guidelines are just that – guidelines based on what has worked well in other locations around New Zealand and the world.

The most important attributes in getting something started in this area as in so many others are enthusiasm and commitment. The rewards are great, not only for the sailors whose lives are so greatly enriched by the experience, but also for the volunteers and coaches who get such positive feedback from the sailors.

Thank you and good luck in your efforts to make our sport accessible to all.



How to use these Documents

This handbook has been produced to help communities develop sailing opportunities for people with disabilities. It is based on best practice, culled from successful initiatives, both within New Zealand and overseas.

It should not be seen as a prescriptive set of steps to be slavishly followed, but rather as a set of guidelines, to be adapted to suit your circumstances. There is no standard organisation which meets the needs of every situation.

For example:

- Some organisations are small, with only a few helpers and a small fleet of boats; others are large with a variety of boat types, many sailors and helpers.
- Some operate independently of local yacht clubs; others are fully integrated into the mainstream of yacht club operations.
- Some employ paid coaches and bosuns, others depend on an all-volunteer workforce.
- Some cater only for those with physical disabilities; others include sailing for the visually impaired and those with intellectual disabilities.
- Some cover their operating costs through membership subscriptions; others offer heavily subsidised sailing through charitable donations and other fund-raising schemes.
- Some provide only recreational sailing, others also include racing opportunities.
- Some focus only on sailing, others also include social events outside the regular sailing season.

Nevertheless, there are some propositions that can be universally applied, regardless of your circumstances:

- Seek affiliation to Yachting New Zealand, where you can access essential information on training, coaching and racing.
- Make contact with Yachting New Zealand's Committee for Sailors with Disabilities to seek support and advice.
- Consider joining Blind Sailing New Zealand, where much additional information is available on the more specific needs of people with vision impairments as they are introduced to our sport.
- Join the Class Association relevant to your fleet to stay abreast of current developments.

Finally, remember that even the largest and most successful of organisations had modest beginnings. The maxim "Think big, start small" is especially relevant to helping people with disabilities get involved in our sport. Initially, the prospect of getting started may appear daunting. However, the rewards are great.