

**SUSSEX COUNTY
AMATEUR SWIMMING ASSOCIATION**
(Founded 1895)

**Survey of Officials
2016**

Analysis

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Introduction

Following the 2016 County Championships and Age Group Competition the Workforce Co-ordinator and Event Manager commissioned a survey of all officials (both licenced and un-licenced) using the county's officials contact data base. The survey was hosted on line by Survey Monkey and was open for 18 days between 14 March 2015 and 31 March 2016.

The objectives of the survey were to:

- Understand the key issues, motivation and obstacles that surround being an official and volunteering.
- Understand the views of officials about the County Championships and Age Group Competition.
- Gather information that might inform the delivery of future events.

Summary of responses

The format of the questionnaire provided both open and closed responses and, in some cases, multiple choice answers. All responses to closed questions are included as Appendix 1. All responses to open questions are included in Appendix 2.

All known officials in Sussex (97 licenced and 7 un-licenced) were included in the distribution of the survey. Responses were received from 60 (57%) of officials invited to participate ensuring a statistically valid representation. There is anecdotal evidence that not all judge 1/timekeepers were included in the distribution of the survey.

The age of most officials who responded (Q20) was over 50 years (45%) with the largest group 40-49 years (44%). 25% of officials were over 60 years. Only 5 officials under 39 years responded.

Of those who responded to the survey the breakdown of qualifications is as follows:

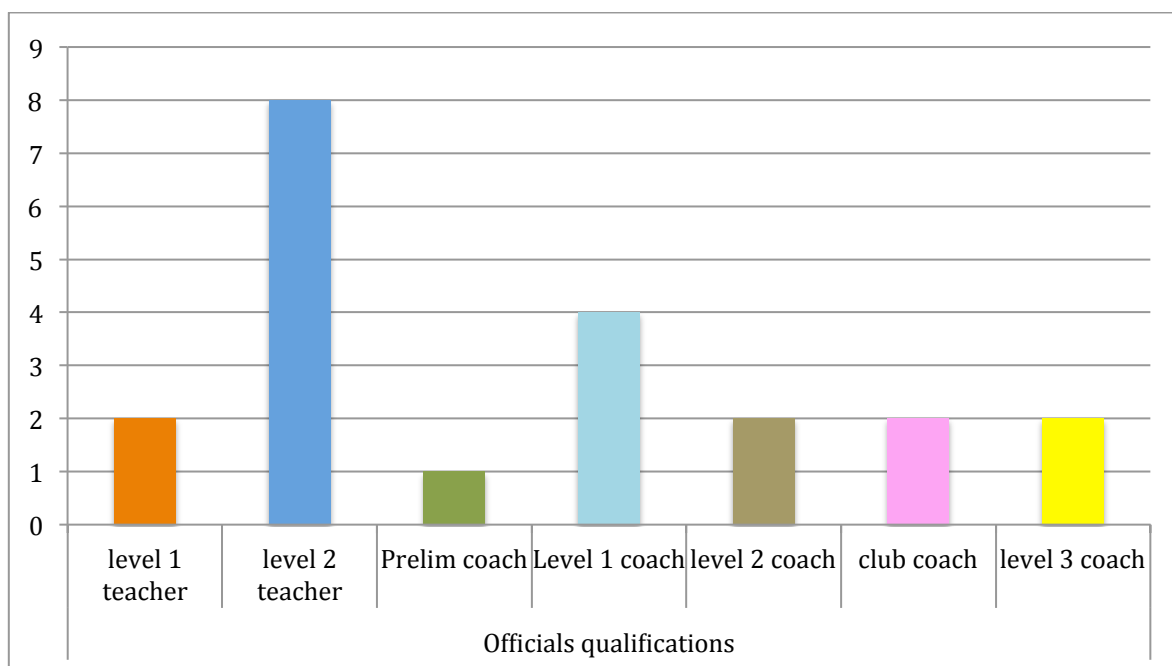
Judge 1/timekeeper	22
Judge 2	17
Judge 2S	15
Referee	6

The following commentary is based around broad topics contained within the questionnaire.

Recruitment:

The recruitment of volunteers (Q2) is vibrant and should provide a sustainable workforce for the foreseeable future. However the continued engagement of officials (Q3) will provide challenges with most respondents suggesting that their volunteering is directly related to their family members remaining in the sport (Q11).

Most respondents (56%) said that they became officials with little or no previous involvement in the sport either as a swimmer (Q4) or as a Teachers/Coaches (Q5). Of all respondents only 40% said they had previous experience as a junior swimmer (Q4) and just 16% had swum continuously into Masters swimming, 56% had no experience of previous competition. Of the 36% of respondents that had formal Teacher/Coach qualifications the breakdown, by most advanced qualification is:



The primary route for recruitment of officials (Q10) is through clubs where 75% of respondents said they originally became involved. This is substantiated through responses to Q11 where 83% of respondents said they were volunteering to help their clubs. However most (91.5%) of the respondents did volunteer outside of their club environment (Q17).

Training:

The level of competencies amongst officials is key to the organisation being able to deliver well run competitions. Similarly personal development is seen by officials as being an important motivator and de-motivator if training is not delivered efficiently.

Officials who had taken training courses during the previous 2 years were asked to comment on the various stages of training. Of all respondents 58% (35) discussed their experience of training.

When asked about the registration element of training 54% of respondents identified it as being either good or very good experience. The quality of material was also recognised as being either good or very good by over 62% of respondents. Less than 10% of respondents felt that the registration process or the quality of material was poor or very poor.

Similarly, the ability of tutors was very well received with 74% saying they were either good or very good, only 8.5% felt they were poor or very poor.

The mentoring process was also well received with 70.5% saying it was good or very good and 14.7% saying it was either poor or very poor.

Of all respondents only 35% suggested that they may seek further training but over 48% saying they would not be taking any further training.

When commenting directly about the training process (Q9) the majority of concerns focussed on the nature of the mentoring with a number of respondents suggesting it should be more formalised and structured. Some respondents were also uncomplimentary about the relationship with senior referees and repeated the comments elsewhere in this analysis.

Retention:

The retention and continued development of officials is essential if the county and clubs are going to be able to provide the officials to run competitions at any level.

When asked whether they would continue to officiate after their family stopped swimming or moved away (Q12) 42% suggested that would not or were not sure. However 32% said they would continue. In the main these people were senior and long standing officials.

Key issues around the motivation for volunteering centred on family relationships with children and partners being involved. No one cited “giving back to the sport” as motivation in closed questions but did make this comment in open questions. However the social aspect of volunteering was identified by 63% of respondents.

When asked to identify issues that demotivated (Q14) officials a high proportion cited “not being valued”, “not feeling part of the team” and “the relationship with senior officials” as being key issues; together these issues amounted to 57% of all responses. The length of days was identified by 45% of respondents.

Similarly when asked what Sussex ASA could do to motivate volunteers 44% cited “valuing their time” as an important motivational factor. Improving the way training is delivered was also identified as was shorter working days with both identified by 47% of respondents. Factors such as the quality of lunches and organised social events were less important.

Although many respondents had high levels of satisfaction and were motivated to volunteer there were a number of factors that were seen as barriers. The most frequent comments were made about the relationship with senior officials and being valued by the organisation. These themes were repeated in response to (Q15) when they were asked what might improve their motivation and again when asked what changes could be introduced to encourage officials to volunteer more often for Sussex County ASA (Q19) and again in Q20 when asked if they had any other comments.

Deeper analysis of responses suggests that there is no pattern to these comments either by qualification, length of time officiating or qualification held. The analysis also suggested that the same respondents did not regularly repeat these concerns.

The 2016 Championships and Age Group competition:

The survey sent to officials contained a series of questions that focussed on the programme for the 2016 Championships and Age Group competition. This question was repeated in a separate survey sent to clubs for distribution to coaches and team managers. These show a generally high level of satisfaction for the programme but a need to review the programming of finals in future events.

Combined responses from both surveys show that the start time was rated very good or good by 58% of respondents, the order of events was rated very good or good by 36% and warm up times rated as very good or good by 38%. The order of events and warm up times were identified as needing review by 21% and 23% respectively.

The timing of finals were rated as very good or good by 28% of all respondents but 54% when considered by just coaches and team managers. 47% of all respondents suggested that the timing of finals needed reviewing or was not good. 40% of coaches and team managers also considered that the timing of finals needed reviewing or was not good.

Similarly the number of breaks were rated as very good or good by 21% of all respondents and by 36% of coaches and team managers only. The number of breaks was considered in need of review or was not good by 36% of all respondents. When analysed separately 36% of coaches and team managers considered that the number of breaks was in need of review or was not good.

The finishing time was welcomed by 88% of all respondents.

Conclusions

Responses from the officials survey carried out following the 2016 Championships and Age Group Competition raise a number of important issues that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency by Sussex County ASA.

- Generally, officials are dedicated and willing to volunteer whenever they are available. However there are a number of factors that need to be considered if this state of harmony is to continue.
- The recruitment and retention of volunteers should be taken seriously and considered alongside the wider activities of engaging clubs and their members. Linkages to the county's development programme should also be encouraged. This is particularly important given the expected high level of loss as swimmers leave the sport and the suggestion by 45% that they will not be seeking further training.
- The motivation for volunteering was mainly extrinsic with supporting family member and clubs regularly identified as key factors.
- The aging workforce should also be an area of concern. With 45% of officials over 50 years and 25% over 60 years the county needs to seriously consider succession planning by introducing younger officials to all aspects of event management.
- The significant number of comments from officials across all ages and qualifications expressing concerns about poor relationships between senior officials and those less qualified and developing their skills is concerning. Unless this is correctly resolved dissatisfaction is likely to grow and have a negative impact on the retention and probable recruitment going forward.
- The training process has been broadly welcomed but there are areas, notably around mentoring, that need to be addressed.
- The specific comments focussing on the 2016 Championships and Age Group competition are combined with responses from a survey sent, in the same timescale, to clubs for completion by coaches and team managers. These show generally high level of satisfaction for the programme but a need to review the programming of finals in future events.