

Committee Member Induction Guide

Welcome to the Committee. As a committee member, you are an officer of an incorporated society and part of the group responsible for governing the club on behalf of its members.

You are not expected to be an expert in the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 or in governance theory. This guide highlights the core responsibilities, documents, and reference points relevant to the role, and indicates where further information can be found if needed.

1 Understand Your Role as a Committee Member

Committee members collectively govern the club. This includes setting direction, providing oversight, and ensuring the club operates consistently with its purpose, rules, and legal obligations.

In an incorporated society:

- committee members are legally officers with specific duties
- committee members must sign a consent form every time they are appointed
- authority is exercised through committee decisions, not individual action
- governance is distinct from operational or management roles

Where to find guidance

- [Incorporated Societies Register – Committees and officers](#)
- [Consent form for officers](#)
- Club constitution

2 Know the Club's Purpose, Constitution and Strategy

The constitution sets out why the club exists and how it is governed. It is the primary reference document for committee decision-making. Key governance content typically includes the club's purposes, committee structure, decision-making processes, member rights, and dispute resolution.

Your club may also have a strategy or strategic plan that can provide specific guidance on current priorities and programmes.

Where to find guidance

- Club constitution
- Club strategy or strategic plan
- [Incorporated Societies Register – Your society's constitution](#)

3 Declare Conflicts of Interest

Overlapping roles are common in sailing clubs. Potential conflicts of interest should be declared, recorded, and managed.

Where to find guidance

- Ask your club Executive Secretary
- Constitution or conflict-of-interest policy
- [Institute of Directors Conflict of Interest Guide](#)
- [Incorporated Societies officer duties guidance](#)

4 Financial Oversight and Reporting

The committee is responsible for financial oversight and annual financial reporting. Depending on the size of the club the annual financial report may need to be audited.

The club is required to file annual financial reports with the Incorporated Societies Register. This is usually done by the Treasurer. You can search the Incorporated Societies Register to find your filed annual filings.

Where to find guidance

- Treasurer's reports
- Annual financial statements ([Search the register here](#))
- [Incorporated Societies Register – financial reporting guidance](#)

5 Legal Status and Health & Safety obligations

The club is a separate legal entity, meaning it can own property, enter contracts, and hold legal obligations in its own name rather than those obligations automatically sitting with individual members.

Many sailing clubs will meet the definition of a PCBU (Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking), particularly where they engage paid instructors, coaches, contractors, or paid staff.

Where the club is a PCBU, it has primary health and safety duties. These include taking reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health and safety of:

- volunteers
- instructors and officials
- contractors
- members and participants
- other people affected by club activities

Liability and protection

Committee members are generally **not personally liable** simply because the club is a PCBU or because something goes wrong, provided they:

- act in good faith
- make informed decisions
- work within their authority
- take health and safety responsibilities seriously at governance level

Personal liability risk increases where serious risks are ignored or where governance responsibilities are consistently neglected.

Where to find guidance

- [Incorporated Societies officer duties guidance](#)
- [Sport NZ Legislative Compliance Manual \(2024\)](#)

6 Other Legal Matters to Be Aware Of

Sailing clubs are subject to a range of other legal obligations beyond incorporated societies law and health & safety.

These can include (but are not limited to):

- privacy
- safeguarding and child protection
- employment or volunteer engagement
- contractual matters
- charities regulations (if your club is registered under the Charities Act)

Where to find guidance

- [Sport NZ Legislative Compliance Manual \(2024\)](#)

7 Managing Risk

Governance oversight includes awareness of major risks, insurance cover, and escalation of serious safety matters.

As a committee member, you should be aware of your club's major risks and what is in place to reduce them (such as insurance cover for buildings and third party liability). Some clubs keep a risk register that is reviewed on a regular basis. Some clubs have a finance and risk subcommittee reporting to the main committee.

Where to find guidance

- Club risk register
- [Yachting NZ Club Manual – Club H&S and Risk Management](#)

8 Know Your Policies and Procedures

Committee members should be familiar with how the club operates in practice, including the key policies, procedures, and operational documents that support day-to-day activities. These may range from individual policies to a more formal operations or club manual.

It is the committee's responsibility to ensure that:

- appropriate policies and procedures are in place
- documents remain fit for purpose as the club changes
- policies are reviewed periodically
- updates are approved and communicated clearly

Regular review helps ensure the club operates consistently with its legal obligations, risk profile, and values.

Where to find guidance

- Club policies and procedures
- Any club operations or management manual
- Secretary, safety officer, or other delegated committee role

9 Ask for Help

Good governance includes recognising when further information or advice is needed.

Where to find guidance

- [Sport NZ – Club Management](#)
- [Yachting NZ Club Manual](#)
- [Incorporated Societies Register – Help Centre](#)
- Email Yachting NZ's governance manager at ingrid@yachtingnz.org.nz