

## 2012 British Athletics Facts

### ABAC Fact File 19

#### **An analysis of club membership for participants at the English Schools Athletic Championships**

##### **Background.**

Government plans and funding for sport are implemented over four year cycles. In each period targets are set and individual sports produce plans and requests for grant aid to meet their targets. The new four year cycle commences in April 2013 and drastic changes are planned for school sport. At the centre of the new initiative is the proposal to provide £100 million per year to secondary schools for sport development. Part of the plan is to offer every one of the 4000 secondary schools in England a site based Community Sports Club with a direct link to one or more sports NGB's depending on the local clubs in the area.

As there are only c200 track and field clubs operating in England each club theoretically should develop ties with on average 20 secondary schools. It has been claimed that many young athletes competing in the English Schools Championships do not belong to clubs and therefore a potential shortage of clubs and coaches should not affect the planned expansion in young athlete numbers nor their development and retention. ABAC has commissioned Rob Whittingham to produce the facts.

##### **English Schools Championships 2012**

The total number of athletes at the 2012 English Schools Championships in 2012 was 1592. Of these only 56 or 3.5% were not members of an athletic club.

The breakdown by gender and age shows that young men are less likely to be club members.

|          | Total/non Club (%) |
|----------|--------------------|
| U19Men   | 239/2 (0.8%)       |
| U17Men   | 329/5 (1.5%)       |
| U15Men   | 289/37 (12.8%)     |
| U19Women | 230/1 (0.4%)       |
| U17Women | 2291/1 (0.3%)      |
| U15Women | 239/2 (4.7%)       |

##### **Retention 14-24 year olds**

The above analysis shows how important club membership and competition is for aspiring young athletes. Sport England's funding for the next four year cycle is heavily weighted towards increasing the numbers of 14 to 24 year old sports people and retaining them. Clubs are the only local organisation able to cater with this whole age group. Indeed schools only cover about 40% of this spectrum. So it will be for clubs to provide the missing link.

##### **Problems ahead**

But there is no plan to help grass roots track and field clubs which are actually in decline. Clearly this is a topic which will need to be addressed if athletics is to do well in comparison to other sports in the four years ahead.