

2013 British Athletics Facts

ABAC Fact File 21

The number of Officials licensed

Background. Neither track and field, nor extra stadia events, could take place without the support of volunteer officials. In the interests of health and safety and to maintain proper standards officials need to be trained for their specialist roles. Officials are licensed by British Athletics (formally UKA Ltd) for a three year period and are CRB/DBS checked.

Officials numbers. There is little information in the public domain about the number of officials qualified to manage athletic meetings. Anecdotally 4000 is the figure generally accepted as the minimum needed to run all the events and fixtures taking place on a busy summer's day.

ABAC has lodged an FOI request with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) asking for the number of athletics officials submitted for checking by UKA/British Athletics over the last three years. Only officials cleared in the last three years will be licensed to officiate in 2013. Any officials licensed before 2010 and who have not been DBS checked since will not have a valid licence. The numbers checked by DBS are as follows.

2010 - 260

2011 - 683

2012 - 431

There are therefore just **1374** licensed officials available for the 2013 season.

Not all of these will be available for every week and in reality the pool available on any day will be around **1000**.

Comments. Licensed officials are covered for insurance purposes by the sports NGB. Recently officials have been asked to show they had attended Health and Safety courses. Those who had not were instructed to go on a suitable course in order to maintain their licence.

Apart from the most prestigious meetings there is a dearth of officials. Many meeting organisers inevitably need to call on previously qualified retired officials and untrained volunteers to help out. This of course raises all sorts of health and safety and insurance issues.

We note that in order to function at all, T and F leagues allow unqualified (and unchecked) helpers to officiate. For field events, helpers must work under the direct supervision of qualified officials. Soon the number of qualified officials will fall below the critical levels needed and meetings will need to be cancelled.

It is time that the question of officials numbers and training is given greater priority by the sport. One of the Olympic Legacy hopes was that vast quantities of volunteers would get involved with grass roots clubs and boost the pool of officials. There are few signs that this is happening.