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Stewarding Labour Market

Desk review findings

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1 Background

Stewards play a key role in the safety management operation at football grounds and at other sports and live events. In recent years, the role of stewards as part of safety management has evolved in response to new or growing threats, including terrorism and crowd disorder. Whilst the need for, and demands on stewards are increasing, there is evidence of a growing shortage of stewards on a national level. However, it is currently difficult to get an accurate picture of the stewarding workforce, and whilst there is anecdotal evidence and some data available, these sources are disparate and variable in quality. This research was carried out to develop the evidence base on stewarding and comparable security roles in football and the wider events sector.

The main objective is to provide a detailed description of the labour market for stewarding and event personnel, including short, medium and long-term trends. Research questions centred on 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

In order to address the research objective, we conducted a desk-based review of existing data sources along with qualitative interviews with senior stakeholders from across the sports and live events industry.

The desk review included published data sets and grey literature sourced through systematic database searches, stakeholder recommendations and web searches. Seventeen studies were included in the final review.

This report summarises the key findings from the desk review. The findings from the interviews and a combined summary of findings from both the desk review and interviews are contained in separate reports (a slide deck and short summary report).

2 Key findings

The findings presented below are structured according to the key research questions.

Q.1 What is the population of stewards/event personnel available to support: football in England and Wales; sport in the UK; and, the wider live events sector in the UK?

The *Stewarding Review* discussion paper (Kay, 2019) explains that the total number of available stewards in the UK is unknown, as stewards are not aligned to any single national body. Estimates of the total number of stewards in the Premier League and English football range from approximately 12,000 to 25,000. However, these are based on crude estimates of the number of clubs multiplied by the number of stewards each club requires on match day. The evidence reviewed did not point to the number of stewards available to support other sport and the wider live events sector. Although Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence holder demographic data (GOV.UK, 2022a) reports 295,771 active door supervision SIA licence holders, there is no data on how many of these are available to work in the sports and events sector, and it does not account for individuals available to steward who do not have a SIA licence.

Q.2 What are the different supplier channels that make up the available population?

Documents suggest that although some Premier League football clubs have in recent years started to recruit their own, in-house stewards, a large proportion of stewards are recruited via agencies. The *Stewarding Review* discussion paper (Kay, 2019) reports that 20 of the 92 Premier League and English football clubs have in-house stewards. The majority of those 20 are Premier League clubs, while the remaining 72 rely on agency staff. As the clubs that use some in-house staff tend to be Premier League, and therefore require higher numbers of stewards for each fixture, they also tend to recruit similar numbers of agency staff to meet the required quota. Concerns are raised in multiple sources (Kay, 2019; UK Crowd Management Association (UKCMA), 2021c) that agency staff are not as well trained, experienced, or able to interact with fans in as friendly and constructive a manner as in-house staff. There are also concerns that, when agencies struggle to find enough stewards for match days, less suitable staff are supplied. Moreover, agencies subcontract to other agencies to try to generate a sufficient number of stewards for match days.

Q.3 What is driving the current shortfall and how is this expected to change over the next six months?

Several drivers of the current shortfall of stewards are identified in the literature, namely:

The Covid-19 pandemic

During lockdowns when live events were not allowed to take place and football fixtures took place 'behind closed doors', with no work available to stewards, many sourced alternative jobs. These alternative roles became preferred over stewarding, resulting in a large proportion of the workforce choosing not to return to stewarding when the sports and live events sector re-opened (SIA, 2021a). An additional impact of the pandemic was that an unprecedented number (estimated as c.5,000 per day in the letter to the Prime Minister from the Night Time Industries Association et al, 2021) of stewards and SIA personnel were required to provide direct or indirect support to the UK government, taking them away from traditional roles (UKCMA, 2021b).

Respondents to a SIA survey (2021b) reported that while events security had been seriously affected by the pandemic, deployments increased significantly for other sectors (e.g. 'Government and Business and Industry', and healthcare security). Similarly, a UKCMA member survey in December 2020 found that 40% of steward supply agencies had diversified to areas such as supermarkets, hospitals, public space management, transport and care homes, as well as vaccination and testing centres. The report claims that pay was better in such areas and stewards were unlikely to return to the sport and live events sector as a result. Furthermore, due to COVID-19 mitigations, many events have been stacked towards later dates into the summer of 2022 to give them a better chance of taking place. When added to events of national significance, such as the Queen's Jubilee in 2022, it is predicted that the demand for stewards, and resulting shortfall, will be intensified over the next 6 months. *The Impending Threats to Public Safety* letter (UKCMA and the Football Safety Officers Association (FSOA), 2021d) added that stewards are unwilling to return to stewarding due to concerns around contracting COVID-19 itself, and will not return until the risk of the virus has reduced.

The nature of the steward role

Factors that are more intrinsic to the steward role that have contributed to challenges with recruitment and retention include low pay, unsociable hours, irregular and low number of working hours, job insecurity, high levels of physical and verbal abuse towards stewards, training costs and the SIA licence application fee (SIA, 2021a). A 2021 report from the SIA states that pay rates for both stewards and SIA licence holders are approximately £10-£12 an hour, which is unchanged since 2006. This collection of factors is considered to have led to the stewarding and SIA personnel roles being considered as a temporary stopgap before moving on to other, more attractive, longer-term career roles (UKCMA, 2021b).

High training costs and new training requirements

The UKCMA's *Industry Challenges and Ambitions* report (UKCMA, 2021b) highlights that for a part time role, with an average of 12 working hours per week, training in crowd management becomes disproportionately costly for agencies or employers to provide. UKCMA members reported concerns that, with potential outcomes of new Protect Duty legislation and the Manchester Arena Inquiry, and changes to SIA training and Level 2 Spectator Safety award, the increased training requirements broaden the responsibilities of a steward but threaten the commercial viability of agencies that strive to supply stewards at competitive prices. Furthermore, set against the context of low pay and inconsistent work opportunities, it is feared that increased training costs and requirements will deter individuals further from taking on a stewarding role.

Immigration factors

Whether due to Brexit and/or the COVID-19 pandemic, the literature suggests many stewards from overseas left the UK in recent years and have not returned.

Lack of financial support for stewarding role

The *Stewarding Review* discussion paper (Kay, 2019) highlights the minimum wage policy for stewards among football clubs, with many clubs unwilling to pay for stewards to attend Continuing Professional Development or refresher training outside of match days. Lower league clubs in particular have limited resources allocated for stewarding, so rely on agencies to provide training and quality checks. This unwillingness to pay any more than the minimum for stewarding is perceived to be linked to a perception among football clubs that stewarding is not worth investing in.

Increased demand

In addition to the shorter-term increase in demand caused by COVID-19 restrictions easing as discussed above, demands have been placed on football clubs to increase

the number of stewards at fixtures due to changes in policing policy, which have resulted in the police reducing their match day presence (Kay, 2019).

Q.4 What data is available on the education training, qualifications and experience of the available pool?

The *Stewarding Review* (Kay, 2019) identifies two parallel training processes of: SIA door supervisor certificates; and Spectator Safety National Occupational Standards, which are competency-based qualifications. It reports that the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) has been working with awarding organisations to agree that those with the door supervisor SIA qualification can use it to gain credits towards the spectator safety qualification. However, those with the spectator safety qualification are not able to use that to gain credits towards their door supervisor qualification. The review explains that the average steward will receive training from various providers, including agencies and clubs, and trainers will provide training to multiple different agencies, clubs and individual stewards. These 'many-to-many relationships' are considered to lead to an uncoordinated training delivery system, with scope for inconsistent quality of training delivery and content, and therefore competence. Further, it is claimed that clubs provide few quality checks on training providers, and 'many' carry out no or cursory checks on the precise identity and qualifications of match-day stewards, especially when employing agency-sourced staff.

This document review found numerous job adverts¹ for steward roles from agencies which did not demand that applicants have any relevant experience or qualifications. Rather, agencies sought individuals with soft skills such as being approachable, confident, willing to learn, reliable and punctual. Some of these job roles require candidates to carry out tasks such as monitoring access points, ticket validation, reporting and recording details of irregularities and incidents, managing safety and security processes, monitoring and controlling crowds, preventing unlawful entry into venues, ensuring safe entry and exit of crowds, and managing conflict. And yet, there was no apparent requirement for candidates to have the spectator safety qualification or a SIA licence. However, there were also jobs available at a higher level in the sector, such as for a crowd safety officer at a football club. This type of role required the candidate to have a Level 4 qualification in event safety management, was full time with a permanent contract, and included managerial and strategic responsibilities.

The *Impending threats to public safety* letter (UKCMA and FSOA, 2021d) highlights the challenges with tracking the steward workforce due to a high proportion of stewards being temporary, casual or unregistered workers. Notwithstanding this lack of robust data, UKCMA survey respondents reported a lack of suitably trained and experienced stewards as a concern. Factors which are considered to contribute to this lack of education, training, qualifications and experience of the available pool include:

- **Increased training requirements and costs:** In 2021, SIA introduced new requirements for those applying for, or renewing, a door supervisor or security guard licence (SIA, 2021a). These new requirements include having first aid training and holding one of the newer, updated SIA qualifications (updated qualifications were introduced in April 2021) or undertaking a 'top-up' qualification where applicants hold one of the older qualifications. A new Certificate in Spectator Safety was also released in February 2021. The UKCMA's *Industry Challenges and Ambitions* report (UKCMA, 2021b) claims that the funding available for this certificate is nearly £1000 per person less than

¹ We reviewed four recruitment websites for job adverts.

the previous qualification, which will negatively impact on the level and quality of training provision and consequently, availability of suitably trained stewards.

- **Lack of regulation:** The UKCMA report *Industry Challenges and Ambitions* (2021b) highlights that the stewarding role is currently unregulated and the burden of responsibility for any due diligence checks falls on the employer
- **COVID-19 pandemic:** The *Impending threats to public safety* letter (UKCMA and FSOA, 2021d) reports that while restrictions have continued through the pandemic and there has been little or no work for stewards, the workforce has been unable to build up recent experience and develop their skills. Moreover, as stewards have left the sector, experience that they once had will be lost, leading to an overall decline in standards across the industry.
- **Shortfall of stewards and resulting use of subcontracting and agencies to provide workforce:** Due to a lack of available stewards locally, clubs subcontract or use agencies to recruit stewards for fixtures, whose level of experience and training can be very limited. The *Impending threats to public safety* letter (UKCMA and FSOA, 2021d) cites 'many examples' of stewards arriving to work at a club from hundreds of miles away right before kick-off without receiving orientation or briefing. This is a result of the shortfall of stewards, particularly in small geographical areas that have many competing events taking place at the same time.

Q.5 What is the demographic breakdown of the available pool?

The documents reviewed did not contain evidence on the demographics of the available pool of stewards, but only of those with active SIA licences (GOV.UK, 2022a). Those with active SIA licences (approximately two thirds of which are door supervisor licences) are clustered around the 29-43 age group, approximately 90% are male, and two-thirds are British (other key nationalities are Pakistani, Nigerian and Italian).

Q.6 What is the state of the pipeline of new stewards and event personnel being trained?

Data on the uptake of the certificate in spectator safety (SGSA, 2022) showed that between January and December 2021, of 1065 registrations for the level 2 certificate, 259 certificates had been issued. Of 94 registrations for the level 3 certificate, 12 had been issued, and of 36 registrations for the diploma, 1 had been issued.

Applications for the door supervisor SIA licence increased from pre-COVID-19 levels of approximately 9000 per month to 10-12000 per month since September 2020, with a peak in September 2021 of nearly 15000 (GOV.UK, 2022c). The *SIA Sector Profile* reported in July 2021 that the number of Door Supervisor licence applications was the highest it had been in the last ten years.

The UKCMA *Members Areas of Concern* (2021a) report claims that the level of uncertainty around events, with detailed information only made available at short notice, makes it difficult for companies that supply stewards to plan large deployments of trained staff. See Q.4 for further discussion around the lack of funding available for training.

Q.7 What is the turnover/churn of stewarding staff and where are those who leave the role going?

The *Impending Threats to Public Safety* letter (UKCMA and FSOA, 2021d) claims that stewards have left the role for more secure employment elsewhere in the industry or

have left the industry altogether. The Letter to the Prime Minister (Night Time Industries Association et al, 2021) suggests this includes working in security roles in sectors such as retail or manufacturing, or as part of the COVID-19 response effort. The SIA Sector profile (SIA, 2021a) reports that some of the alternative jobs that individuals with door supervisor SIA licences have moved to include other security guard roles, delivery driver, supermarket staff, online retail (warehouse fulfilment) and bar staff.

Q.8 and Q.9 What are the job destinations for those who have completed training in the past year? Are those in the labour pool undertaking multiple roles?

The documents reviewed had little data on this, but the *Impending Threats to Public Safety* letter (UKCMA and FSOA, 2021d) claims that stewards often work part time for multiple companies, and work at both sports and wider events. Similarly, the *Stewarding Review* discussion paper (Kay, 2019) reports that the average steward works for several different clubs or events and takes work from several different agencies. However, a July – September 2021 survey of SIA licence applicants (SIA 2021c) found that of the 2,359 respondents, 61% were working or planning to work in a ‘public facing role’ (e.g. retail), 13.9% in ‘events and festivals’, and 9.2% in ‘pubs and clubs’. Of the 15.9% of respondents who answered ‘Other’, none mentioned work at stadiums or sports matches. See also response to Q.7 for further discussion of alternative roles stewards have moved to.

Q.10 Are there ‘active’ and ‘dormant’ stewarding populations and if so, can these be quantified?

The *Impending Threats to Public Safety* letter (UKCMA and FSOA, 2021d) explains that the SIA licence register does not show which of the licence holders are ‘active’ or are still resident in the UK. The letter to the Prime Minister (Night Time Industries Association et al, 2021) emphasises that despite the apparent record number of SIA licence holders, it is a question of usage, not of licence numbers. The UKCMA *Industry Challenges and Ambitions* report (2021a) states that although the actual number of licence holders exceeds 430,000, up to 60,000 (14%) of those may be holding more than one licence. Additionally, it reports that a proportion of these licences are held by non-frontline operatives, and the biggest uncertainty is how many of those licences will remain active during their three-year tenure.

Q.11 What data is there on the underlying reasons for ‘dormant’ stewards?

Although the documents contained no information on the causes of ‘dormant’ stewards per se, see response to Q.3 for discussion of potential reasons for the shortfall of stewards.

Q.12 What data is there on pay/reward for steward/event personnel across the live events sector?

Steward jobs advertised on recruitment websites (including Joble, Reed, Totaljobs and Uk.talent.com) tend to advertise a pay rate of approximately £9-£10 per hour, which is the same for those with SIA licences as it is for unqualified stewarding roles. The *Stewarding Review* discussion paper (Kay, 2019) reports that most football clubs pay minimum wage for stewards, although some pay more for stewards in more senior roles. It claims:

Rates of pay are reported as the single greatest factor affecting recruitment and retention, despite the minimum wage policy being set by the clubs themselves.

The UKCMA's Members Areas of Concern (2021a) report claims that the industry is 'pushed towards the floor on charge rate' and organisers are prioritising costs before quality during this period of economic recovery. Concerns raised by members included: *The expectations of event organisers for a high level of safety and security service delivered by staff that they will barely pay the Living Wage for. Complete disconnect.*

Further, there are reports that the industry is undermined by unlicensed pop-up security companies paying stewards cash. In addition, the UKCMA's *Bank Holiday Weekend Survey Results* (2021c) reports that the night time economy and large festivals were increasing rates of pay to poach staff away from pre-booked work over the bank holiday weekend.

Q.13 How robust is the data and what assumptions have been made?

The most robust quantitative data on workforce demographics and number of stewards available relates to SIA licence holders only, rather than the wider pool of individuals available to work as stewards without a SIA licence. Furthermore, SIA licence holders includes not only those with door supervision licences (of all types of licence holder this group is most likely to work in stewarding roles), but other types of licence holders, including those who work in vehicle immobilisation and close security roles. The UKCMA *Members Areas of Concern* report (UKCMA, 2021a) is based on a survey of 45 respondents, and the UKCMA *Bank Holiday Weekend Survey Results* (UKCMA, 2021c) included only 8 respondents, and therefore is more useful as a source of qualitative data than quantitative analysis. The *Stewarding Review* discussion paper (Kay, 2019) is based on consultation with a wide range of stakeholders but focuses on the football sector only, and, written in 2019, provides a pre-pandemic perspective. Perhaps the most pertinent data challenge is the lack of comprehensive data on the stewarding workforce as a single entity, with no national register for stewards, and much of the workforce comprising of temporary workers on casual contracts. Indeed, the *Stewarding Review* discussion paper (Kay, 2019) recommends the development of a national stewards database to understand how many stewards there are, provide a mechanism to communicate with the workforce directly, check their competence, training and eligibility for duties, and provide incentives.

Appendix A. Desk review sources

GOV.UK, (updated January 2022a), *Statistical data set: SIA licence holders*, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/sia-licence-holders>

GOV.UK (2022b), *Changes to the training you need for an SIA licence*; available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/changes-to-the-training-you-need-for-an-sia-licence>

GOV.UK (2022c), *SIA licence applications*, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/sia-licence-applications>

joble.org; available at: [Joble - Steward](#); [Joble - Match Day Stewards](#)

Kay, P. (2019), *Stewarding Review, Challenges and Opportunities - Discussion Paper - Premier League and English Football*

Night Time Industries Association, UKCMA, UK Door Security Association (2021), *Letter to the Prime Minister*, 15th July 2021

reed.co.uk, available at: <https://www.reed.co.uk/jobs/steward/45340753?source=searchResults&filter=%2fjobs%2fevent-steward-jobs>

SGSA (2022), *Data on uptake of new spectator safety qualification 1st Jan 2021 to 1st Dec 2021*

SIA (2021a), *Sector Profile: recruitment and retention in the door supervision sector*, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recruitment-and-retention-in-the-door-supervision-sector>

SIA (2021b), *Covid Lockdown Surveys*

SIA (2021c) *Survey of licence applicants*

Totaljobs.com; available at: https://www.totaljobs.com/job/event-safety-steward/carlisle-support-services-job96062115?WT.mc_id=A_RE_BTSPPC_MP3a_C41_18_TJ; <https://www.totaljobs.com/job/football-steward/buildstaff-job96264531>

UKCMA (2021a), *UKCMA Members Areas of Concern*

UKCMA (2021b), *UKMA Industry Challenges and Ambitions*

UKCMA (2021c), *UKCMA Bank Holiday Weekend Survey Results*

UKCMA and FSOA (2021d) *Letter to SIA and SGSA from UKCMA and FSOA re. Impending Threats to Public Safety – Security/Stewarding Staff Shortages*, 1st March 2021

Uk.talent.com, available at: <https://uk.talent.com/salary?job=event+steward>