

NatCen

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Stewarding Labour Market Research

Findings from qualitative research with
stakeholders

February 2022



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Background

- The overall research objective was to:
 - Provide a detailed description of the labour market for stewarding and event personnel performing comparable roles across the live events sector, including short-, medium- and long-term trends.
- Research questions centred around gathering information from existing sources on:
 - The size and profile of the stewarding labour pool
 - Supplier channels
 - Factors driving the shortfall
 - Training and qualifications undertaken by/required of stewards
 - Job destinations
 - Pay and reward

(A full list of research questions can be found in the Appendix)

Methodology

In order to address the research questions, we combined a desk based review of existing data sources with qualitative interviews with industry stakeholders.

The findings presented in this report are drawn from the stakeholder interviews, which aimed to gather participants' insights around some of the key research questions and inform our desk review through signposting to relevant data sources.

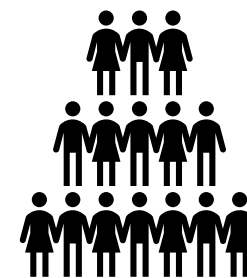
- Online interviews with five senior stakeholders from across the sports and wider live events sector were carried out in January 2022
- Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes

Industry trends



1.

Stewarding population



Number of stewards available

- There appears to be no register or reliable measure of stewards in the UK
 - Surveying individual employers/clubs would lead to double-counting
 - Stakeholders estimated that roughly 14-16,000 stewards are required by football clubs alone
 - There are over 300,000 Security Industry Authority (SIA)-badged individuals

Demographic make up of stewarding population

- Highly varied population, including everything from university students to older, life-long fans of a football club
- Anecdotally, majority are male, and in some parts of England and Wales the proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people appears higher than in the general population
- Many work in stewarding part-time alongside a 'main' job/other job(s)

Extent to which supply is meeting industry demand

- Stakeholders were of the view that the stewarding labour market **is not meeting industry needs**
 - Stakeholders had seen evidence of a shortfall, e.g. UK Crowd Management Association (UKCMA) members reported a 40% shortfall of stewards in 2021
 - Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were difficulties recruiting people with relevant skills
 - There is a common view that the industry needs to invest more in security personnel
 - The use of agencies to meet surges in demand is not seen as a sustainable model; agency staff tend to lack skills, knowledge and understanding of a venue/event compared with in-house staff

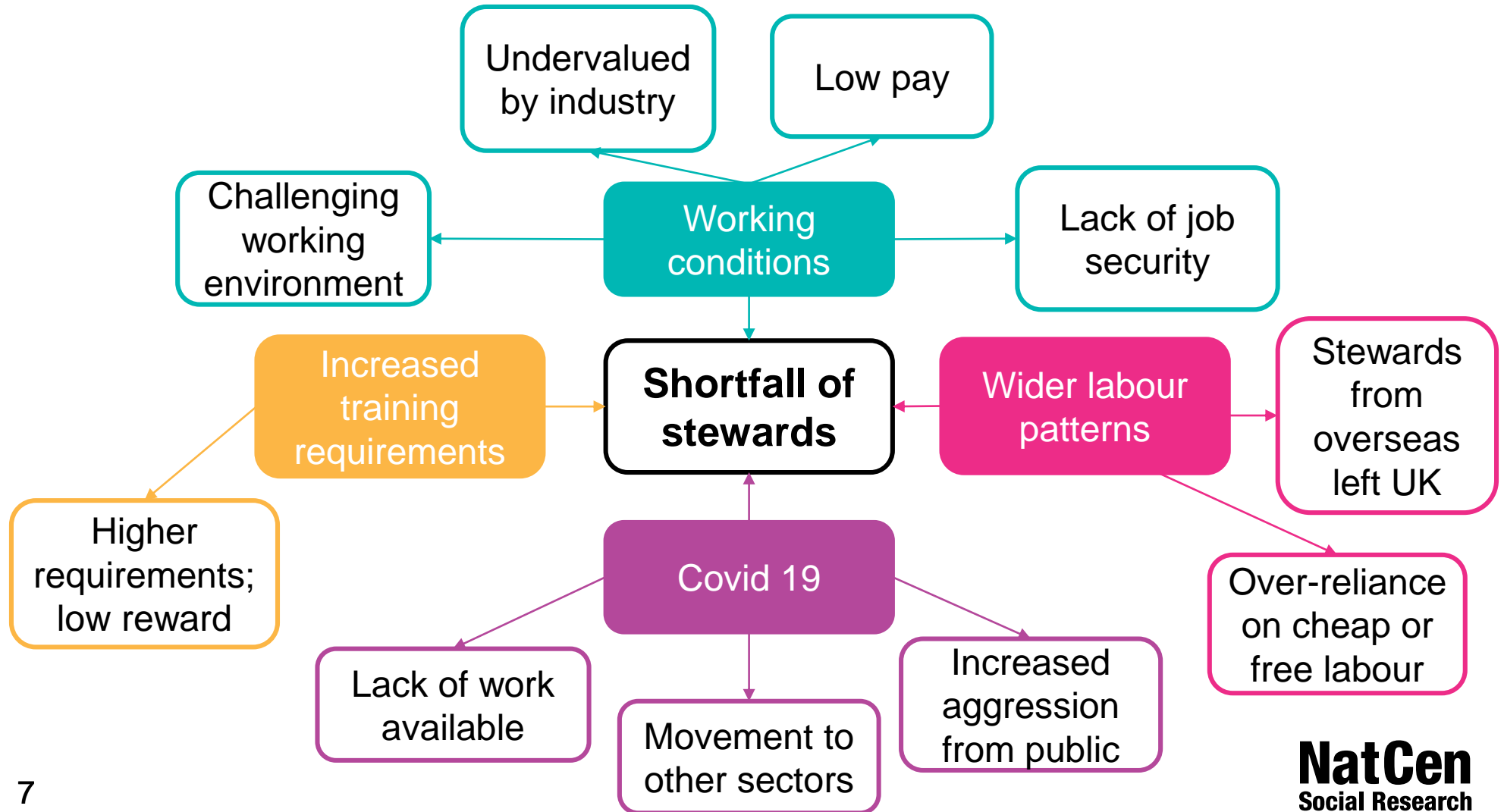
“Security is seen as a grudge purchase”

“I think it has been a slightly busted market... for a long time. There have been labour shortages advertised... for many years”

“It is probably a model which is unsustainable unless you’ve got lots and lots of virtually free, cheap labour”

“We are, as a nation, I think, addicted to cheap, part time labour”

Trends and drivers of shortfall



Working conditions

The stewarding role involves:

- A challenging working environment
 - Stewards often work in unfavourable physical conditions/weather, and can receive verbal and physical abuse
- Low pay
 - Pay does not make role appealing/worthwhile, or acknowledge the skills needed and responsibilities held by stewards
- Lack of job security and unreliable hours
 - Often zero hours contracts and work offered at short notice, with shifts themselves also being short
 - This leads to lack of commitment from stewards, who apply to work two different events on the same date, or cancel one role to work for another offering higher pay
- Being undervalued
 - Perceived as a casual role, not a career choice

“Finance Directors of football clubs... have to pay a lot of stewards a lot of money collectively, and it’s not necessarily making a contribution to the bottom line... therefore pressure is always applied to keep the number of stewards as small as possible, to pay them as little as possible, and not even give them a hot drink”

“They’re the ones that get grief... spat at... even punched... if you’re standing there getting £35... what’s the point?”

Training requirements

- There has been an increase in the minimum training requirements and the cost of SIA and Spectator Safety qualifications, with no parallel increase in reward or remuneration
- This disparity acts as a disincentive to join the stewarding workforce, particularly for casual workers who are not looking for a role they need to invest in
- Covid-19 further compounded this issue, as people weren't willing to invest in training or qualifications when work was less guaranteed afterwards

“When designing the new standards people wanted more and more content...so all the time the training requirements of entry level stewards are increasing, but the reward and recognition is not increasing, so the ask of them is quite tall, but the rewards don't match the ask...although the new occupational standards need to be high, it's a disincentive for some...”

”[People think] ‘what's the point of me having a SIA badge to work at a festival, if I don't know that festivals are going ahead?’”

Covid-19

- No work for stewards at live events during restrictions
- Alternative work (e.g. in retail, delivery driving) found to offer more favourable working conditions
- Uncertainty around whether events will go ahead remains
- Some stakeholders perceived the public to be less tolerant and quicker to anger at events post-COVID-19 restrictions, which further turned stewards away from the role

“People drifted away from stewarding... matches, don't forget, went behind closed doors for quite a long time, so therefore, there wasn't any work for stewards”

“We find there is less tolerance and less patience among crowds, people seem to get angry quicker and they don't want to be told what to do...it's 'Who the hell do you think you are? We're sick of being told what to do'. That is definitely making the people who did come back [to stewarding] briefly now turn back and walk away again.”

Wider labour patterns

- Some stakeholders reported that many stewards from overseas had returned *home* following Brexit and the onset of Covid-19. However, others emphasised that they had no empirical data on how many had returned
- Stewarding employment model relies on cheap labour, and is vulnerable to competition from better employment opportunities
- Unemployment rates have decreased and there are more permanent jobs for people to go into, which reduces supply into stewarding labour market

“Approximately 50,000 of those with SIA licences have a home address that is overseas... We have no idea, of those 50,000 who left, how many are still living back overseas, or how many are back in the country or how many have the right to work”

“You can be paid National Minimum Wage... to stand in the cold and wet... or you could work in an Amazon warehouse for a couple of pounds more in the warm and dry”

Impact of shortfall

"[The shortfall] could potentially have a knock on effect on public safety... [and] on the entertainment licence that we operate under if we fall below the numbers that we are expected to have... which potentially could mean that the event couldn't go ahead, we can't open the doors."

Shortfall of available stewards



Overbooking of stewards and use of unqualified, inexperienced stewards to try and meet need



Increased risk to public safety and ability to run events

"Through the pandemic there's been such huge pressure on clubs... to gather enough stewards that perhaps... I suspect that quite a few clubs have taken on more unqualified personnel than they would have liked simply to get the bodies on board"

Expectations for the future

- Over the next 6 months, stakeholders expect to see high demand for stewards, and consequently, **challenges for the industry in meeting the demand and increased public safety risk**
 - Stakeholders referred to a high number of events taking place in summer 2022, including music tours of big artists, the Queen's Jubilee events, the Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture
 - There are significant concerns amongst stakeholders that the shortfall will result in more unqualified, untrained and inexperienced stewards working at events

“We’re competing for pretty much the same labour pool [as other events sectors]. The Commonwealth Games taking place this year, that’ll be a big drain on the labour pool of licenced and non-licenced security and stewards.”

“We’re heading towards a perfect storm”

Training and retention

2.

Training

New training requirements could deter people from entering the stewarding workforce

- Stakeholders explained that the new Spectator Safety qualification and SIA licence requirements are more rigorous and have higher requirements
 - There is potential for higher training requirements to increase the roles' status and professionalisation
 - However, at a higher cost to trainees, they could also act as a deterrent or barrier to entering the stewarding workforce
 - Some stakeholders stated that the impact of the higher requirements on the number of qualified staff available is not yet clear. However, others reported that the number of first-time SIA licence applications and licence holders has continued to grow year on year.
- Other concerns around training included:
 - Employers expect externally-sourced and trained stewards to require no further training, and are reluctant to invest in stewards' further training and progression

Contracting

Permanent steward contracts are rare, but are linked to better steward training, welfare and commitment

- Some large employers (e.g. some premier league football clubs, security companies that guard large venues) can afford to employ a trained staff pool on a permanent basis
- However, most stewards work on zero hours contracts and are hired at short notice for short-term or seasonal work
- Volunteers also make up part of the stewarding workforce
 - Includes enthusiasts of the particular sport/music event, and those from local community who respond to an advert in local press

Pay and conditions

Stewards' pay and conditions do not promote recruitment and retention, particularly for those recruited externally

- Steward roles typically pay little above minimum wage
 - However, one stakeholder reported some employers were increasing rates of pay to attract more stewards
- When sports fixtures and events are cancelled at short notice, in-house stewards might receive some compensatory pay, but external and agency staff do not
- There is a perception that external and agency staff are not looked after by football clubs as well as they should, for example, by giving them a hot drink or appropriate clothing
 - Cricket (the England and Wales Cricket Board) was highlighted as an example of better practice in looking after the welfare of stewards

“The ECB invest more in their stewards than football. For example, they look after them, give them better gear to keep them warm, pay them for the time they come in to do training, give them food and drink, so it’s a good example of a sport doing it better, but most sports have a similar view of stewards as football does”

Job destinations

Although there was a lack of data on job destinations of stewards, stakeholders highlighted a number of different potential job destinations:

Sports and events sector roles	Other security and stewarding roles	Non-steward roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some stewards work for only one sports club or type of event• Others (particularly agency staff) work for multiple sports fixtures and live events at different times over the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those with an SIA license can move into security roles, such as guarding buildings• Stewards found work during the pandemic at vaccination and testing centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• During the pandemic, some found roles outside of stewarding, for example as delivery drivers or supermarket staff

Leaving the workforce

Stakeholders discussed the reasons for people moving to roles outside of the sports and live events sector:

- **Covid-19** was an obvious reason for leaving the sector, as the availability of jobs declined or was inconsistent or not guaranteed.
- Some roles outside of stewarding, such as in retail, were thought to provide **better working conditions** (e.g. a warm environment, better pay and regular or more standard hours). Belief that encouraging people in those roles back into stewarding would be a challenge.
- **Wider immigration patterns** were thought to be another factor. 16% of SIA badge holders' permanent residency is outside of the UK. Where previously this group would have come to the UK to work on large events, belief that since Brexit and Covid-19 many had been less able or willing to return.

Suggestions to address the shortfall



3.

Recognise the value of the steward role and invest in it

- **Create a cultural shift** among employers to place a higher value on the steward role and recognise its importance in event security and ensuring the public have a positive experience at events
- **Employ stewards in house.** Sports clubs which employ their own in-house stewards have seen the benefits of doing so, including creating a better working environment and investing more in their stewards, in turn improving recruitment and retention
- **Professionalise the stewarding role** by making the skills and knowledge needed for the role better recognised and paid for. Provide funded training and proportionate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) e.g. on counter terrorism and safe restraining

Improve working conditions

- **Increase pay and reward** to make stewarding more appealing and compete with other industries (e.g. retail)

“Football has to come to the realisation pretty quickly that if stewarding is a fundamental part of the operation, which it is, they need to invest in that stewarding workforce, they need to be embraced, brought in, offered better opportunities, better training, paid to come in for training days, the pay needs to be better, there have to be some membership benefits for the stewards and so on.”

- **Improve hours and job security** by creating more full-time roles or a more diverse portfolio to provide more hours of work throughout the year. This would include allowing more movement of stewards between different sports and live events employers
- **Create a safety-conscious working environment** and one in which stewards feel supported in carrying out their roles as part of safety management at events

Changes to training and qualifications

- **Reduce the cost to obtain a SIA licence** or create a system of obtaining a licence on credit to make it more affordable and accessible and therefore maximise uptake

“The cost of a badge as a single purchase item is a very significant prohibitor. That for me, is the most important thing at government level that could be... influenced”

- **Merge training pathways and qualifications** for stewards working in sports with those working in the wider live events sector. This could allow a wider pool of trained staff to work flexibly across all types of events
- **Create a national register of stewards**, perhaps via a digital platform for stewards to register for -training/e-learning

Improve collaboration within the sector

- **Improve collaboration and accountability** between different parties involved in events organisation. Across the sports and live events sector, there was a need identified for clearer lines of accountability and communication across the network of bodies involved in events organisation, to allow it to operate effectively and safely

“At the moment no one holds anyone accountable at the right level... An organiser will put on an event in a field, local authority says yes, then everyone asks could the police have done more, could the regulator have done more - and why can't I find the people when I want them? This is not a responsible and accountable network”

Appendix



4.

Appendix i: Research questions

■ Key research questions:

1. What is the population of stewards/event personnel available to support
a) football in England and Wales, b) sport in the UK; and c) the wider live events sector in the UK?
2. What are the different supplier channels that make up the available population?
3. What is the current and predicted shortfall in the supply of stewards/event personnel?
4. What is driving the current shortfall and how is this expected to change over the next six months?
5. What data is available on the education, training, qualifications and experience of the available pool?
6. What is the demographic breakdown of the available pool?
7. What is the state of the pipeline of new stewards and event personnel being trained?
8. What is the turnover/churn of stewarding staff and where are those who leave the role going?
9. What are the job destinations for those who have completed training in the past year?
10. Are those in the labour pool undertaking multiple roles, e.g. in hospitality, social care etc?
11. Are there 'active' and 'dormant' stewarding populations and if so, can this be quantified? What data is there on the underlying reasons for 'dormant' stewards?
12. What data is there on pay/reward for stewards/event personnel across the live events sector?
13. How robust is the data and what assumptions have been made?