

## **Role of an ASD Volunteer**

It can be quite daunting to turn up to the apparent chaos that reigns at the start of an ASD session on your first visit as a Volunteer. So what is expected of you and how do you get involved? Here is a general description of what happens at the sessions and some descriptions of the various roles undertaken each session. You can become as involved in any of these as you wish. Please tell us what you would like to help with or how we may use you. Please do not feel that you have to do anything you are unsure of and do let us know if you feel uncertain or uncomfortable.

If you can arrive early (about 09.30) on your first visit, one of the regulars will be able to give you a quick tour and briefing to help you to get your bearing. We always partner you up with an experienced guide or instructor whilst you gain experience.

The session runs in two halves on the slope. First session is 10.15 – 11.15; second session is 11.15 – 12.15. Many of our better skiers will stay out for most of the two hours, but sit-skiers and those requiring a lot of assistance will be allocated to one of the two sessions.

### **Getting the Equipment on the slope**

Arrive 30-40 minutes before the session starts (09.00 onwards) several of the helpers arrive to help carry all the equipment from the store onto the slope and to get the bibs and helmets ready in the boot room. All help welcome here.

### **Booking In**

When skiers and their families/carers start to arrive things get very hectic. The start of our session overlaps with the end of the junior Race Team session – so there are a lot of people around in a relatively small space.

Key to a well run session is booking all the skiers in and taking their session fees. The person 'on the desk' also tells the skiers which guide or instructor they have been paired with. All skiers should report to the 'check in' desk. In good weather this may be outside the front door of the centre, but is usually in the bar area. Since the most direct route to the bar is through the boot/ski room this further enhances the chaos.

If you have any questions, or are new and want to introduce yourself, the best person to see is the person on the 'check-in' desk or someone in a red club shirt carrying a clip-board or list and looking exceedingly harried (that will be the duty instructor ☺).

### **Skier Assessment**

This is not something done by a volunteer, but all new disabled skiers will need to be assessed before they go onto the slope. A qualified adaptive instructor will do the initial assessment of all skiers and record their 'initial' equipment needs on their progress cards. If, as a volunteer, you are assigned to help with a skier, you should read their progress card and be able to help them with their 'kitting up'.

## Kitting up

Each skier has to be 'kitted up'. Depending on their particular needs/disability they will need to be fitted with boots, skis or other equipment. Each skier's equipment needs are recorded on their progress/record cards. Helping get the skiers into their boots and setting up their skis is an essential and 'manic' part of the session. Learning how to help skiers is part of becoming a 'volunteer'. If you would like to, you can be trained to set up the skis and fit people in the correct boots. Some of our skiers will be using 'sit-skis' and an understanding of how they need to dress to use this equipment will be part of your training. You can then help the skier to the slope and help to prepare them for their sessions. Being alert to people having problems is key here. Many of our skiers have disabilities which make it hard for them to express their need for help, or may have physical impairments which make it hard for them to 'go and get' help. If you only identify someone with a problem and get one of the regulars to help – that in itself is a great help.

Every disabled skier will wear a **Yellow** bib. Helpers/guides will tend to use the **Orange** bibs. This helps to identify who is who out on the slope. For safety reasons we have the following dress requirements:

- Long sleeves must be worn to fully cover arms
- Legs must be fully covered
- Gloves (that cover fingers) must be worn
- Sit skiers must wear fully enclosing footwear (no sandals, flip flops etc)
- We also highly recommend the use of ski helmet

## The Skiing Session(s)

Once skiers are 'kitted up' they will go out to the slope. Depending on their abilities and disabilities they will need help or will be quite independent. Some skiers, who arrive in a wheelchair, may go straight to the top of the middle slope (Slope 2), whilst they are signed in by their carers. This avoids adding to the chaos in the centre at the beginning of the session. They will be fitted into the sit-ski at the top of Slope 2.

Other skiers will proceed (with or without assistance to the top of Slope 2 where they will put on their skis and ski on Slope 2, or – if part of the race group – will ski across to Slope 1 which is the main slope with the big ramp. Some of these will need to be reminded to 'look' before skiing across Slope 1 to the lift.

Other skiers will walk down the steps to the bottom of Slope 2 and back up at the end of the session. Having someone to help them and/or carry their equipment is always appreciated – both at the beginning and the end of the sessions.

If you are aware of someone who is unable to climb the stairs either at the beginning or at the end, then do let the session organise know (or grab one of the instructors). We can always find a way of giving them a ride in a donut or a sit-ski.

## Manning the lift

One of the key areas which requires quite a bit of concentration is manning the lift. There will be a 'liftee' at the top and bottom of Slopes 1 and 2.

### a) Slope 1 Liftees

This is the slope with the race gates on and the big ramp. There will be someone at the top of the ramp and someone at the lift at the bottom. These people need to talk to each other and agree on what signs they will use if there are problems.

Since 2 hours is a long time to be concentrating as a 'liftee' we will try and arrange for relief. Sometimes things are just so hectic and helpers in such short supply that this isn't always possible. If you need relieving let one of the helpers know and they will go and see the slope organiser to arrange a relief.

Before you are asked to be a 'liftee' you will be given some training on the basics of how to stop and start the lift and what to do if something goes wrong. But don't ever be afraid to ask 😊.

### The Liftee at the bottom of Slope 1 will need to:

- Keep an eye on the skiers going up the lift and be ready to help any that have trouble getting on the lift.
- **STOP** the lift whenever you see a problem or think there might be one. **Better safe than sorry.**
- Stop the lift and hold the skiers back at the bottom if there are too many skiers on the platform at the top of the slope.
- Help control the skiers who have reached the bottom. They tend to stand around at the bottom making a superb target for those descending at speed. So, encouraging them to get into the queue properly is important. There will be guides skiing with the disabled skiers so don't be afraid to seek their help in this.
- Be alert to the physical and mental condition of the skiers on slope 1. Some tend to push beyond their limits and get very tired/hot/cold. If in doubt – get help.
- Be alert to what is happening on both slopes. You get a really good view of proceedings from the bottom of Slope 1 and may well see something that others haven't.

### The person at the top of Slope 1 will need to:

- Control the skiers waiting to ski at the top of the slope.
- Be alert to 'friction' between skiers. Many have learning difficulties and can be easily upset. Humour is the best tool.
- Get the liftee at the bottom to hold the queue if there are too many at the top. You can use one of the guides to ski down and alert the liftee.

- Be ready to **Stop** the lift if you see a problem.
- Be able to reset the lift if one of the skiers doesn't let go of the bar in time and trips the lift.

#### **b) Slope 2 Liftees**

The people manning the Slope 2 lifts will usually be the more experienced guides/helpers. Slope 2 is used by those learning to ski, those with more severe disabilities and by the sit-skiers. So the range of issue is greater and more complex.

**The person(s) manning the lift at the bottom of Slope 2 will tend to be one of the most experienced helpers (and physically robust) and will need to:**

- Be 'au fait' with the range of disabilities involved and be aware of the various needs of the skiers with regards to using the lift.
- Be able to speed up or slow down or stop the lift as appropriate.
- In particular be aware of skiers entering the slope having walked down the steps. Stop the lift if there is any danger of skier being hurt doing this.
- Be able to load sit-skis onto the lift.
- Keep an eye on the skiers going up the lift and be ready to help any that have trouble getting on the lift.
- Help control the skiers who have reached the bottom. They tend to stand around at the bottom making a superb target for those descending at speed. So, encouraging them to get into the queue properly is important. There will be guides skiing with the disabled skiers so don't be afraid to seek their help in this. The fact that there will also be heavy skit-skis operating makes this even more important.
- Be alert to the physical and mental condition of the skiers on Slope 2. Since most will be using the lift, the liftee is in a good position to spot problems.
- Be alert to the danger of Pomas hitting people (especially on the head in the case of sit skiers) as they are loaded onto the lift.
- Be alert to what is happening on both slopes. You get a really good view of proceedings from the bottom of Slope 2 and may well see something that others haven't.

**The Liftee at the top of Slope 2 will need to:**

- Be ready to stop the lift whenever anyone using it gets into trouble.
- Be able to signal the liftee at the bottom to restart the lift and make sure that the Stop Button has been returned to the 'go' position.
- Be ready to stop the lift for a sit-skier to dismount – especially if the 'release' does not work on the sit-ski.

- Control the skiers getting ready on the flat areas or at the top of the slope so they do not interfere with people trying to dismount the lift or set-off skiing.
- Be able to reset the lift if one of the skiers doesn't let go of the bar in time and trips the lift.
- Help people dismount at the top – particularly at the end of the session when we try to send as many up the lift as can use it to save them walking up the stairs. Be ready to Stop and Re-Start the lift many times.

### **Helping with a skier (guiding)**

If you are a skier, you will be encouraged to get your skis on and help out with the disabled skiers. You will be paired up with a qualified instructor or an experienced guide. You will **not** be expected to teach, but can help the skiers to practice tasks set by the instructor (think of the role as comparable to a 'classroom assistance' supervised by a qualified teacher).

If you want to become an Adaptive Instructor you will be encouraged to do so. Training will be available and we will support you through getting your qualification.

If you do not wish to become an instructor – that is great too.

### **Being a dogsbody**

The 'dogsbody' is arguably the most important role out there. Every session things go wrong: kit needs changing; drinks need fetching; skiers need helping up and down steps; someone needs comforting; 'liftees' need relieving whilst they take a break; worn out liftees need replacing; equipment needs carrying; tidying up after the session needs doing; helping at the 'check-in'... the list is endless.

We all do a bit of 'dogsbodying' but having a few spare people to help out in these ways is great.

### **Eyes open wide**

Everyone needs to grow eyes in the back of their heads. There will always be something going on behind you – so the ability to spot problems before they occur and head them off is highly valued.

### **De-kitting**

When the skiers come back in after their sessions, they may need help de-kitting. We also have to ensure that all the boots, skis, bibs and helmets are put back in the proper places after the session.

Some of the skiers may need help back to their transport, or with getting wheelchairs out of the centre. Don't be afraid to ask if you see someone you think needs help.

### **Packing away the equipment and clearing up afterwards**

After the session ends, all the adaptive equipment had to be returned to the store. There will be a small mountain of stuff at the top of Slope 2 that needs returning.

Race gates will also need to be removed and returned to the race team store.

Someone will check the slope to make sure that nothing has been left anywhere.

### **Hanging around for a chat after the session.**

Not compulsory, but it is nice to sit for a chat and a coffee after the session. Several of our skiers will also stay. It is a good way of getting to know folk and winding down.

### **Committee membership and roles**

We are always looking for folk willing to take on roles on the committee. The Club belongs to the members and we cannot run it without help in the form of the committee. We try to break the roles down as much as possible so that individuals do not become overloaded. If you think you can help or would like to discuss what is involved, please let us know,

### **Going home and crashing**

What most of us do after the session.....Cold Beer...MMMMmmmmm.....ZZZZzzzz....