Evaluation of Systematic Stewarding Challenges

2CV report prepared for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

2022

Sports Grounds Safety Authority

2CV

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How to support steward retention

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The reasons for becoming a steward are often varied, with motivations ranging from keeping spectators safe, the need for quick money or flexible employment, and being a loyal fan of a specific sports club.

Overall, satisfaction with the role is high among stewards, but it is clear that delivering a sense of potential progression and connection to all types of stewarding staff will be key in driving retention.

There are a number of concerns that stewards (past and present) have about the role ranging from staff shortages and poor pay to fear of assault. Many also cite that Covid-19 has impacted these concerns with spectator behaviour worsening and specific elements of the role being harder to perform

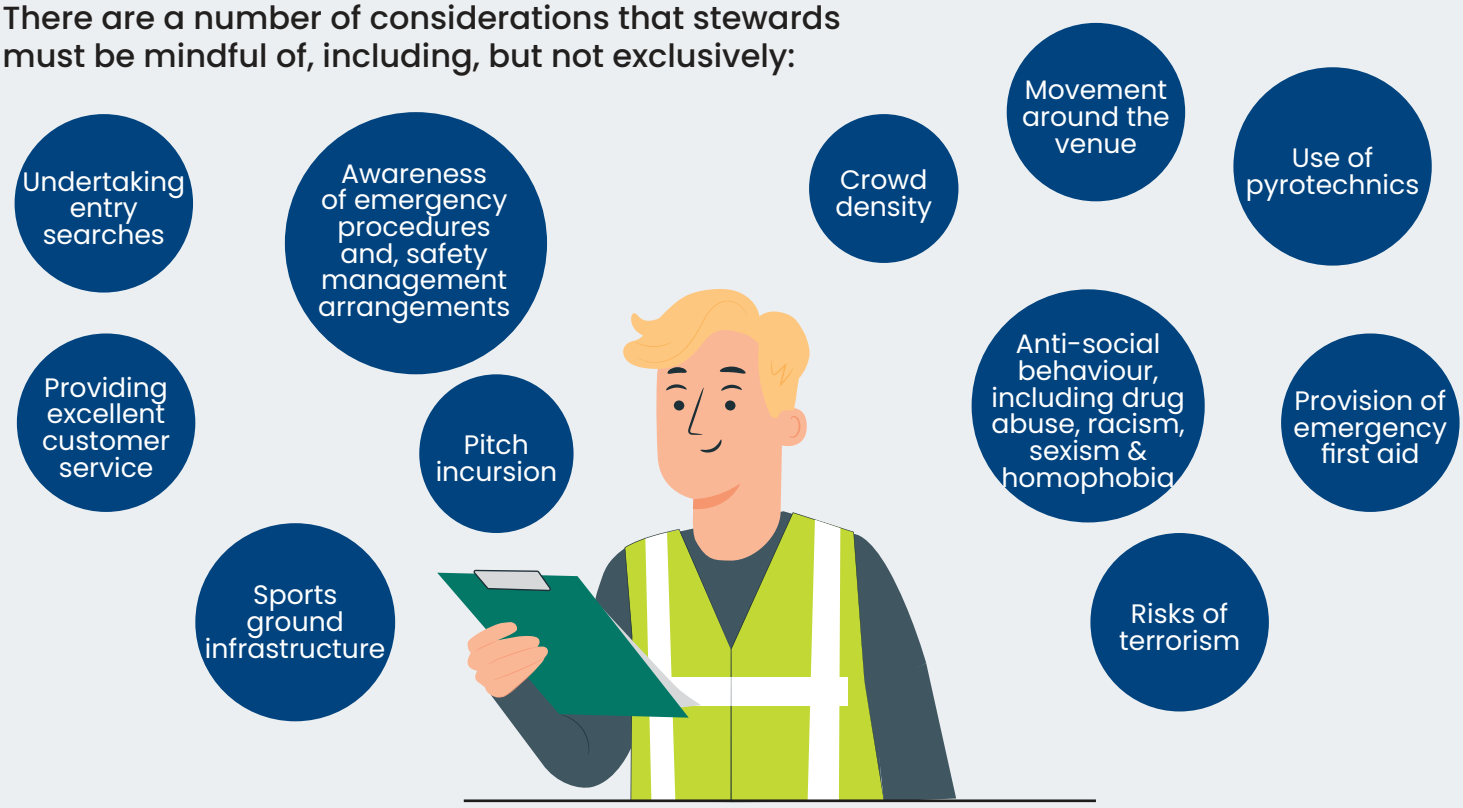
While money is not a primary motivator, when remuneration is perceived to be poor, alongside other negative elements of the role, it results in disincentivised employees. An increase in pay could be a short-term compensatory measure to justify higher demands of the role but addressing the wider tensions identified in this research is needed in the longer term.

Background

Safety is a broad term which means that all people at a sports ground, not just spectators, are protected against dangers of physical harm or injury arising from being present.

Stewards, both in-house and agency-supplied play a key role in the safety management operation at football grounds, and it is the responsibility of the venue managers and event organisers to ensure that stewards are adequately qualified, competent and equipped to undertake their duties.

There are a number of considerations that stewards must be mindful of, including, but not exclusively:



In addition to these, at each matchday or event there are a number of factors for organisers and supervisors to consider in relation to stewards:

With such roles and responsibilities, safety management and stewarding can be a challenging and complex job, and one that has continually evolved to meet the demands of the changing events sector environment and context. Indeed, in the context of terrorist threats to events, exemplified by the Manchester Arena and Stade de France attacks, and with the complications added by the COVID-19 pandemic, the expectations and requirements of a steward have grown over recent years.

In the UK, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) is mandated to regulate local authorities in relation to the General Safety Certificate at sports grounds and issues licenses to league clubs from the Premier League to League 2, plus Wembley and the Welsh National Stadium. SGSA provides guidance through the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (6th Edition) on standards for the training of stewards and works with the industry sector to set these educational standards through the National Occupational Standards framework.

SGSA commissioned this research on behalf of DCMS. This followed anecdotal concerns of a growing shortage of competent stewards available to venues to preserve the safety management functions within professional sport and across the wider live events sector post-Covid.

There are several hypotheses as to why stewarding numbers are in decline, including:

- The increasing complexity and pressure on the role (including risks of terrorism and additional demands of the Protect Duty)
- COVID-19 and the closure of venues and the need to seek employment elsewhere
- The restriction that required qualifications place on industry entry
- Pay and working conditions
- Brexit
- The rise of the gig economy giving alternative sources of income

The SGSA, in its regulatory role, commissioned the research to gain a more formal and robust understanding of the state of the stewarding labour market.

The SGSA split the research requirement into two Phases:

Phase I:
Detailing the stewarding labour market

Sizing and profiling the number, role and qualifications of the steward/ event personnel population in the UK (both current and potential)

Evaluation of the supply shortfall and driving factors, including the roles stewarding is competing with and why.

Phase II:
Addressing the sustainability of the stewarding function

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of stewards

Understanding the motivations, challenges and barriers for stewarding

Evaluating the mitigations in place for supply issues and the possible solutions ahead.

Phase I – Summary of findings

The full details of and outputs from Phase I, undertaken by the agency NatCen, can be found at https://sgsa.org.uk/research/.

In summary, the NatCen research found that:

- A lack of data on the stewarding population (e.g. a national register for stewards) means it is difficult to understand and address the scope and scale of the stewarding shortfall.

- Crude estimates include 12,000 to 25,000 stewards in Premier League and English football, and approximately 300,000 individuals with SIA door supervision licences, but neither of these figures represent the breadth of the steward workforce across the live events industry.

- There is a wide spectrum of training for stewards, but whilst recent changes to qualifications are widely perceived to have increased standards and quality of training, the cost to the individual of undergoing the training has also increased, and there are concerns that this acts as a barrier to take up.

- Another key issue highlighted in the literature and by industry stakeholders is the lack of value placed on, and investment in, stewards by employers in the industry. With some exceptions, stewards tend to be employed on zero hours contracts, paid little more than minimum wage, and offered short shifts and few hours in seasonal work.

- Stewards are often ill-equipped to cope with the ever-changing and demanding conditions and responsibilities of the role, which can include dealing with aggression from the public.

- The combination of low pay, lack of training and limited hours is considered to lead to a perception of the steward role as a stop gap or part-time role to supplement a main income, rather than a role that offers career progression.

- Although these drivers of the shortfall in steward supply were present prior to COVID19, the pandemic has exacerbated the problem as many stewards sought employment elsewhere (and have stayed), or have left the UK (on top of those already having left when the UK exited the European Union).

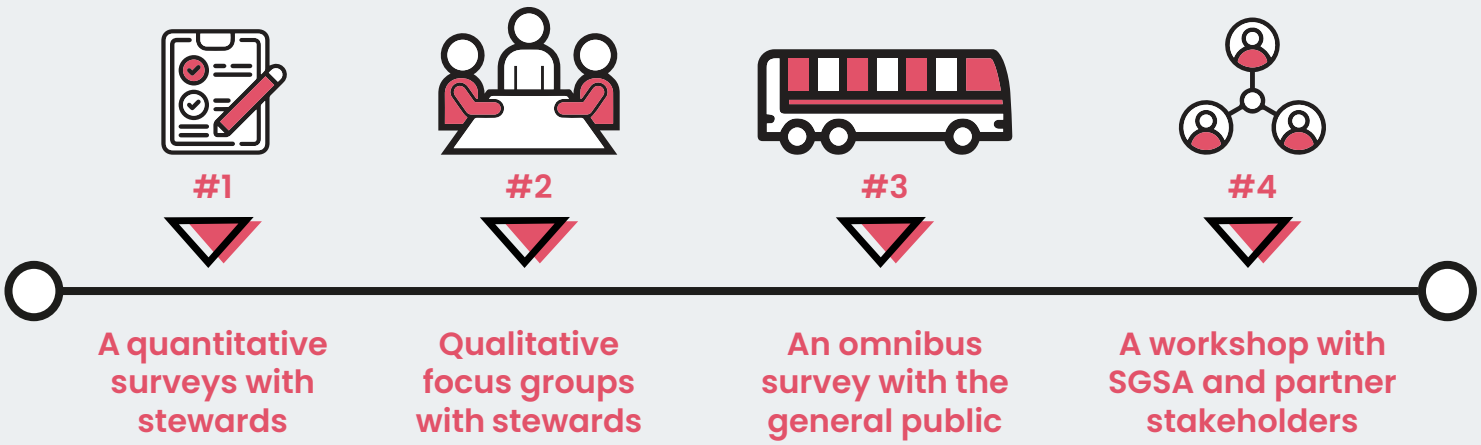
- Shortfalls have often been relieved with a heavier reliance on agencies, but concerns have been raised over the experience, training and capability of these temporary staff, and the knock-on effect of event safety.

Phase II

This report builds on the findings from Phase I and outlines, from the perspective of stewards themselves, the motivations, challenges and barriers for stewarding, and offers recommendations on how the SGSA and partners might start to address the issue of steward retention and recruitment.

Methodology

Phase II was undertaken by 2CV in four stages. There are some subtleties to the approaches and their context that are key to understanding the findings:



1. A quantitative surveys with stewards:

A 15 minute survey was administered to understand the relative weight of the motivators, barriers and potential improvements within stewarding.

In the absence of a comprehensive stewarding register to sample from, samples were instead sourced from a variety of SGSA club, venue and agency partners, as well as free found using research panel provider, Dynata.

Both the partner and research panel sample profiles were allowed to fall out naturally due to an absence of information on what a representative sample looks like. Likewise, the partner sourced sample skews heavily towards football club stewards, however, as much effort as possible was made to establish a large sample with a mixed profile of stewards to ensure as comprehensive a view as possible.

Partner sourced sample summary:

- Total – n=1045
  - o 220 recruited from Showsec (agency) staff
  - o 82 recruited from Trent Bridge stewarding staff
  - o The remainder (n=743) from stewarding staff of 18 football clubs
- This sample is used in the report to represent 'Current' stewards

Research panel sourced sample summary:

- All recruited on the basis of working in a stewarding role in the last five years
- Total – n=307
  - o 152 self-defined as Current Stewards
  - o 155 self-defined as Lapsed Stewards
- This sample is used in the report to represent 'Lapsed' stewards only.
- Due to a difference in profile and, for the avoidance of confusion, the n=152 self-defined as Current Stewards were ignored and not added to the Current Stewards from the partner sourced sample for analysis.

A more detailed quantitative sample profile can be found in the appendix.

2. Qualitative focus groups with stewards:

Six, online focus groups were undertaken to gain a more nuanced understanding of elements uncovered in the quantitative survey. All participants completed a brief pre-task designed to get them to think about their experiences before attending a 90 minute group discussion.

The qualitative respondents were recruited off the back of the quantitative survey and consisted of a mix of steward types, gender, experience, venues/clubs, and in-

house vs. agency staff. In-house stewards were defined as those employed directly by a sports club or a venue; agency defined as those employed by an external agency.

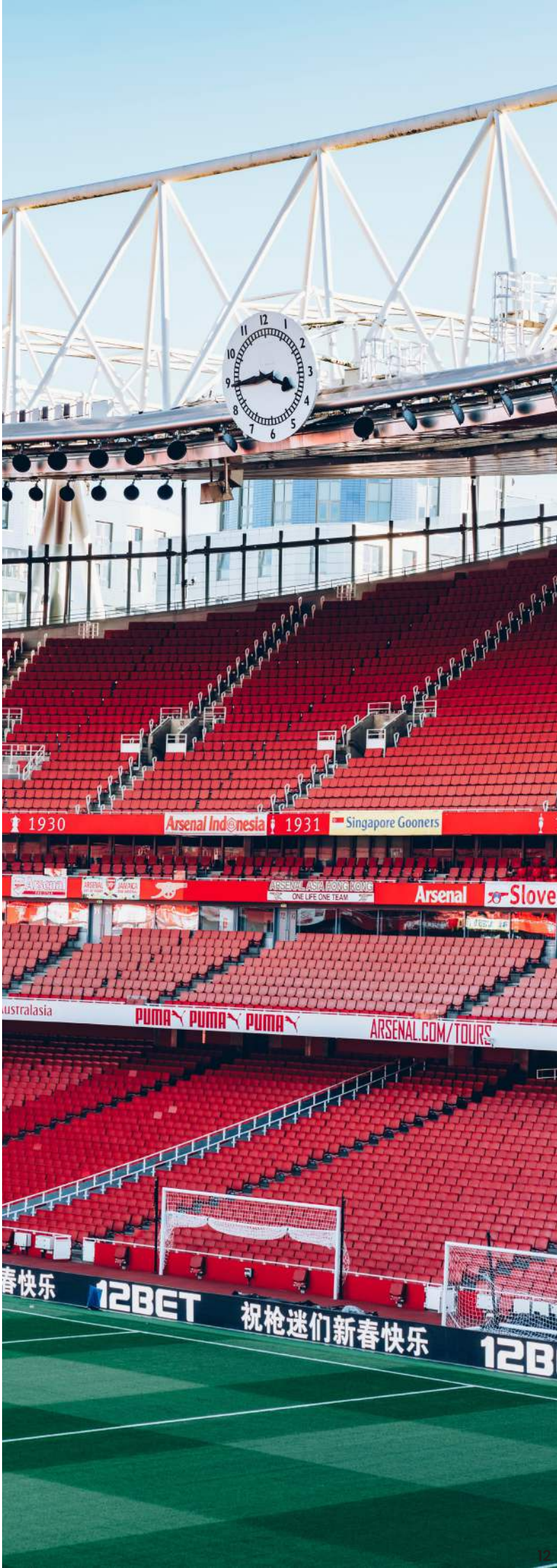
A more detailed qualitative focus group sample design can be found in the appendix.

3. An omnibus survey with the general public

To support the findings amongst stewards, four questions were added to an omnibus survey amongst a nationally representative sample of n=2,000 UK adults.
These questions were designed to gauge the public's understanding and expectations around the stewarding function.

4. A workshop with SGSA and partner stakeholders

A workshop with representatives from: governing bodies (Premier League; English Football League); events organisations (Showsec); regulators (Security Industry Authority & SGSA); government department (DCMS) to discuss the primary research findings from Phase II and deliberate potential solutions to steward retention challenges.



Detailed Findings

Stewarding Motivations

The motivations to be a steward are highly varied. We see that team working, passion for a sport or club, and the chance to contribute and keep people safe are major motivators to the job of stewarding. However, we can also see differences in the relative importance of these motivators across the different groups (e.g. across those with less or more experience; agency versus in house staff).

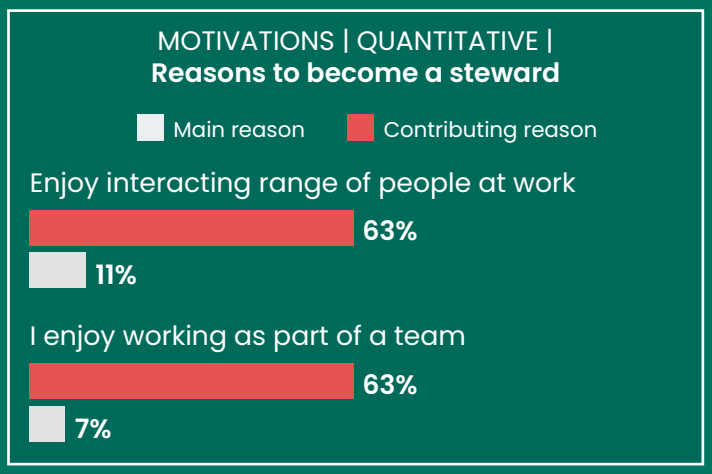
In our current stewarding sample a large number are football stewards, of an older age, and employed in-house. For this group, money is less of a factor, with passion for their club, and the chance to contribute to safety and a team being key.

Agency staff, those with less experience, and younger stewards tend to place a greater relative emphasis on the job 'package' (e.g. pay and working conditions).

Five overarching motivations that drive people to becoming a steward

1. Companionship/ Connection

The chance to meet and work with (new) people is a motivator for 76% of Stewards surveyed. For 11% of stewards the enjoyment of interacting with a range of people at work is their primary reason for becoming a steward; for 7% it's being part of a team. This is particularly true of older, white, in-house stewards, particularly those winding down in their careers or working as stewards post-retirement.

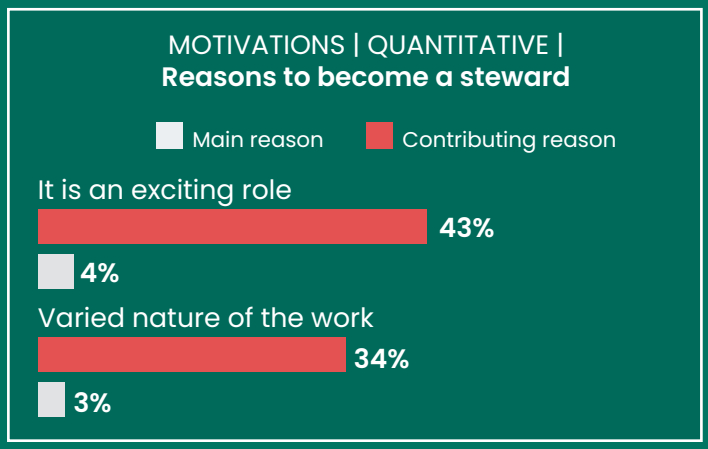


"Retirement left me with a lot of time on my hands. I didn't know a lot about what I'd be doing but knew it'd get me out of the house and meet new people."

Female, 1-2yrs stewarding experience, events stadiums

2. Variety

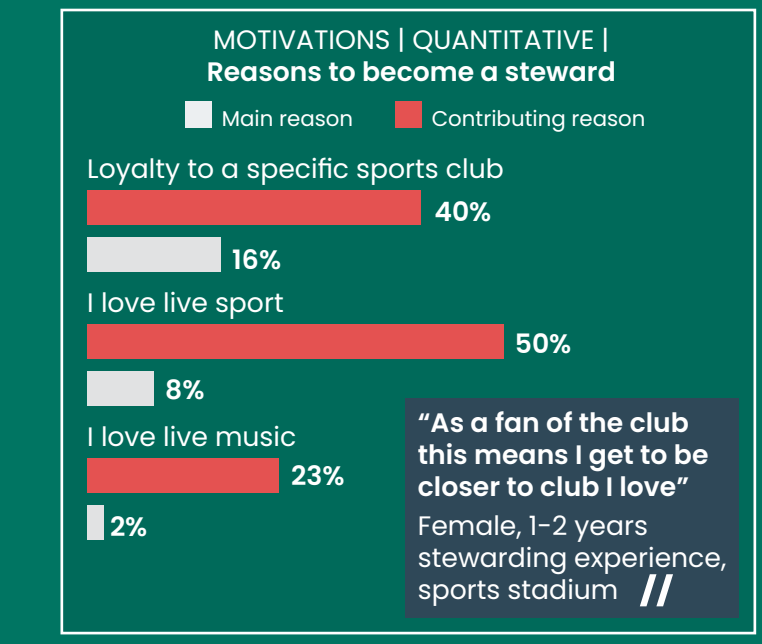
As a profession, stewarding offers varied roles, but also something different and exciting to day to day life. 76% say that the varied nature of the work or excitement of the role are motivators. The variety offered is more of a motivator for those stewards working outside of football, and for agency staff.



A1a. For which of the following reasons, if any, did you first become a steward? A1b. Which is the main reason you first became a steward?
Base: All partner sourced, current stewarding sample (1045)

3. Passion for the sport/event

Many, particularly those working in sport and live music, are driven by their passion for the product on show, with 40% of stewards having strong loyalty towards their club of employment; 16% as their main motivator (the highest of all motivations). This motivation is held more strongly by longer serving and in-house stewards, those working in football, and BAME stewards.



4. Terms of employment

A need for money is the second highest primary motivator (14%) behind loyalty to a specific club, but flexibility of employment is a motivation held by more stewards in general (39% vs. 34%). Part of this is varied working hours (33%) along with good demand/availability of work (26%). All in all, terms of employment, including pay and hours, is a motivator for 70% of stewards.

Younger and less experienced stewards (often one in the same) are more motivated by pay and flexible employment, likewise this is true of agency stewards who are more focussed on quick money, and varied and flexible employment.

5. Sense of service

Finally, 62% of stewards first started the role base on a 'sense of service', be it protecting and keeping others safe (49%), enjoying the level of responsibility that comes with the role (39%), or holding similar experience (anecdotally, roles such as working in the police or in security roles).

A1a. For which of the following reasons, if any, did you first become a steward? A1b. Which is the main reason you first became a steward?
Base: All partner sourced, current stewarding sample (1045)

Important aspects of role (once employed)

Once in the role, a sense of duty in protecting others (92%), working as part of a team (89%) and with others (85%) are deemed the most important aspects.

Fourth most important is having training/ development opportunities provided (79%) and fifth, level of respect shown to you/your role by spectators (78%) – both areas for improvement (see 'Barriers & Improvements' section below)

Being part of live music is the least important motivating factor (33%), but this is driven by a lack of relevance to most surveyed. On par with this as least important are working benefits (e.g. pension, healthcare) followed by working outdoors (34%).

Pay is considered important to only two thirds of stewards. This is lower amongst older, more experience stewards (57% amongst 10+ years' experience), who instead place greater importance on duty and a sense of service/responsibility, and in working with others (93%) and part of a team (91%). Conversely, younger and agency stewards value pay much more (83% importance amongst 16-34s, and 83% amongst agency staff). Flexible employment is more important amongst agency stewards (80%).

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS | QUANTITATIVE |

Importance of different aspects of working as a steward

A1d. How important are/were each of these to your role as a steward?
Base: All partner sourced, current stewarding sample (1045)

Role & Satisfaction

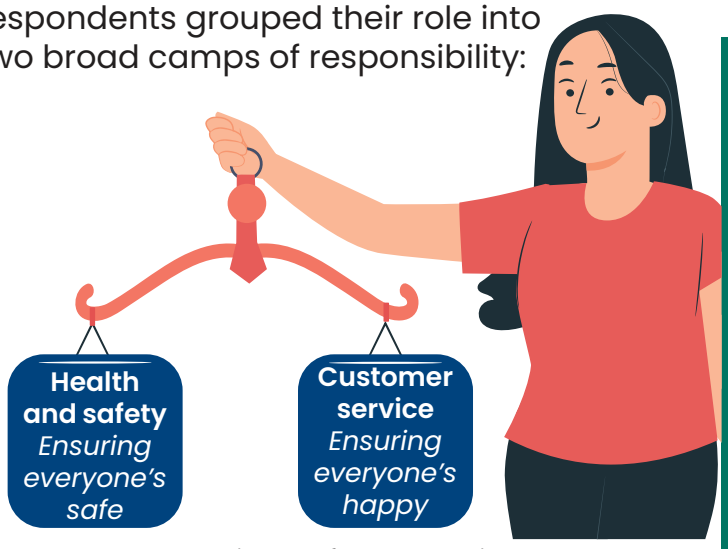
The majority of stewards are satisfied with their role.

It is intangible elements – such as: a sense of connection; progression; feeling part of something that are key to engendering satisfaction. And it is likely delivery on these elements will drive retention. However, there is less enthusiasm amongst some groups; it is therefore crucial to ensure that agency, younger and BAME employees have an equally positive experience to their counterparts.

A mismatch of expectations is also evident, whereby the stewards themselves may have a different perception of their role versus attending fans, or their employers. This too can have an effect on satisfaction if stewards feel undervalue or overworked.

The mismatch in expectations

From qualitative discussions, respondents grouped their role into two broad camps of responsibility:



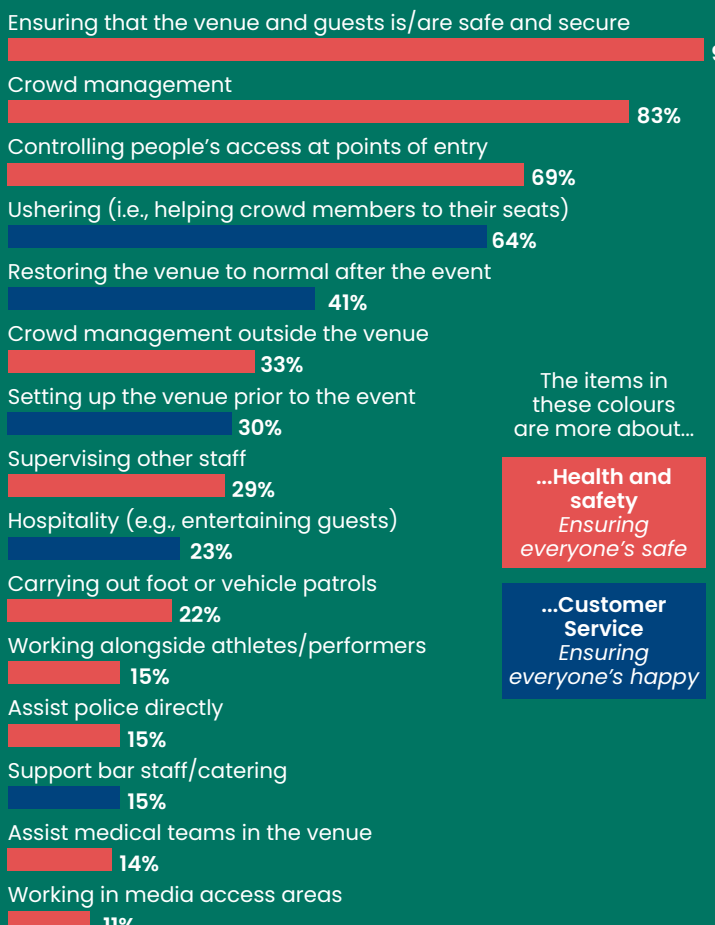
However, the weight of emphasis on the role is often placed differently, depending on the stakeholder in question. Stewards feel that their employers are expecting both roles in equal measure, whilst they themselves feel health and safety is their priority. In contrast, fans can take health and safety for granted and instead demand customer service, expecting stewards to be knowledgeable of the stadia, the event, and the upwards chain of management. In fact, the omnibus research demonstrated that only 37% believe stewards are there mostly for their safety (25% for security, 19% customer experience, and 18% don't know).

> **"It's safety first then customer service – that's the order of what the job is about."**
>
> Mixed gender, 3-5 yrs stewarding experience, sports stadiums //

These qualitative findings were supported by survey data – the safety of guests (93%) and crowd management (83%) are stated as their primary responsibilities, according to stewards themselves.

Ushering the crowd to their seat is recorded as the most common customer service responsibility (64%). Whilst 30% and 41% set up and restore the venue prior/post the event respectively. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who are employed directly by clubs report having greater responsibility for supervising staff, and setting up the venue prior to an event. Typically more niche roles include assisting other venue workers, i.e. in media areas (11%), with medical teams (14%), bar/catering staff (15%), and the police (15%).

ROLES | QUANTITATIVE |
Primary responsibilties undertaken in a role as a steward



A2. What responsibilities do/did you undertake in your role as a steward?
Base: All partner sourced, current stewarding sample (1045)

The general public themselves do see identifying and reporting safety issues as the primary role of stewards -79% see it as the role of most/all stewards. However, their expectations of stewards extends beyond safety to customer service (77% expect most/all stewards to help patrons find their way around the venue), security (67% expect most/all stewards to identify potential terrorist threats' 55% to physically intervene to prevent disorder), and medical support (62% expect most/all stewards to provide basic first aid).

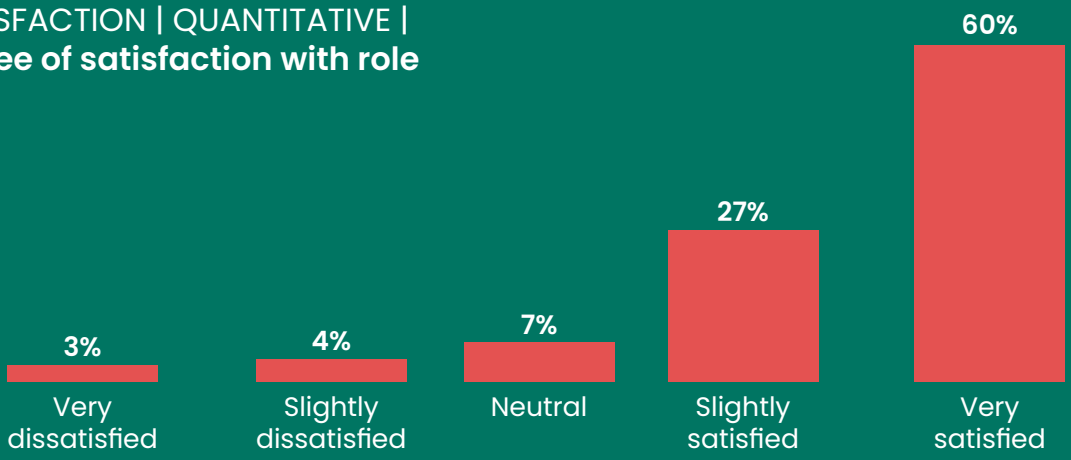
Thinking about stewards at large events like sports fixtures, stadium events, music concerts, and festivals. To what extent do you expect stewards to undertake each	**Net of most/ all stewards**
Identify and report safety issues, for example fire hazards.	79%
Help patrons find their way around the venue	77%
Control entry to the venue or areas within a venue.	72%
Prevent overcrowding.	70%
Provide information about the event such as start and finish times.	67%
Identify potential terrorism threats	67%
Challenge antisocial behaviour, e.g. swearing or intoxication	66%
Provide basic first aid	62%
Physically intervene to prevent disorder	55%
Carry out body and bag searches on entry.	49%

Satisfaction

The majority of current stewards are satisfied with the role; 60% are very satisfied, 27% slightly (87% overall). However, there are some patterns in the type of stewards who are less satisfied that raise some possible watch outs.

Whilst dissatisfaction isn't strong amongst any particular stewarding sub-group, overall satisfaction is lower in some instances. Agency workers (46% very satisfied), those on zero hour contracts (39%), BAME (30%), and 16-34 year old stewards (38%) typically register lower satisfaction than the average (52%). Possible reasons for this are explored in the next section. Conversely, those directly employed by venues (63%), 35-54 year old (54%), and White stewards (57%) have above average job satisfaction.

SATISFACTION | QUANTITATIVE |
Degree of satisfaction with role



87%
of stewards are satisfied with their role

B1. Overall, how satisfied are/were you with your role as a steward?
Base: All partner sourced, current stewarding sample (1045)

Drivers of satisfaction

It is often the less tangible areas of stewarding that create satisfaction. From qualitative discussions, a number of areas arose; notably many of these align with the reasons for becoming a steward outlined previously. These were supported by responses from the survey amongst current stewards.

The job role met with the highest level of satisfaction is helping to protect others and keep them safe, along with interacting with a range of people (both 90%). Stewards in the focus groups received satisfaction from connection - building and being part of a team, and feeling 'part of something'. This connection extends beyond colleagues and to providing support to crowds, building rapport and creating enjoyable experiences. This satisfaction is highest amongst older, more experienced stewards.

The areas of least satisfaction are working benefits (28%), opportunities for career progression (44%), and the pay (57%). However, satisfaction with pay is higher amongst BAME stewards and those under the age of 35 (64% and 77%).

Despite overall lower satisfaction, BAME stewards are more satisfied with pay versus White stewards (64% vs 55%), flexible employment arrangements (80%), level of respect received (73% vs 64%), and working benefits received (37% vs 24%). The lower overall satisfaction may, however, be explained by greater desire to see improvement in pay, long hours, training and progression opportunities, as we will see later on. BAME stewards are also more acutely concerned by racist abuse.

There is also a difference in satisfaction between agency and in-house stewards. In-house stewards are more satisfied with training received (79% vs 61%), protecting others (91%), their level of responsibility, and working as a team (90%). Agency stewards are more satisfied with varied working hours (79%) and flexible employment (84% vs 68%).

Job areas with greatest satisfaction

B2. How satisfied are/were you with each of the following elements of your role as a steward?
Base: All partner sourced, current stewarding sample (1045)

"You get to know the fans and season ticket holders in your section. They say 'hi'. They know you."
Female, 1-2yrs stewarding experience, events stadiums

Barriers & Areas for Improvement

We see some of the complexities of the role can cause barriers to retention. While money was not a primary motivator, when remuneration is perceived to be poor, alongside other negative elements of the role, it results in disincentivised employees. The solution suggested by employees is often better pay. In short, more money is often seen as a potential compensation for other negative aspects, rather than a sustainable solution to ongoing issues that include staff shortages, abuse and poor fan behaviour.

Further to barriers and concerns uncovered, many report that Covid-19 has changed many things, with tensions (and a loss of work) resulting in a reappraisal of the role for many. Elements that have changed include:

- Job security
- Worse attendee behaviour
- Employee work expectations increasing, including on pay
- The ability of stewards' to ensure a safe, managed environment more difficult

This has caused many to leave the role and not look back.

Areas of concern

77% have at least some concern in their role as current stewards, with three concerns on average. 62% are concerned by negatives around their terms of employment including the consequences on safety of staff shortages (40%), poor pay (29%) and working conditions (20%), a lack of reliable work/job security (12%) and a lack of training/support.

While qualitative participants maintained they do not steward primarily for the money, it's apparent many feel undervalued. Many stewards (particularly those with 5+ years experience) are likewise concerned about an 'exodus' of experienced and well trained stewards and believe the impact of these departures will be negative.

"We're going to have a major incident like Hillsborough because everything is slipping. The training is not happening for agency. There'll be a disaster because we're not getting trained staff."

Mixed gender, 3-5 yrs stewarding experience, sports stadiums

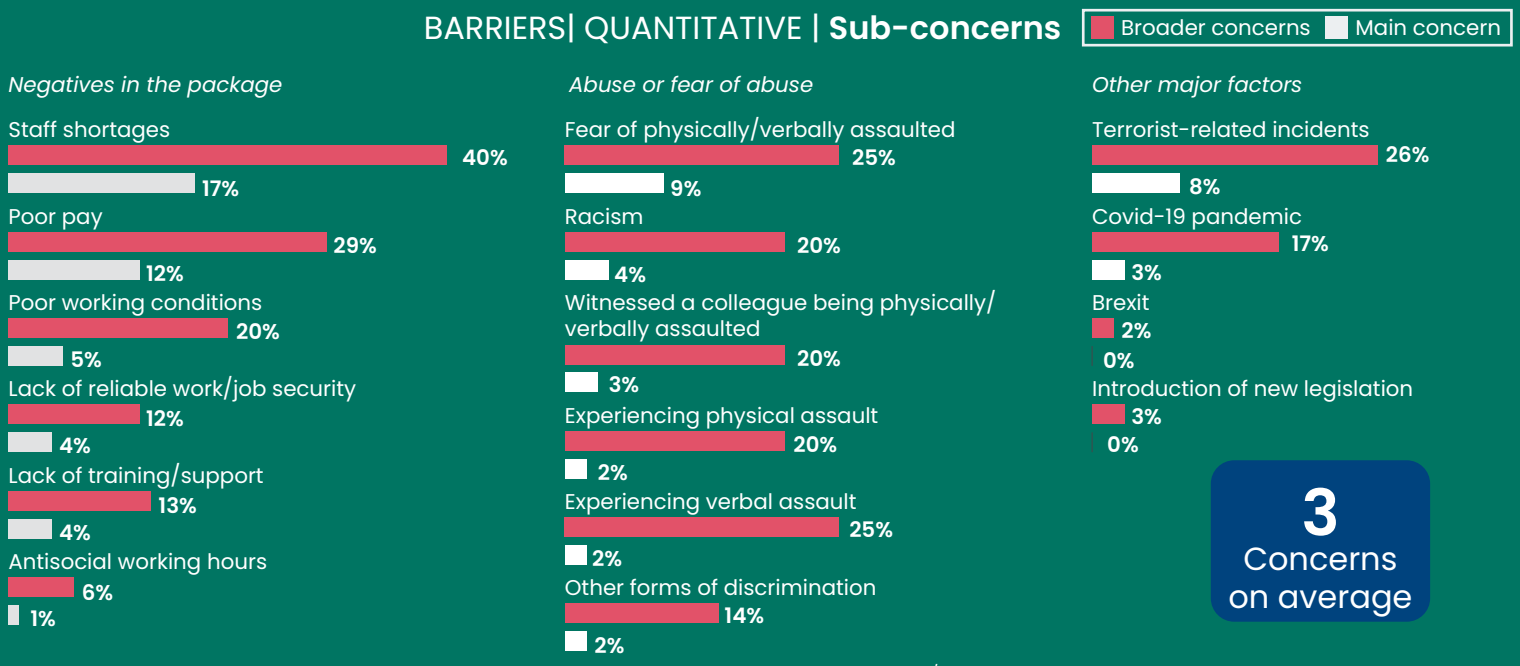
47% are concerned about abuse or fear of abuse, with fan behaviour seemingly deteriorating post-pandemic. Many point out that behaviour since the pandemic has worsened; fans have 'forgotten how to act when in a public', with stewards reporting an increase in aggression, antisocial behaviour and abuse. Specific incidents commonly referenced include: use of flares, pitch invasions and assaults; missiles thrown onto pitches; drug and alcohol misuse. 20% say they are concerned about experiencing physical assault; 25% verbal. 20% are concerned about racism. This is driven up by BAME stewards versus white stewards (37% vs. 15%) who are typically more concerned about abuse and discrimination.

As already outlined, attendees see customer service as part of a steward's role and with ticket prices rising it seems they may be expecting more as a result. This can manifest in belligerence and rudeness, with customers becoming agitated and difficult to control.

"The behaviour has gotten worse. I work at theatre as well, there's so many ejections for talking, drinking and fighting. I feel like people have forgotten how to interact."

Mixed Gender, 1-2 years stewarding experience, events stadiums

BARRIERS| QUANTITATIVE | **Sub-concerns**



C1a. Are any of the following concerns for you in your role as a steward C1b. Which of the concerns you mentioned is/was the biggest concern to you?
Base: All partner sourced, current stewarding sample (1045)

38% are also concerned about other major factors including the threat of terrorism (26%), and Covid-19 (17%) and Brexit (2%).

Terrorism wasn't offered freely as a concern in qualitative groups, but is noted as a concern for a quarter of the quantitative sample. Conversely, staff shortages and the impact of the pandemic were openly discussed.

When discussing what impact the pandemic has had (particularly in relation to the early days of returning to work) a number reference how Covid-19 changed their roles and event management. Some feel that the focus is now on managing protocols (checking of passes; social distancing etc) at the expense of other safety procedures (thorough bag searches). Others feel that stadia owners/ event organisers' focus on financial recovery meant they were prioritising the 'experience' and customer satisfaction over attendee safety. And while the lifting of restrictions has ostensibly meant a return to 'normal' this has not always resulted in a return of standard safety checks.

Stewards' concerns are reflected in reasons for leaving the industry. The Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown is cited as the main reason for departures amongst lapsed stewards (16% main reason, 30% contributing factor). It is thought to have prompted reappraisal of the role and driven awareness of some of the challenges faced by stewards, namely around pay and how the role can impact on life.

In addition 28% of current stewards say that the pandemic has made crowd management more difficult, and 22% guest safety and security more difficult.

"I feel that clubs and organisers have wanted to recoup money after Covid and are prioritising customer service experience over safety."

Mixed gender, 3-5yrs stewarding experience, sport stadiums

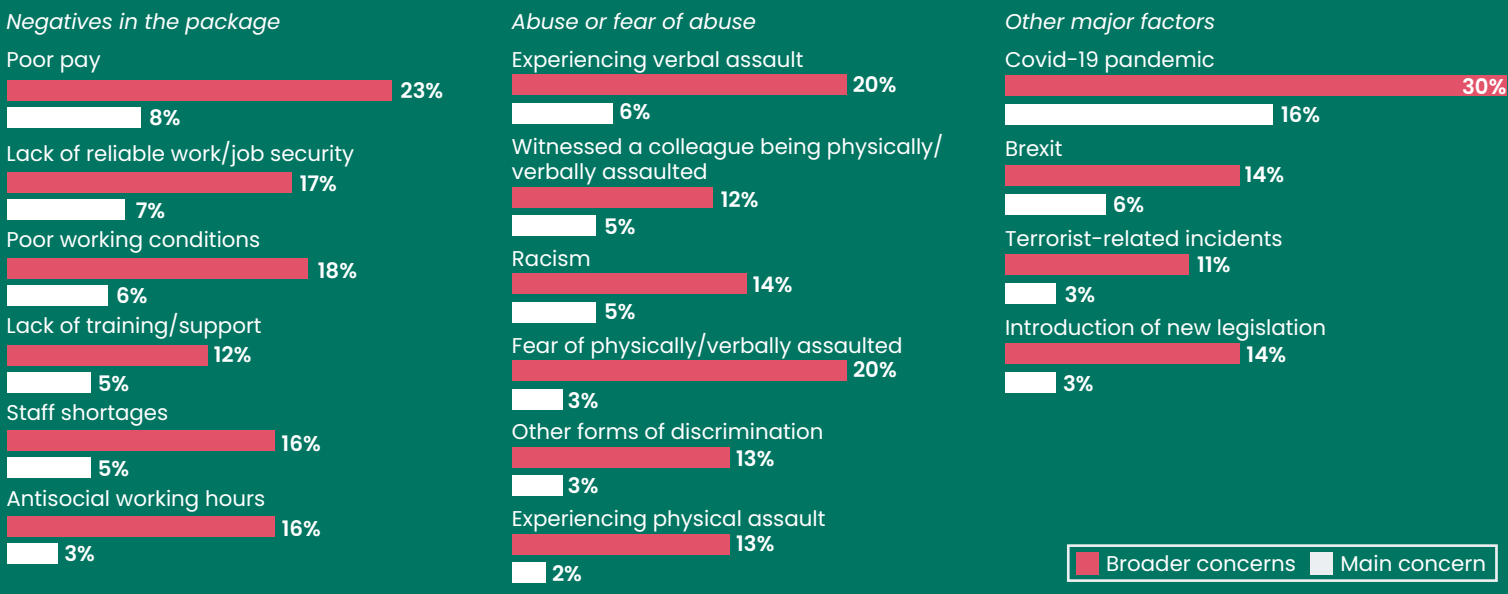
"Since Covid we have a lot more of the team at the edge of the footprint [outside] rather than inside the stadium. We're less able to control and steward people."

Mixed gender, 3-5 yrs stewarding experience, sports stadiums

"I think many people realised what they were missing out on. Time with family; their weekends and thought 'I ain't going back'."

Female, 1-2 years stewarding experience, sports stadium

BARRIERS| QUANTITATIVE | **Sub-concerns leading towards stewards leaving**



C1a. Did any of the following reasons contribute to your decision to stop working as a steward? C1b. Which of the concerns you mentioned is/was the biggest concern to you?
Base: All lapsed stewards (155)

Poor pay is the second highest reason (23%) for leaving amongst lapsed stewards, reflecting the concern of current stewards.

As already noted, although pay is not claimed to be a main motivator to the work, stewards say an increase would help to overcome some of the negative aspects of the role. It is cited at the top job aspect stewards would like to see improved the most – 63% would like to see it improved and 37% say it's the main thing that needs to be improved.

Stewards can feel that they are not valued by employers (stadia owners/ senior management rather than direct managers). They often feel they're expendable.

For some this lack of appreciation is reflected in…

- How much they're paid – they believe that what they do is a skilled job and that the pay and benefits need to reflect this
- Their working conditions – they believe that they are not always well supported in the undertaking of their roles

Indeed, improved pay and working conditions may have kept lapsed stewards in the role. 47% of lapsed stewards would like to have seen pay increase, 37% working conditions improved, and 31% long working hours.

Some call for more financial benefits to act as incentives for staying, including:

- Consecutive game pay – The more games in a row, the greater the financial incentive
- Bank holiday pay – Many events occur during bank holidays yet this isn't reflected in commensurate pay
- Training/refresher courses funded by employers

A clearer understanding of progression and training opportunities could help drive motivation and retention. 39% of lapse cite opportunities for progression/promotion as an area they would like to have seen improved, 12% the main thing (35% training/support, 5% main thing).

"We said we don't do it for the money but we're still severely underpaid."

Mixed gender, 5yrs + stewarding experience

"Why am I paying £150 for [SIA] training when I could keep that money and still earn the same by stacking shelves at Lidl?"

Mixed gender, 3-5 yrs stewarding experience, sports stadiums

"I would certainly like a bit more first aid. Obviously your first aid badge expires. We've had a lot of situations on the ground. You don't fully know what the protocol is. You don't have any set training."

Female, 1-2yrs stewarding experience, events stadiums

There is little understanding of what direction a career can go (in terms of development and progression). And while many are happy with their existing roles, it is clear that a better sense of progression and opportunity can motivate people to stay in the sector. In addition, there is appetite for more and clearer opportunities to improve relevant skill sets - to be better prepared for all aspects of the role, particularly around first aid and conflict resolution.

In-house vs. agency tensions

A number of differences in experience and perspective between in-house and agency staff have already been outlined, but the relationship between the two groups itself can be fractious.

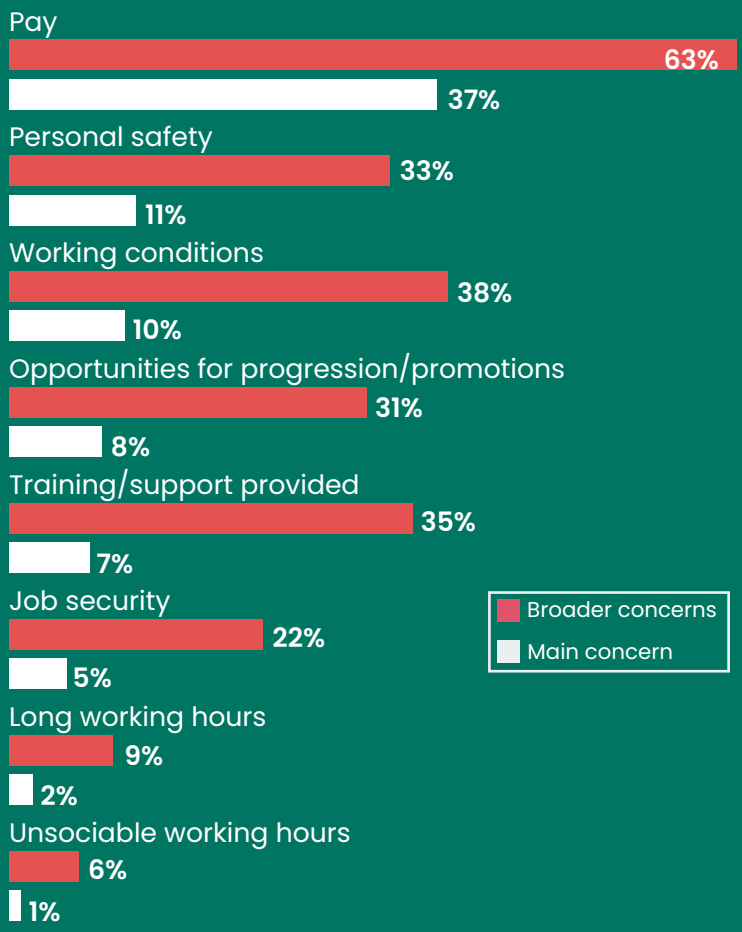
Many in-house staff (particularly those with more experience) have less faith and trust in agency staff who often plug gaps in staffing. They feel temporary staff are purely money focussed and are not motivated in the same way as in-house staff (i.e. they just 'clock in and clock out'), they consider them less skilled, committed and knowledgeable – they do not work in the 'in-house way'.

On the other hand, agency staff do not always feel appreciated or that their experience is valued (particularly if they have years of stewarding practice). They feel that they are not always well utilised, coming into the venues 'blind' and with their first introductions to staff and the stadium occurring only in the short hours before the event.

These tensions can have a knock on effect on job satisfaction, exacerbating the challenges of staff shortages and feelings of being undervalued.

IMPROVMENTS | QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE |

What would current stewards like to change?



B3a. If you could improve/have improved aspects of working as a steward to ensure that you remain/remained in stewarding, what would you improve/have improved? B3b. If you could only improve/have improved one aspect of working as a steward to ensure that you remain/remained in stewarding, what would you improve/have improved?
Base: All partner sourced, current stewarding sample (1045)

"With in-house guys you have the 'stadium way' of doing things. We know what we're about. These guys [agency] don't."

Female, 1-2 years stewarding experience, sports stadium //

"We're getting agency staff who don't even know what an NVQ is. You don't get the same quality of steward."

Mixed gender, 3-5 yrs stewarding experience, sports stadiums //

"We don't always have the faith that the agency staff that come in are going to have the capabilities or commitment to have our back if we need them to, can feel like an extra burden to watch out for at times."

Mixed Gender, 1-2 years stewarding experience, events stadiums //

"I got a gig at [a League One football ground]. I've never been there so I don't know the stadium. I asked a few basic questions and you could tell they [in-house steward] didn't want me there and I wasn't up to the job. I've been at this for years. I know what I'm doing but they didn't treat me like that. And yet they needed me there."

Mixed Gender, 1-2 years stewarding experience, events stadiums //

Conclusions & Recommendations

Providing an equal experience

There is variation in the experience of different employee groups. Agency, BAME and younger workers show less positivity overall. Motivations range from keeping spectators safe, the need for quick money or flexible employment, to being a loyal fan of a specific sports club. There are also clear differences in motivations (and experience) by in-house and agency staff, often reflecting age of steward.

Retention will depend on there being an equally positive stewarding experience for all and delivering against the different motivations of various audiences. More needs to be done to address the abuse faced by all stewards, but felt more acutely by BAME staff. Establishing clarity around the role of stewards may help ease pressure put on them by demanding attendees, but nevertheless unruly and abusive behaviour needs to be curbed and stewards adequately compensated for extra pressures felt.

Delivering the intangible benefits

It is the softer, intangible aspects of the role that motivate: working as part of a team, progressing, feeling like you're contributing, for a club that you love. There is a little understanding of what direction a career can go (in terms of development and progression). And while many are happy with their existing roles, it is clear that a better sense of progression and opportunity can motivate people to stay in the sector.

Ensuring stewards feel valued goes beyond just pay. It would be beneficial to review training and work processes to promote these benefits and career progression for all, not just permanent or more experience staff who are more likely to feel 'part of something'. There is appetite for more and clearer opportunities to improve relevant skill sets, e.g. first aid, and conflict resolution. Training can also feel like a financial benefit and contribute to a sense of worth if paid for by the club/venue.

Questioning whether pay is right

While stewards can bemoan the low pay, this was not an initial motivator. And a potential pay rise is often seen as recompense for other challenging elements of the role. However, it would be remiss to ignore take home pay in the context of how stewards feel valued.

It is probable that improving other elements of the role first, will remove some of the desire for higher pay, but it is still important to review, not just in absolute terms, but possibly through more creative ways of incentivising commitment. Ideas floated by stewards include consecutive game pay, bank holiday pay and training/ advancement funded by employers as part of the role. Ultimately increasing stewards' sense of worth in the role is likely to aid retention; pay is a critical part of this.

Addressing the tensions

There are tensions that underpin this desire for more pay that need to be addressed: the mismatch of expectations placed upon stewards by the clubs/venues and attendees; the ways of managing events and entry post-Covid; managing and reducing abusive behaviours; and how agency and in-house staff work together.

Reviewing and addressing these should support overall job satisfaction at individual events as well as longer term. Clarifying the stewarding role with clubs and fans alike is likely to aid fairer expectation setting, whilst better planning and collaboration between clubs and agencies can only aid more harmonious working. Having a clearer purpose for agency staff will empower and motivate them, whilst in-house staff, particularly those who are longer serving, need to feel problems caused by staff shortages are being suitably addressed without just asking them to do more. Better understanding of the underlying factors in an apparent rise in post-pandemic, attendee behavioural issues also seems necessary in order to effectively reduce and deal with abusive behaviour. An increase in pay could be a short-term compensatory measure to justify higher demands on the role but addressing the wider tensions is needed longer term.

Stakeholder workshop outcomes

Delegates were aligned with the key challenges faced by the live events sector and that these issues directly impacted on steward retention. Four broad themes were identified and discussed, relating to....

1. **Pay and conditions:** the stewarding role is characterised by low pay, intermittent demand, long hours and unstable working conditions.
2. **Training and qualifications:** particularly that the quality of training available is variable
3. **Aspects of the live events industry:** event organisers can prioritise costs before quality. In addition stewards can feel undervalued
4. **A range of systemic issues:** There is no register or reliable measure of stewards in the UK

Stakeholders agreed that the sector also faced the problem, not just of retention, but also of recruitment and finding the next generation of stewards to help deal with any shortfall. Critically, this was not seen as a UK specific problem but an issue facing the live-events sector in the EU and United States.

Discussions relating to the four broad areas illustrated that many of issues were of long-standing and efforts to resolve them made difficult given the breadth of the sector and range of different stakeholders (with different responsibilities and priorities) involved. Attendees felt that constructive and regular engagement forums with all key stakeholders (industry, regulators and government) would be essential in delivering solutions.

Debate looked at broader issues relating to: how the sector is regulated (and who ultimately should be responsible for it); what solutions to the shortfall/withdrawal of funding for vocational training might look like (tapping into the apprenticeship levy was mooted); the setting up of a register to determine the quality and number of stewards in the UK; the threat of unscrupulous suppliers; flexible qualifications/transferable applicable across SIA and safety steward staff.

Tackling many of these issues were seen as critical not only to more wider sector issues but also in tackling the problem of steward retention. This said, it was widely viewed that the issues identified need to be tackled collectively and that focussing or prioritising one would only ultimately be a short term fix, possibly exacerbating the other issues.

When exploring retention (and recruitment) more specifically the following areas were identified as achievable in the short to medium term:

- **A 'best practice' standard:** (either voluntary of via compulsion) that is based on 'best in class' employers and how they treat their stewards. It was seen as critical that employers understand the benefits of this solution to their businesses
- **A clearer path to progression and professionalism:** Clearly demonstrating the benefits of a career in stewarding and that it delivers a range of relevant and transferable skills can help attract a new cohort
- **Flexible, accessible & standardised training packages:** Doing this was thought to widen the pool of current stewards and make it possible to work at a range of different events/stadia and help make the role more attractive to current and prospective employees. Reducing the cost of training at an individual level was thought likely to help increase uptake. Similarly, encouraging employer contributions toward training can also be critical
- **Tempering attendee behaviours and attitudes:** It was felt that (re)educating fans and event-goers of the crucial role stewards have in ensuring the safety and smooth running of events can help manage attendee expectations. It was also believed that this can help 'humanise' stewards and potentially lessen anti-social behaviour toward them

Delegates believed delivering solutions would need close cross organisational working (industry, regulators held together by the 'glue' of government).

Appendix

Qualitative Focus Group Sample Design

Session	Employer type (in-house vs agency)*	Gender	Experience	Event type (sports vs event)
Group 1	Mix	Mixed	1-2 years	Mix
Group 2	In-house	Female	1-2 years	Sport
Group 3	Mix	Mixed	3-5 years	Mix
Group 4	Mix	Female	3-5 years	Mix
Group 5	In-house	Mixed	5yrs +	Sport
Group 6	In-house	Mixed	5yrs +	Sport

Number of current stewards sourced from each partner

FOOTBALL	
Arsenal	152
Chelsea	64
Crystal Palace	1
Everton	57
Newcastle United	87
Tottenham Hotspur	70
West Ham United	56
Wolverhampton Wanderers	70
Port Vale	8
Non League Partners	4
Blackburn Rovers	20
Cardiff City	45
Bristol City	22
Reading FC	6
Sunderland AFC	26
Portsmouth	26
Exeter City	12
Stevenage	17
CRICKET	
Trent Bridge	82
MUSIC/OTHER	
Showsec (agency)	220
TOTAL	1045

Profile of partner sourced, current steward sample

When first started working as steward		
Less than 12 months ago	213	20%
1-2 years ago	35	3%
2-3 years ago	86	8%
3-5 years ago	152	15%
5-10 years ago	196	19%
11-20 years ago	211	20%
21 years+ ago	152	15%

Pay		
£6.56-10	463	44%
£11-15	460	44%
£16-20	32	3%
£21-30	22	2%
£31+	8	1%
Prefer not to say	60	6%

Employment status		
Zero-hour contract	734	70%
Contract	224	21%
Permanent staff	106	10%
Cash-in-hand	4	0%
Prefer not to say	45	43%

Employer		
Directly by a sports club	585	56%
Directly by a venue	43	19%
Through an agency	196	12%
Through multiple agencies	53	6%
Directly by multiple venues	128	5%
Directly by multiple clubs	60	4%
Other	95	9%

Current events working at		
Football	918	81%
Other sporting events	544	38%
Live music	608	33%
Other	233	12%

Ethnicity		
White	774	74%
BAME	258	25%
Prefer not to say	13	1%

Age		
16-17	10	1%
18-24	123	12%
25-34	135	13%
35-44	163	16%
45-54	207	20%
55-64	290	28%
65	117	11%

Gender		
Male	744	71%
Female	288	28%
Prefer not to say	7	1%
I prefer to self-define as	6	1%

Profile of panel sourced, lapsed sample

When first started working as steward		
Less than 12 months ago	12	8%
1-2 years ago	25	16%
2-3 years ago	33	21%
3-5 years ago	43	28%
5-10 years ago	29	19%
11-20 years ago	10	6%
21 years+ ago	3	2%

Age		
16-17	2	1%
18-24	14	9%
25-34	47	30%
35-44	57	37%
45-54	15	10%
55-64	14	9%
65	6	4%

Gender		
Male	95	61%
Female	60	39%
Prefer not to say	0	0%
I prefer to self-define as	0	0%

Ethnicity		
White	128	83%
BAME	26	17%
Prefer not to say	1	1%

Past events worked at		
Football	131	85%
Other sporting events	111	72%
Live music	99	64%
Other	65	42%

Employer		
Directly by a sports club	38	25%
Directly by a venue	42	27%
Through an agency	53	34%
Through multiple agencies	46	30%
Directly by multiple venues	64	41%
Directly by multiple clubs	35	23%
Other	3	2%

Employment status		
Zero-hour contract	69	45%
Contract	50	32%
Permanent staff	37	24%
Cash-in-hand	39	25%
Prefer not to say	5	3%

Pay		
£6.56-10	28	18%
£11-15	37	24%
£16-20	39	25%
£21-30	30	19%
£31+	17	11%
Prefer not to say	4	3%

20

Sports Grounds
Safety Authority