



COMMUNITY AND SPORT DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

March 2005



Introduction

This report offers an initial interpretation of a major survey of community sport workers and volunteers in the UK, carried out by SkillsActive in partnership with Dr Andy Pitchford of the University of Gloucestershire. The purpose of the survey was to establish demographic, equity and educational indicators for workers¹ in the sector, and to audit their employment trends, working practices and perceived training needs.

The shape and focus of the survey questionnaire was informed in two ways. Firstly by a desk review of policy documents and research reports of relevance to work in the sector. Of particular note in this respect were the following²:

- Boutall, T. (2003) *Competences for Sports Workers in Community Cohesion*, Report prepared on behalf of Positive Futures and CCU.
- Collins, M. (1995) *Sports Development Locally and Regionally*, Reading, ILAM.
- Collins, M. with Kay, T. (2003) *Sport and Social Exclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Community Development Foundation (2004) *Survey of Community Development Workers in the UK: A report on paid and unpaid community workers*.
- SPRITO (2001) *Social Exclusion and Sport: The role of training and learning*. London: SPRITO.

Much of this literature suggests that historically, the sport development sector has suffered from a series of constraints in relation to training and learning which supports community-level interventions. These constraints include:

- Poor co-operation between professional bodies and associations
- Fragmented training and learning opportunities
- Lack of coherent career structures and career development opportunities
- Tendencies towards 'model driven', managerialist interventions
- Limited understanding of parallel, 'converging' welfare agendas

Data gathered for this project offers an opportunity to revisit these issues.

Secondly, the survey was informed by five regional workshops, held in Leeds, Birmingham, London, Ormskirk, and Gloucester during November 2004. 52 workers from a range of agencies and backgrounds contributed to these workshops, clarifying existing training and development frameworks and identifying issues for further investigation. Qualitative data from these workshops supplement survey data throughout this report.

An internet survey was hosted on the SkillsActive website for four weeks from the beginning of December 2004. During this time 899 respondents completed the questionnaire, exceeding the target of 600 for the sample. Of these respondents, 117 were unpaid volunteers, 782 were in employment of some kind.

¹ We use the generic term 'workers' in this report to include both paid workers and volunteers operating in community sports settings. The data generated allows for distinctions between employees and volunteers.

² A summary of the other key sources utilised by this project is presented as Appendix 3.

It is estimated that there are between 4,000 to 5,000 people in full or part-time employment in the sector³. We therefore consider this sample to be broadly representative. As the survey remains open on the website, this report should be viewed as a working paper with the option of further analysis of either the total responses or particular variables.

Email databases were utilised to promote and distribute the questionnaire. Although a number of stakeholder agencies supported the project by allowing access to their databases, the exercise highlighted the lack of an effective electronic communication system for the sector. In the absence of a single database for community sport development, we accessed the following:

- National Association for Sports Development member database
- www.sportdevelopment.org.uk
- Sport England and County Sport Partnership networks
- Positive Futures network
- CCPR voluntary sector/NGB networks
- SkillsActive networks
- London Community Sport Network

In order to account for the apparently nebulous nature of the sector, the survey was premised on an inclusive definition of community sport development, allowing for responses from those operating with a 'sport-focused' agenda, in addition to those using sport as a social intervention.

³ This is in relation to workers in full or part-time time employment, based on estimations from Collins (2003).

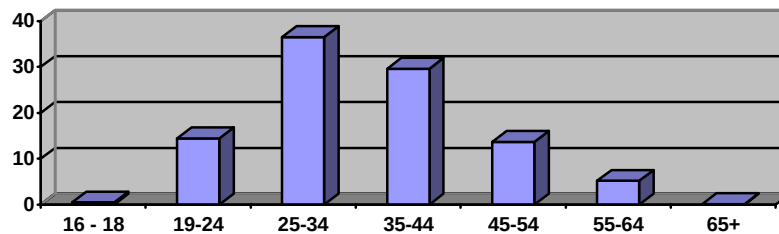
I. The sample

Of the 899 respondents that make up this first sample

- 59% of respondents were male; 41% were female
- 8% of respondents were from an ethnic minority
- 3.8% considered themselves to have an impairment or disability

The age profile of this sample suggests a young, developing workforce:

Figure 1: Age of respondents (%)

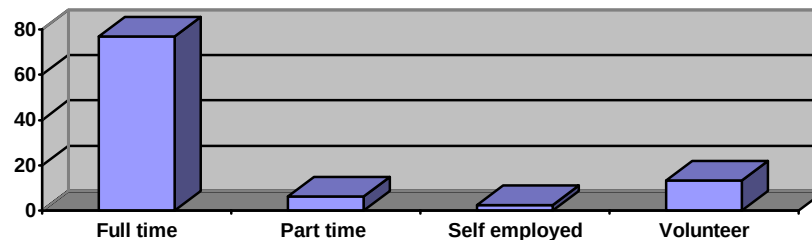


The majority of respondents were from England (81.5%), 11.5% were from Scotland, 3.5% from Northern Ireland and 3.5% from Wales.

Respondents appear to be relatively highly qualified. 74% had a first degree, with 22.4% claiming to have a higher degree (a postgraduate qualification). While it should be remembered that this figure includes the PGCE qualification for teaching professionals, this is a striking characteristic. Only 1% of respondents had no formal qualifications.

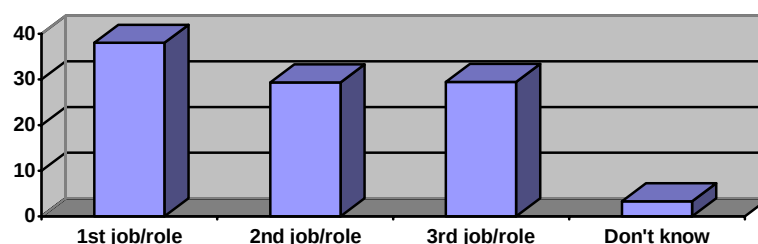
In terms of the employment status of respondents, the majority were in full time employment.

Figure 2: Employment status (%)



Respondents identified a range of career stages and patterns. In response to the question 'Have you had other, similar jobs or roles in community sport before?', participants answered as follows:

Figure 3: Experience of sector (%)



During the workshops, approximately 30 different job titles were identified by participants as relevant and current in the sector. The following titles were therefore offered as options in the questionnaire:

- Sports Development Manager
- Sports Development Officer (including Youth SDO, Community SDO)
- Sports Development Officer for a specific sport
- Assistant Sports Development Officer
- Sports or Leisure Officer
- Community Sports Coach
- Physical Activity Co-ordinator
- Chief Leisure Officer
- Programme Manager
- Football in the Community Officer
- School Sport Co-ordinator
- Partnership Development Manager
- Access Officer
- Volunteer Development Officer/Worker
- Community Development Officer/Worker
- Health Promotion Officer/Worker
- Youth Worker/Leader
- Play Worker/Leader
- Sports Coach/Leader
- Outreach Worker
- Helper/Assistant
- Teacher/Tutor/Lecturer
- Learning Support Worker

A breakdown of respondents associating with these roles is presented in the *Summary of Responses*⁴. However, it should be noted that 279 respondents chose the 'other' category in response to this question, indicating further heterogeneity in terms of job title and – implicitly at least – the focus of their work.

In terms of job function, respondents identified the characteristics of their work from the following choices⁵.

- Practical coaching, teaching, leadership, face to face outreach work
- Advisor or counsellor
- Facilitator or co-ordinator

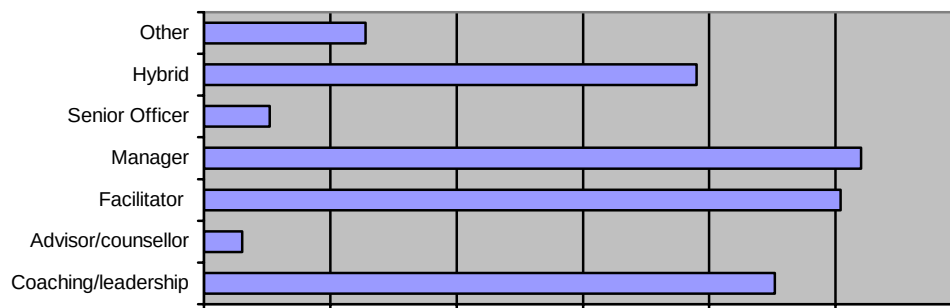
⁴ See Appendices 1 and 2.

⁵ For further analysis of these job functions, see Section 3 *Roles and Functions in Community Sports Development*.

- Manager, strategist or planner
- Senior or Chief Officer
- Hybrid
- Other

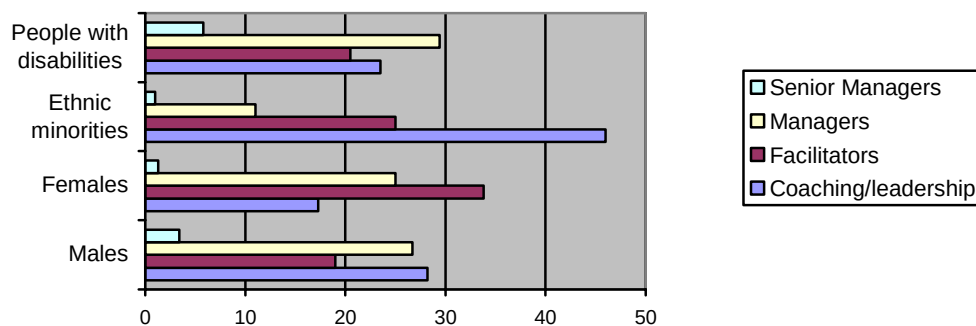
These categories were developed on the basis of the outcome of workshop discussions, and are distinctive primarily in relation to their proximity to the end user or participant. Respondents were dispersed as follows:

Figure 4: Distribution of role (%)



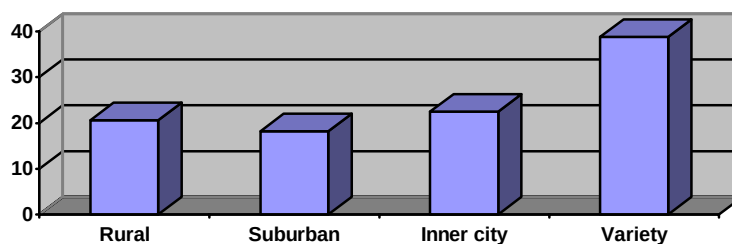
In terms of career development opportunities, demographic groups within the sample appear to experience differential access to levels of responsibility and authority. For example, males, females, ethnic minority and disabled respondents in the sample were dispersed as follows⁶:

Figure 5: Distribution of role/responsibility for demographic groups (%)



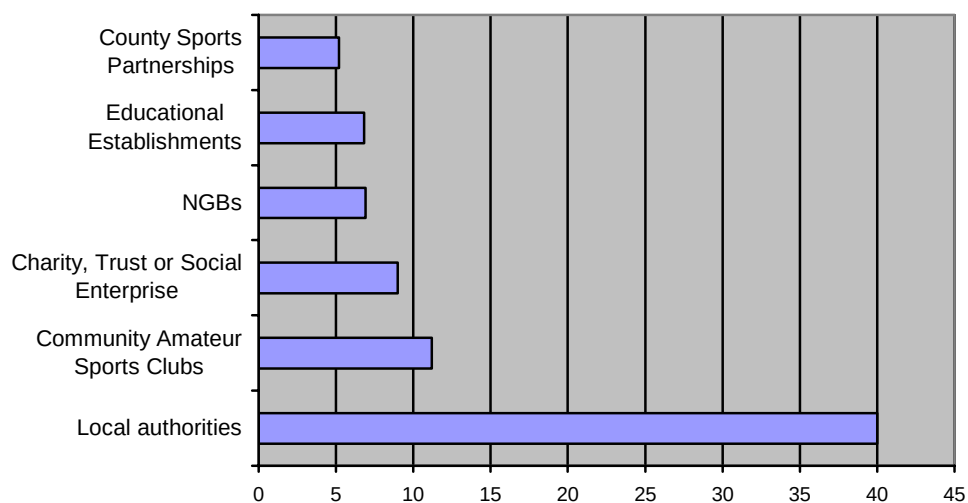
Respondents claim to be working in a wide range of settings. Figure 6 identifies the proportion of respondents working in rural, suburban and inner city areas.

Figure 6: Work Area (%)



Finally, over 40 types of agencies were cited by respondents as their employer, the most frequently cited are represented in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Employing Agency (%)



2. Focus of community sports work

Originally, we had hoped to distinguish respondents on the basis of the rationale for their work. However, discussions during the workshops suggested that this would be problematic. In each of the workshops, participants were presented with a list of rationales and ‘missions’, including the following:

- Social justice
- Sustainable communities
- Community development
- Community safety
- Crime reduction
- Equitable practice
- Health promotion
- Social inclusion
- Social control
- Empowerment
- Success in sport
- Personal/character development
- Rehabilitation
- Self help
- Devolution
- Self determination
- Inclusion in a specific faith or community agenda
- Ethical practice
- Working and learning together
- Collective action
- Social education
- Empowerment

The majority of workshop participants were, however, unable to use this list to identify a clear underpinning rationale for their work. Instead, participants claimed to be pursuing an agenda which covered many, and in some cases all, of these themes. Few felt that these rationales were likely to be in conflict or counter-productive. A small number of participants in each workshop claimed that each of these themes could be underpinned by ‘community development’.

At one level, this lack of clarity is understandable. Community sports workers are increasingly pursuing a wide range of funding streams⁷ in order to secure and develop their work, forcing them to engage with new and challenging social and welfare agendas. However, this flexibility and multi-skilling is also likely to lead to a lack of focus, and consequent difficulties in relation to goal-setting, evaluation and overall effectiveness. Furthermore, at a macro level, it problematises attempts to identify a core body of knowledge for work in community sport development. Instead, a more sophisticated understanding of the various fields of knowledge which underpin work in this sector will be required if occupational standards and related training strategies are to be successfully implemented.

Among our respondents, and indeed among the policy constituencies more broadly, there appears to be a consensus that a knowledge of sport, and a knowledge of the structures and systems of sports is inadequate for workers hoping to secure and maintain programmes in ‘community’ or ‘inclusion’ settings. This knowledge must be mediated by an understanding of the requirements of the setting, which in broad terms can be acquired in two ways: (i) through experience of the setting in question, and/or (ii) by exposure to education and training grounded in the underpinning knowledge relating to that setting.

While the underpinning knowledge for some segments of this sector is relatively uncontested, for example the reliance of youth inclusion programmes on youth and

⁷ Positive Futures estimate that over 20 funding streams relate directly to sports-based interventions

community practice, in other settings the relationship is less clear. Would, for example, an after-school sports club be best informed by physical education, health promotion, playwork or youthwork?

In constructing a functional map of educational and training requirements for the community sport sector, the role of these underpinning fields and disciplines needs to be carefully assessed. Assuming, for example, that all undergraduate sports programmes in the UK support an effective understanding of youth and community practice or play work might prove to be inappropriate.

What is suggested by data from this project, however, is that a mis-match between underpinning knowledge and job functions is being perpetuated by the fragmented nature of training and education for the sector. Despite the fact that many in our sample claim to focus on projects for young people, youth work and play work have relatively low profiles on the sector's curriculum vitae. Of the 41.4% who identified young people as their key target group, only 8.7% cited youth work as an underpinning field of study. 0.8% cited playwork as an underpinning field, while 3.8% had any connections with either UK Youth or the National Association of Clubs for Young People.

Similarly, in settings where workers operate within a single neighbourhood, only 6% of workers cited community development and community practice as components of underpinning qualifications. Interestingly, 19.6% of these workers were from Business Management/Business Studies backgrounds.

While it is not possible to draw any explicit conclusions about the effectiveness of these workers, there is clearly some efficiency to be gained from a clearer understanding of the fields of knowledge which underpin their work, and a rationalisation of educational and training products which facilitate understanding of those fields.

Fields of knowledge worthy of consideration in this respect might include:

- Playwork
- Health Promotion
- Youth work
- Criminology/probation work
- Social work
- Community practice
- Physical education
- Business Management
- Marketing

Some of these fields of knowledge, for example youth work and community practice, are underpinned by a particular values and principles, to the extent that those working in the field are likely to share an ethos, and an interpretation of the worth of their work to society in general. In the current climate, identifying and articulating a distinctive and coherent set of values which might underpin community sport development work, appears to be a rather more challenging proposition.

3. Roles and functions in community sport development

Workshop participants suggested that some consensus would exist in relation to the roles and functions which characterise work in the sector. Despite the fragmented nature of the sector, and despite the lack of clarity of focus and mission, it was suggested that job functions can be clustered into three main categories. Again, it should be remembered that these functions will be mediated by both the setting for the work and the mission of the employing organisation.

1. Coaching/leadership/face to face delivery

- Direct delivery to participants through coaching, teaching, leadership, outreach work
- Likely to involve session planning, management and delivery
- Some local level financial control
- Requiring an understanding of health and safety, child protection, equity, mentoring, progression/development guidance, management of challenging behaviour, referral or open access systems – depending on nature of intervention.

2. Facilitation or co-ordination

- Management or enabling activity removed from face to face delivery
- Likely to involve partnership work, project planning and management, liaison and negotiation in addition to monitoring and evaluation
- Local level financial and budgetary control
- Requiring an understanding of inter-agency working, decision-making processes, governance at a 'micro' level, organisational change, consultation processes, monitoring and evaluation, in addition to the management of casual staff and marketing – depending on the nature of intervention or employing organisation

3. Management

- Strategic, planning and management activity
- Likely to involve responsibility for department level human resource management, strategic planning, partnership development,
- Area/department levels of financial and budgetary control
- Requiring an understanding of strategic management, human resource management and planning, employment relations, financial planning, governance at organisational levels, contract management

Short term contracts and project insecurity are likely to be experienced at each of these levels, so procurement and funding applications are common activities in each category.

While it is possible to propose some commonalities of experience for workers in these groups – at least in terms of their proximity to programme users or sports participants – it is unwise to assume that any of these categories will share an underpinning field of knowledge. This exchange, between two workshop participants, demonstrates that where workers appear to share similar job functions, their base assumptions and modus operandi can differ quite significantly. Both of these participants were confident that they were 'facilitators':

I think a national certificate in sports development which provides entry level to the career ladder would be beneficial, but also additional management career development modules for managers – we are no different than any others in the industry. We manage people and contracts.

No, I'm not a manager. I facilitate. My job is about empowering communities. I don't manage, in the way you're describing, it wouldn't be appropriate.

While the following figures should be viewed with this debate in mind, the ease with which survey respondents completed questions about their job functions suggests that these terms do indeed carry some currency in the sector. To these three main categories we added a 'hybrid' and 'senior management' option to questions, in addition to a category for 'advisors or counsellors', which was intended to relate to the growth in referral systems in both physical activity and health promotion and social inclusion projects.

Those engaged in **coaching/leadership/face to face** work represented 22.6% of the survey.

- 68.3% of these were male
- 29.7% were female.
- 16% were from ethnic minorities
- 4% claimed to have a disability or impairment
- 43.6% were employed full time; 8.4% part-time; 5.9% self employed; 40.1% volunteers
- 44.6% were in their first role in the community sport sector
- 24.8% no sport/physical activity qualifications
- 58% had higher education qualifications (including 14.9% with a higher degree)
- 68% were unattached to any sector professional bodies

Those engaged in **facilitation or co-ordination** represented 25.2% of the survey

- 44.4% of these were male
- 54.7% were female
- 9.8% were from ethnic minorities
- 3% claimed to have a disability or impairment
- 85.3% were employed full time; 8% part time; 1.3% self employed; 2.7% volunteers
- 43.6% were in their first role in the sector
- 80% had higher education qualifications (including 19.6% with a higher degree)
- 57.3% were unattached to any sector professional bodies
- 27.2% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with prospects of promotion
- 20.5% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with job/role security

Those engaged in **management** represented 26% of the survey.

- 60.3% of these were male
- 39.2% were female
- 4.3% were from ethnic minorities
- 4.3% have a disability or impairment
- 94.4% were employed full time; 1.3% part time; 0.9% self employed; 2.6% volunteers
- 22.8% first role in sector
- 82.8% had higher education qualifications (including 31.5% with a higher degree)
- 46.6% unattached to sector professional associations
- 14.2% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with job/role security (14.2%)
- 20.7% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with promotion prospects

4. Sport-based social intervention settings

In relation to those groups most likely to be engaged with **social intervention** projects, the following data may be of note:

Of those claiming to work in connection with **young people**

- 32.1% were engaged in face-to-face roles; 26.4% facilitators; 23.1% managers, 13% hybrid; 2% senior managers
- 37% were in their first community sports role
- 74.4% had higher education qualifications

Of those working in **inner city areas**

- 28.4% were engaged in face-to-face roles; 20.4% facilitators; 27.9% managers; 18.4% hybrid; 3% senior managers
- 39.3% were in their first community sports role
- 51.2% under 34 years of age
- 63.2% were male; 36.8% female
- 72.2% had higher education qualifications
- 8% with a background in community development; 7% social work/social policy
- 26.4% from Sport Science/Sport Studies degrees

Those working at the **neighbourhood** level

- 49.1% were engaged in face-to-face roles; 18.1% facilitators; 12.1% managers; 15.5% hybrid; 3% senior managers
- 44.8% were in first community sport role
- 63.8% were male; 35.3% female
- 73.3% unattached of sector professional associations
- 35.3% no sports-related/NGB qualifications

In relation to those workers who are least likely to have extensive vocational experience of community sports settings, the following data may be of note:

Of those respondents in their **first community sport role**

- 26.9% were in face-to-face roles; 29.3% facilitators; 15.8% managers; 22.4% hybrid
- 20% were under 24 years of age, 52% were under 24
- 10.7% are lone workers
- 67.2% unattached to a sector professional network
- 70.1% have sports-related NGB qualifications

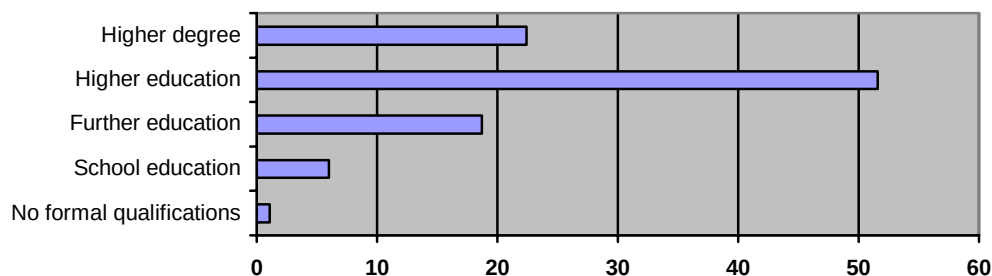
Of those respondents **under 24 years** of age

- 30.3% were in face-to-face roles; 37.9% facilitator; 9.8% manager; 21.2% hybrid
- 9.1% lone workers
- 85.6% have higher education qualifications (including 8.3% with a postgraduate qualification)
- 87.9% have sport-related NGB qualifications

5. Perceived Training Needs

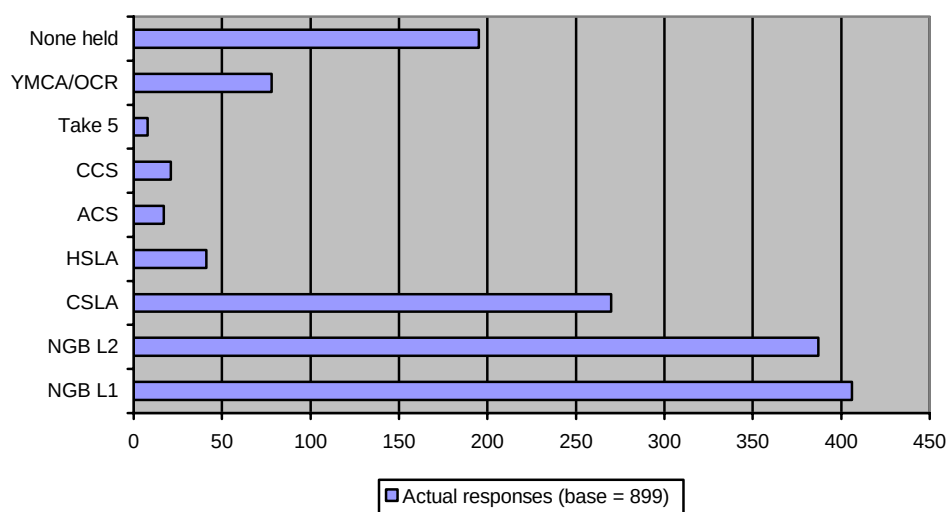
The Community and Sport Development Workforce appears to be very highly qualified. Figure 8 indicates respondents' highest educational qualification:

Figure 8: Educational Qualifications (%)



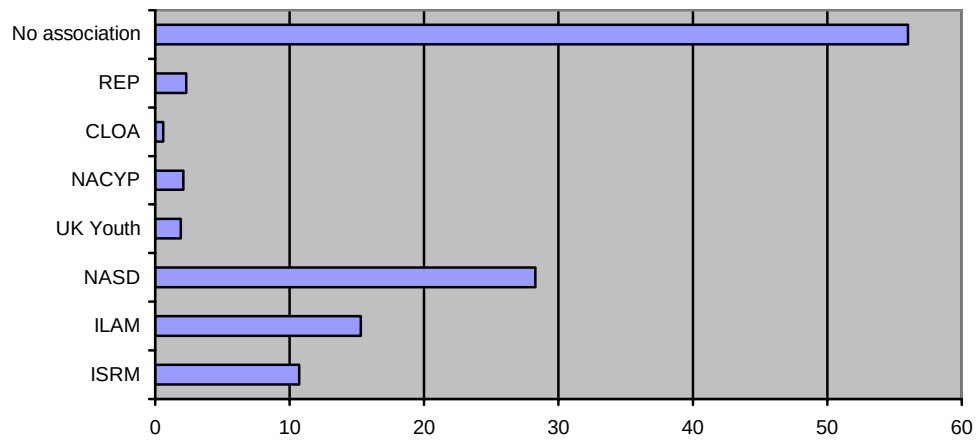
This profile is enhanced by the numbers of respondents with sports/physical activity qualifications:

Figure 9: Sports/physical activity qualifications



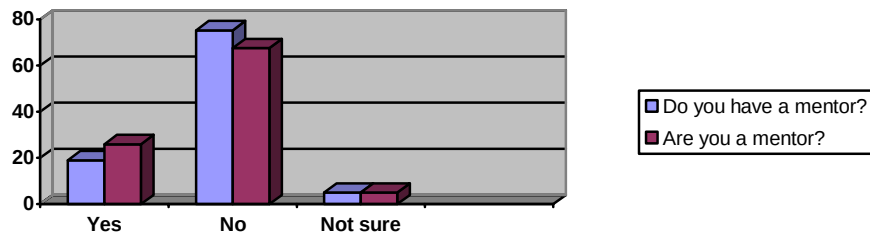
These profiles suggest that workers in the sector are likely to be receptive to new training opportunities. However, this potential is limited by other characteristics. For example, professional associations have a fragmented profile amongst our respondents. The National Association for Sports Development had the highest rate of membership in the sample, but 56% claimed no association with any of the sector's professional associations or bodies.

Figure 10: Professional Associations (%)



Additionally, a minority of respondents were engaged in mentoring.

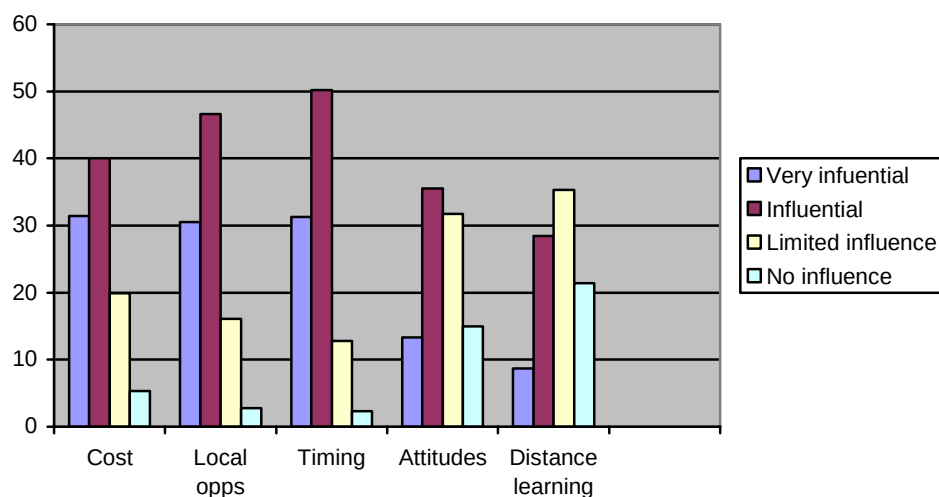
Figure 11: Mentoring (%)



Following on from discussions in the workshops, survey respondents were asked to indicate the influence of the following factors on their ability to access training:

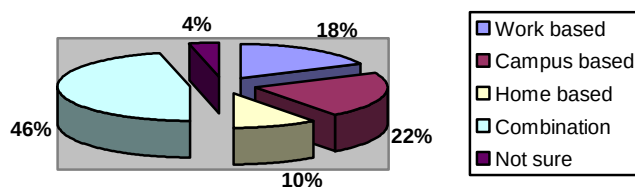
- Cost
- Availability of local opportunities
- Timing of opportunities
- Attitudes of managers/team members
- Availability of distance learning resources

Figure 12: Influence on training (%)



In response to the question, *which of the following training locations would you find most beneficial?*, participants indicated the following:

Figure 13: Preferred training locations (%)



A number of questions allowed respondents to prioritise or identify their own training needs and requirements. Again, the options for these questions were generated by discussions in the workshops. Over 100 respondents selected each of the following as a priority training need:

Training theme	Respondents identifying this as a priority
Funding	383
Managing Challenging Behaviour	255
Convergence Training (understanding other policy agendas)	252
Strategy/policy development	249
Sustainability	241
Local systems and networks	226
Examples/cases of good practice	214
Monitoring and evaluation	213
Financial/budget management	210

Sport session delivery	207
Awareness of govt/lead agency policies	202
Community development/community practice	202
Project management	202
Social inclusion	194
Career development planning	184
Managing volunteers	184
Partnership working	151
Child Protection	142
Staff recruitment, development and retention	133
Self management	122
Communication, negotiation skills	118
Drug and alcohol awareness	93
Equity	87

In terms of particular work-groups/clusters:

Neighbourhood workers prioritised

- Funding (45.7%)
- Managing Challenging Behaviour (39.7%)
- Sport session delivery (38.8%)
- Sustainability (28.4%)

Inner city workers prioritised

- Funding 46.8%
- Managing challenging behaviour (37.8%),
- Sustainability (32.8%)

Those engaged in **coaching and leadership** delivery prioritised

- Sport session delivery (45%);
- Managing challenging behaviour (43.1%)
- Funding (37.1%)

Facilitators prioritised

- Funding (47.6%)
- Financial/budget management (28.9%)
- Managing challenging behaviour (26.7%)
- Sustainability (26.2%)

Managers prioritised

- Convergence training (42.2%)
- Strategy, policy development (41.8%)
- Funding (36.6%)

Workers **under 24 years** of age prioritised

- Funding (59.1%)
- Budget/financial management (37.9%)
- Career development planning (31.1%)

While these priorities represent perceived training and development needs, they may also offer some indicators of appropriate occupational standards for the sector.

Summary

Our preliminary analysis of the data generated by the workshops and the survey indicates that there is a clear demand for a national, accredited framework for education and training for the community and sport development sector. Indeed, a highly qualified and receptive workforce is already in place. However, it is also clear a number of broad issues require immediate consideration if effective systems and strategies are to be put in place to advance the sector.

1. The development of standards

While the survey has generated some indication of the training desires of the workforce, these are perceived training needs and do not necessarily translate directly into occupational standards. Effective community sport work requires an explicit understanding of the requirements of the welfare field which underpins the intervention, in addition to the application of the skills and competencies implied by the list of preferences presented in this report.

Constructing meaningful occupational standards requires an acknowledgement of the requirements of the intervention and the employing agency, in addition to an articulation of the specific functions which characterise particular roles in the sector.

2. Underpinning Knowledge

At present, it seems clear that a majority of entrants to the sector emanate from sport-focused undergraduate degrees. However, the relationship between those degree programmes and the welfare agendas which surround community sport development work is less clearly defined.

A number of scenarios are perhaps worthy of consideration here. Employing/lead agencies in the sector could, for example:

- (i) continue to recruit from sport-focused degrees, but prioritise training mechanisms which familiarise entrants with relevant welfare fields – youth work, community practice, play-work, health promotion, lifelong learning etc – according to the setting in question;
- (ii) prioritise the recruitment of those with primary education and/or training in relevant welfare fields – youth work, community practice, play-work, health promotion, lifelong learning, etc – and then develop training programmes which familiarise those entrants with sport and sport development;
- (iii) encourage higher education sport providers to focus more explicitly on the welfare agendas which currently shape the sector; or
- (iv) prioritise positive action strategies which empower individuals from marginalised communities to gain employment in the sector, focusing then on CPD pathways which widen access to training and further and higher education

Identifying the body/bodies of knowledge on which community sport development work is founded is clearly a key requirement. Without clarity on this issue, the construction of appropriate occupational standards for both the community sport development sector – and the parallel ‘sport development’ workforce – will continue to be challenging.

3. To what extent are community and sports development workers representative of the communities they serve?

The community and sport development workforce appears to be a highly skilled but predominantly middle class occupational group. Given the historic weaknesses of the sector in terms of its inappropriate managerialism and over-reliance on ‘models’ and top-down approaches, this may be an issue of some concern.

It would be easy, given the strengths implied by our sample, to assume that effective training needs only to build on the established base of graduate skills and competencies, but this would be to over-simplify the requirements of the sector. More fundamental questions need to be asked in terms of the shape and composition of the workforce before this can become the accepted position. It is not possible to discern from our data whether any workers are the beneficiaries of positive action programmes or community development strategies, and this may be identified as a weakness of design. However, it is clear that further consideration of this issue, and perhaps more detailed and subtle research, is required before any assumptions are left to settle.

In addition to these questions, we recommend that the Working Group also consider rationalising communication systems in the immediate future.

4. Dissemination and communication

There is a clear requirement for an effective, coherent communication system for the sector. In compiling this project, we had to access a series of disparate databases, leading to cross postings and a ‘scatter-gun’ approach which, while it achieved the required sample, was time consuming and inefficient. The process also demonstrates one likely cause of difficulties for training providers in the current climate.

Workers in this sector are likely to be under considerable time pressure, and need to be able to schedule training appropriately. The views of one survey respondent neatly summarise the problems currently perpetuated by a fragmented, ‘cascading’ communication system:

I’m desperate for myself and staff to undertake the Positive Futures training – it was held in the South West (Bristol) this term but at very short notice and not in time for our new community sports coach. Inclusion, youth work, managing challenging behaviour and drug/alcohol awareness would be of great benefit for her role. Can we have another programme please?

Without some form of centralised, national sport development database or communication system, similar scenarios are likely to be repeated in the future.