

Chesil Sailability Standard Operating Procedures

Part 2 SOP- Specific Operational and Safety Procedures – for Volunteers by Activity

Pontoon Lead, Pontoon Team & Hoist Lead Standard Operating Procedures

Updates

March 2025	Pontoon SOP 2025 v2	Original (after amendments)
January 2026	2-5 Pontoon SOP 2026 v1	Annual update incorporating learning from 2025 season

Pontoon Team – process and role

- The role of the Pontoon Team is to ensure the safe transition of Sailors and Volunteers from the shore to their vessel(s) using the Pontoon. Pontoons are potentially hazardous; by following these guidelines you, our Chesil Sailability Volunteer, are the main mitigation against those hazards.
- Stay alert, if something does not look right speak up.
- At all times show respect for our Sailors and Volunteers. Do not gossip.
- Be alert to welfare and safeguarding – pass on concerns to the Safeguarding Officer.
- Be ready to advise on appropriate clothing and always wear clothing appropriate to the weather yourself. Feet should be protected by closed toe footwear and buoyancy aids/life jackets must always be worn on the Pontoon.
- Know your limits, let the Pontoon Lead know when you need a break or when you have had enough. Bring food and water as need be and ensure it is kept stored in a safe location so as not to be in the way.
- Enjoy your role and take pleasure in helping others enjoy the session along with you.

Pontoon Lead

The role of the pontoon lead is somewhat akin to the conductor of an orchestra, you play no instrument yourself but somehow ensure all the moving parts work in harmony. You will be aware of what is coming up (boats approaching, hoists required, sailors on the pontoon) and allocate resources (your pontoon volunteers) accordingly. Hoist operations are the responsibility of the Hoist Lead. Boat approach and release are the responsibility of the Skipper, so far as this is practical. Good communication with the DO and your pontoon team is essential.

Qualifications

- There is no specific qualification requirement for any pontoon role, training and guidance will be given. In general, the Pontoon Team personnel should be able to demonstrate key skills and good judgement, through practical assessment.
- All volunteers are required to complete the RYA Disability Awareness Course at the earliest opportunity.
- Pontoon Leads should, ideally, hold a VHF licence, but not essential. See Part 3 for VHF use
- RYA Certificates held must be presented and copied for Chesil Sailability records.
- Pontoon Leads must confirm that they have read and understood their standard operating procedures, and this must be recorded on the training record.

Getting started

- Pontoon Lead collects and signs out VHF handset from the Cabin.
- Pontoon Lead consults with DO, takes a copy of the session plan and if applicable, makes note of any specific Sailor needs, medical or otherwise, that might arise.

- Pontoon Lead helps ensure someone is leading on the Hansa's are being rigged and taken to the slipway.
- Attend DO briefing.
- Ensure Pontoon trollies have been taken to the Pontoon or facilitate this.
- Ensure contents of Pontoon trollies are correct against Kit List to make sure everything is available in time for the start of the session.
- Pontoon Lead to check the pontoon area is ready to be set up for the session, i.e. no other users. Advise DO of any actual or potential conflicts on the pontoon.
- Be aware of any fuel brought to the pontoon (Ribs Trolley) and that the jerry can is positioned safely/ tied down on windy days. Only the Bosun or their assistant should refuel boats.
- Consider having a wheelchair available on the pontoon.
- Check your team and confirm roles with Hoist Leads and hoist assistants. In practice roles may change during the session however Pontoon Lead should always try to keep an overview of activity on the Pontoon and therefore should not become focused on any one single activity/ function.
- Does everyone know the session plan, the safety plan, and what they should be doing?
- Ensure fenders are in place along the pontoon.
- Remove covers from hoist(s) and prepare hoists for use. If there is any doubt about the condition of either hoist seek advice from the DO or Bosun. Store covers securely.
- Safety boats – these will be self-organising. Pontoon Team should take account of their presence and position, or absence, during operations.
- Hawks – these will mostly be self-organising apart from help with taking lines. Pontoon Lead should organise mooring positions to ensure boats needing the hoist are in the correct position. Pontoon Team will assist with Hawks departing from and returning to the pontoon.
- Hansas – Pontoon Team will receive Hansas from the Safety Boat and complete the rigging process with the Hansa alongside the pontoon. Keels MUST be lowered (and raised) using the keel hoist (known as 'Keith'), it is unsafe to raise/lower Hansa keels by hand. Note: Hansas are extremely unstable until keels are lowered. Keel pins and their retainers must be put in place and checked by the Pontoon Lead and DO before the Hansa can be used. Sailors will often know how they want the Hansa to be rigged and will guide on any assistance required from the Pontoon Team. Pontoon Team will assist with Hansas departing from and returning to the pontoon.
- Wheely boat – be aware of the larger size of the wheelyboat. Assist with mooring and release.
- Hoist Lead – ensure hoist is ready for use, that the area around the hoist is clear, that the T Bar has been attached and the shackle firmly closed. Check who will be your Hoist Assistant (the person pumping and moving the Hoist)

During the session.

Pontoon Lead

- **The Pontoon Lead should always try to keep an overview of activity on the Pontoon.** They should be planning ahead and therefore must avoid becoming focused on any one single activity/ function.
- Ensure Hoists are available for use, and on-water safety cover is available for when the hoist is in use.
- Ensure that the right boat is in the right place at the right time with support from the Pontoon Team, to catch/release lines etc, as appropriate.
- Keep a regular check on your team and ensure that Hoist Leads and Hoist Assistants are ready when needed.

- Be aware of the weather and of how the conditions on the pontoon are impacting on your Team and their ability to operate safely and effectively. Alert the DO to any concerns. For volunteers present for the whole session breaks, food and fluids will be important.
- Check any unknown people on the pontoon – should they be there?
- Welcome sailors (or ensure they are welcomed) and ensure their safe and smooth transition to their vessel.
- Check Sailors and their supporters are appropriately dressed, feet protected by closed footwear and buoyancy aids correctly fitted.
- Nominate a member of the Pontoon Team to assist Link manoeuvre wheelchairs on the pontoon access bridge. Wheelchair users must be able to float separated from their chair so any body-straps must be released before coming onto the pontoon (Link role – but check)
- Ensure any personal property is secured on the pontoon – wheelchairs/cushions tied down, walking aids placed where they can be found.
- Welcome and encourage returning sailors, ensure they are re united with their property and supporter(s) and are facilitated to leave the pontoon safely. Sailors should always be escorted on the pontoon and bridge, by a member of the Pontoon Team if Link are busy.
- Avoid congestion on the pontoon, identify a safe place for waiting sailors, manage the flow of sailors (liaise with DO and Link), keep equipment in allocated areas if it is not in use.
- Ensure DO is aware when boats leave or return. Hawks and Wheelyboat will report using their VHF (but let the DO know if they don't), Hansas must be reported by the Pontoon lead.
- Have knowledge of MOB procedures
- Have knowledge of Emergency Action Plan
- Confirm with the DO when a vessel is no longer needed and liaise as necessary, so the boat can be de-rigged without obstructing other flights or activities.
- Mobile phones may be a safety risk if they distract sailors or volunteers or are at risk of being damaged. Be aware of their use and limit if necessary.

Hoisting

- As Hoist Lead you are the single person in charge of a hoist. You will liaise with sailor, any carers, Hoist Assistant and Skipper to make sure all ready to proceed.
- Check the boat is secured alongside, use an aft spring on Hawks to keep them close.
- Hoist Assistant, works to the instructions of the Hoist Lead
- Your Sailor may know what works best for them, talk with them.
- Once in the vessel the Skipper will advise on position and ensure the Sailor is adequately supported. Check they are comfortable.
- Encourage Sailors and their supporters.
- For hoisting out, ensure the vessel is in a good position under the hoist to offer a vertical lift for the Sailor. The Skipper may need advice on fitting the sling.
- Be aware of MOB procedures.
- Be aware of the Emergency Action Plan.

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- Hoisting in
 - Wheelchair parallel to the pontoon (not facing the water), brakes on
 - Set up; check sling position, cross loops between the legs, NB some sailors prefer loops not to be crossed, check with the Sailor. Attach the correct colour loops to the spreader bar (Shoulders short, Legs long)
 - Avoid spreader bar hitting the sailor's head
 - Hoist, pause & check. Raise the sailor a few inches, then double check sling position is all good.
 - Lower sailor towards the pontoon deck, and then swing out over the boat, i.e. **down and across**, rather than across and then down.
 - Slow lowering of sailor into boat; check positioning of limbs
 - Position in boat in most secure way the sailor wants (e.g. in corner on a Hawk)
 - Use a Standing sling if this better suits the sailor.

- Hoisting out
 - Wheelchair in position with brakes on
 - Spreader bar attached, as above, with help of Skipper.
 - Avoid spreader bar hitting the sailor's head
 - Hoist, pause & check. Raise the sailor a few inches, then double check sling position is all good.
 - Hoist sailor to a bit above pontoon deck height, then swing back over the pontoon and into the wheelchair, i.e. **up a bit, across and then up**
 - Can tilt the wheelchair back a tiny bit when sailor lowered.
 - Ability to use helicopter slings for recovering a MOB from the pontoons

At the end of the session

Pontoon Lead

- Ensure that you have sufficient volunteers to tidy everything away so that it is not left to just a few. Alert the DO if you need more help.
- Ensure that Hoists are de rigged and covers replaced. Fenders recovered. All kit is placed on the trollies and that trollies are returned to the storage container.
- Check nothing is left on the pontoon that shouldn't be there.
- Thank your Team, attend the de brief, report any breakages or incidents.
- Return the VHF Handheld(s) to the cabin
- Securely dispose of the session plan.

Hoist Lead

- When advised by the Pontoon Lead, remove the T bar and place in the Pontoon Trolley. Fully lower the hoist and replace the cover ensuring it is tied down
- Report any damages or malfunction to the Pontoon Lead.
- Work with other members of the Pontoon Team to help clear equipment away.

Kit List (to be reviewed/updated as need be)

Pontoon Trollies	Rib Trolley
Key and kill cord (From Nick)	Key & Kill cord (From Nick)
2x petrol tanks	Petrol to top up tank
Recovery net	Recovery net
Recovery sling	Recovery sling
Throwing line	Throwing line
boathook	boathook
Tow rope	Tow rope
Anemometer	Spare warp
3x Training marks	paddle
Spare warp	Bailer [bilge pump]
paddle	Harbour Chart
Safety bag	Safety bag
Harbour chart	
Hansa Electric pump if heavy weather	
Safety Bag comprises: First Aid Kit Fire extinguisher LED flare Spare kill cord Foghorn TPA 2x knives (1x fixed blade 1x floating) Tide table Serious injury guide Thermal warming blanket 1x red marking tape Anemometer (spare in cabin) Binoculars	Safety Bag comprises: First Aid kit Fire Extinguisher LED flare Spare kill cord Foghorn TPA 2x knives (1x fixed blade 1x floating) Tide table Serious injury guide Thermal warming blanket 1x red marking tape.

Pontoon Team: Qualification and Key Skills

Pontoon Lead Key Skills

- Able to know what is needed when, to look ahead and react quickly when needed.
- Able to identify, manage and allocate resources on the pontoon to make sure the passage of boats and Sailors goes smoothly.

- Able to constantly monitor the weather and other factors that might impact on the Pontoon Team or other Sailability activities, and, in liaison with the DO, take steps as appropriate.
- Good communication skills
- Able to take care of their team and Sailors on the pontoon.
- Ability to use the VHF radio and knowledge of call signs used by Chesil Sailability and able to advise the DO of the return and departure of boats.
- Knowledge of the Emergency Action Plan
- Knowledge of appropriate actions to take should someone fall overboard

Hoist Lead Key Skills

- Knowledge of how to operate a Hoist and of how to care for the hoist user. (See Part 3 Sling operation)
- Have an awareness of when the Hoist will be needed and of who will assist with its operation.
- Be aware of the weather and any other factors that might impact on the Pontoon Team or other Sailability activities and alert the Pontoon Lead.
- Good communication skills
- Able to work as part of a team.
- Awareness of the VHF radio and of call signs used by Chesil Sailability and of the need to advise the DO of the return and departure of boats.
- Awareness of the Emergency Action Plan
- Awareness of appropriate actions to take should someone fall overboard

Pontoon Assistant Key Skills

- Able to catch lines and secure to a cleat – OXO
- Able to tie bowline and a round turn and two half hitches knots
- Know how to use a boat hook and able to judge when it would be helpful to use.
- Awareness of how boats move in different conditions (e.g. impact of wind direction)
- Awareness of others on the pontoon and how to avoid congestion. (don't stand in the way)
- Able to work as part of a team.
- Awareness of the VHF radio and of call signs used by Chesil Sailability and of the need to advise the DO of the return and departure of boats.
- Awareness of the Emergency Action Plan
- Awareness of appropriate actions to take should someone fall overboard