



SAILING AND SAIL TRAINING REPORT

Sailing and Sail Training Programmes – Funded Activity Report 2024/25

Introduction

Thanks to your vital support, the Disabled Sailors Association (DSA) has continued to break down barriers in sailing, giving disabled individuals the chance to embrace the sport on their terms. This report details the progress enabled by your funding during the 2024/25 sailing season, highlighting how adaptive equipment and inclusive training schemes have transformed lives, created opportunities for qualifications and fostered vibrant community connections.

Mission and Vision

The DSA's mission is to make sailing fully accessible, safe and enjoyable for all, irrespective of physical ability or prior experience. Sailing provides not only recreation but a pathway to greater independence, wellbeing, and social inclusion. The scheme's unique combination of specialised dinghies, that cannot capsize and wheelchair-accessible yachts, creates a truly level playing field, where confidence and skills can flourish.

Programme Framework

Adaptive Dinghies Across the Country: Our fleet of unsinkable and capsize-resistant dinghies is stationed at five key partner locations to maximise reach: Ringwood, Hull, Tonbridge, Swarkstone, and Hanningfield. These boats are adapted with bespoke rigging and safety features, empowering sailors with a wide range of disabilities to take part.

Wheelchair-Accessible Ocean Yachts

Two fully wheelchair-accessible cruising yachts, moored in Portsmouth, regularly facilitate ocean sailing experiences in and around the Solent and Isle of Wight. These vessels enable full crewing participation and provide an inclusive platform for extended sailing adventures.

Participation and Reach

Across the year, the programme offered approximately 2,200 sailing opportunities, for people with disabilities.

Partnerships extend to over 33 disability organisations nationally, fostering collaboration and shared access.

Our participants span all age groups, with a significant 70% under the age of 25, demonstrating the scheme's vital role in youth development and skill-building.

Funding Utilisation and Outcomes

Your funding has directly supported:

- The maintenance, upgrade, and operation of adaptive dinghies and accessible yachts.
- Specialist training for instructors and volunteers, ensuring safe and effective delivery.
- Structured sailing courses tailored to individual needs, ranging from beginners to advanced levels.

Key achievements include:

| Award | Achievement number |
|---|--------------------|
| Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Awards | 3 |
| Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Day Skippers | 3 |
| Dinghy sailors passing advanced skills tests | 5 |

These outcomes illustrate both personal breakthroughs and wider programme success. The DofE participants completed physical and skills sections, some with multi-day residential sailing expeditions. Three sailors achieved their rigorous RYA Day Skipper certifications, marking significant proficiency and readiness for independent crewing. Five dinghy sailors successfully passed competence tests, often overcoming significant physical challenges.

Training Programme Highlights

1. Qualification Training

Offering structured progression, the DSA enables qualification towards recognised standards such as RYA Day Skipper and Instructor levels. Training adapts protocols to different disabilities, ensuring full engagement and safety.

2. Leisure Sailing and Coaching

For many, sailing with the DSA is about enjoyment and self-paced skill development. Supported leisure sailing sessions help build confidence and watermanship in a pressure-free environment, often with family members or carers onboard.

3. Competitive Sailing

Where interest and capability align, sailors are encouraged to participate in regional and national disabled sailing regattas. Adapted equipment and umpiring, allow for competitive fairness and a rewarding challenge.

Personal Impact: Stories from Sailors

“Your support meant I completed part of my DofE award, by sailing. It was a life-changing experience where I learned leadership and resilience.”

— DofE recipient

“As a wheelchair user, earning my Day Skipper certificate with the help of DSA training was a huge personal achievement. Now I confidently crew on ocean voyages.”

— Newly qualified skipper

“Passing my dinghy skills test gave me confidence to volunteer as a trainer. Giving back felt as good as learning to sail.”

— Volunteer dinghy sailor, Ringwood

These testimonies demonstrate that the impact extends beyond sailing skills—transforming lives, self-esteem, and social engagement.

Community and Collaboration

The DSA’s partnerships with 33 disability organisations enhance inclusion and spread awareness. Regular networking events, group sailing challenges, and joint projects, enrich our community, creating enduring friendships and mutual support networks.



DISABLED SAILORS ASSOCIATION

CHARITY No 1028993 SINCE 1993

REAL sailing for ALL disabilities of ALL ages in wheelchair accessible boats

PATRON - LORD ROCKLEY

Operational and Financial Stewardship

Your funding directly supports the upkeep of adapted boats, safety equipment, and specialist training. The reliance on donations and grants ensures beneficiaries can access the service free or at low cost, removing financial barriers.

Looking Ahead

Building on this season's success, our priorities include:

- Expanding the regional dinghy programme with new hub locations to increase geographical reach.
- Enhancing training for instructors, focusing on adaptive techniques and safety.
- Developing new interactive resources for youth engagement, especially to support DofE participation.
- Increasing ocean sailing opportunities aboard accessible yachts to meet growing demand.

Conclusion

Your support is the driving wind behind every journey, qualification, and new beginning enabled by the DSA. Together, we are charting a course toward a future, where sailing is not only accessible but a beacon for empowerment and adventure, for people with disabilities.

Thank you for investing in this transformative voyage.

