

BRITISH FENCING



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2019 - MARCH 2020

BRITISH FENCING ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

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1. DIRECTORS' REPORT

For much of the year ending March 2020, British Fencing (BF) continued to make progress on our strategic objectives, which we report on below for our members, funding partners and stakeholders. However, it is important to acknowledge that our operating environment significantly changed because of Covid-19 in March 2020 and our focus naturally changed to supporting and protecting our sport and members. As we emerge from this, the Directors do expect that our strategic objectives will remain broadly intact.

Our vision is for a strong, successful, and sustainable fencing community with a mission to inspire and enable people to start, stay and succeed in fencing underpinned by our core values of honesty, respect, and excellence.

Our strategic objectives remain unchanged:

- A pathway to International success
- A stronger, empowered community of 30,000 fencers, volunteers, coaches and supporters
- Accessible inclusive swordplay opportunities delivered via partnership programmes
- A sustainable future supported by high quality governance and infrastructure that is financially resilient
- Maximise the wider benefits of fencing and the positive impact it can have on people's lives

To deliver our objectives the Board prioritises and monitors, through agreed performance indicators, seven strategic areas:

1. Leadership, Culture and Governance

The Board believes it is important to lead by example furthering the BF values of Honesty, Respect and Excellence. We have continued to provide transparency through updates to members throughout the year and to support the BF executive team. Board members remain involved in many aspects of our sport on a volunteer basis, allowing interaction with the wider community but also providing 'real life' input and feedback to Board decisions.

The Board is pleased to report that BF continues to comply with all aspects of the UK Code for Sports Governance. It remains our aim to be a well-run National Governing Body conforming to best practices according to this code.

There were no changes to the membership of the Board of British Fencing in 2019-20.

2. Sustainability and Core Services

Financial sustainability remains important to us and our aim is to set and meet a broadly balanced budget each year. Of course, if we feel it is necessary to invest in important activities that might result in a temporary deficit, we will consider this as we have a reasonably strong reserves position.

The Board authorised a budgeted deficit of £3,241 for 2019-20 and we achieved a small surplus of £1,328 through tight management of expenditure to achieve the best value we can for members. The Board continues to monitor financial management and risk through the AGRC chaired by John Troiano.

Our strategy to increase commercial revenues remains. These activities, mainly covering Coach Education and licensing of the BF brand have now produced a reasonable surplus in 2019-20, as well as an exciting pipeline of new license offerings. Any surplus helps us to support our core activity in supporting and growing the sport of fencing.

From March 2020, BF continued to deliver adapted services to members and stakeholders in accordance with Government advice.

The Board continues to monitor the impact of the pandemic on the operations of the company, its members, partners, stakeholders and on the wider society, ensuring that both resources and processes are in place to best mitigate any disruption to operations.

The Board anticipate that income will be impacted and that reserves will be sufficient to cover resulting deficits in 2021-22.

3. Membership & Club Support

The Board is united in believing that all active fencers should be members of BF – we are after all fighting together for fencing. Membership income is vital to us building a financially resilient organisation that can deliver better services to members and clubs.

Membership income for the year came in at £414,755 (compared to £415,352 in 2018-19). £154,934 of this was paid on to the Home Country Associations (compared to £155,611 in 2018-19) leaving £259,821 available to BF to support delivery of those services.

England Fencing continue to fund a Development Officer for Clubs and Regions providing valuable support in the absence of public funding to support this area.

4. GBR Athlete Support & Development

After last year's effort in creating a structure to administer and support Senior athletes to represent GBR, a significant focus this year has been on our Athlete Development Programme, funded by Sport England. This continues to develop with good feedback from fencers and increasing adoption by coaches. It has also been extended to U23s with the intention to expand in the future to incorporate Senior fencers. This continues to be funded by Sport England (£192,000 in 2019-20) and no membership income is allocated to this programme.

We received £140,536 from UK Sport's new Aspiration Fund investment in 2019-20 to assist individual athletes and teams through qualification for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

This year the number of qualified Senior fencers at the Worlds and Europeans increased significantly. At the Worlds, all six weapons were represented and 17 of our fencers reached the qualifying threshold in five weapons (a 70% increase). Marcus Mepstead followed Richard Kruse's success last year with another silver medal at 2019 World Championships in Budapest. Both Marcus and Richard received Medal Support Plan funding from UK Sport during the year.



5. Insight led, participant centred Projects and Programmes

We continue to support some great programmes, majority funded by Sport England, working with partners and stakeholders including London Youth, Maslaha (Muslim Girls Fence) and The Scout Association. These projects continue to make a measurable difference to a range of communities. These underpin our belief that fencing can and should be a sport that is accessible to all, increasing exposure of more people to the benefits of sport and physical activity as well as improved mental wellbeing.

We have a new Chair of the British Fencing Charity this year with extensive fund-raising experience and together with new Board members from last year with experience in this area, we have started to plan how to extend our programmes, with our partners.

6. Events, Competitions and Calendars

We have been consistently improving the financial performance of the BF events portfolio in recent years. Excluding staff time, our event portfolio has not made a loss, which is a big step towards our goal of a delivering a surplus to reinvest in improving our sport. Our licensed event structure is progressing very well and we have a project underway to automate rankings. These will provide a foundation for further improvement and efficiencies in this area.

7. Coaching & Workforce Development

We have delivered more coach education opportunities than ever before - through a combination of BF led delivery and licensed education partners, although the take-up of these opportunities at club level has plateaued this year. We continue to invest in upgrading courses and creating new tools to support existing coaches working in different environments.

Overall the Board is pleased with progress this year and would like to thank all the staff at BF for their hard work. Of course a massive thanks also to the volunteers for their commitment in support of our sport.

1.1 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AS AT MARCH 2020

Paul Abrahams

Caryl Oliver

Thomas Cadman

John Troiano

Janet Campbell

Reedah El-Saie

Anne-Catrin Sallaba

Yashmin Harun

Clare Halsted

Matthias Ossyra

Mark Lyttle (Chair)

Tomas Curran Jones



Mark Lyttle
Chair



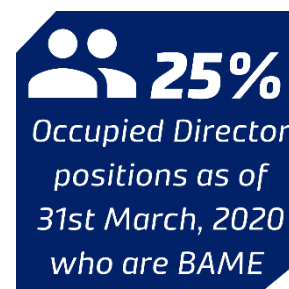
Janet Campbell
Senior Independent Director



Yashmin Harun
Safeguarding Champion

1.2 DIVERSITY PROGRESS STATEMENT AS AT MARCH 2020

As at 31st March 2020, 6/12 Board Directors are women (50%) and 25% of the occupied Director positions are BAME. The Board met its targets in respect of gender diversity (minimum 30% of either gender) and other identified protected diversity characteristics. The Board continues to work towards maintaining gender diversity and increasing representation from young people, BAME and people with disabilities.



As at 31st March 2020, 4/7 members of the BF Executive Team with area management responsibilities were women (57%).

1.3 GOVERNANCE PROGRESS STATEMENT AS AT MARCH 2020

In November 2016 a new Code for Sports Governance was published which sets out a range of requirements that BF and other organisations in sport must meet to be eligible for public funding.

BF became fully compliant in 2017-18. The Board regularly reviews this status. Much of the work to remain compliant is now embedded into the work programme of the Board and policies and activities were reviewed and performed in accordance with the annual Board work programme. There were no areas of outstanding compliance identified.

1.4 BOARD DIRECTOR ATTENDANCE

	Full Board Meetings	Audit, Governance & Risk Committee	Nominations Committee
Paul Abrahams	4/4		4/4
Tom Cadman	3/4	3/4	
Janet Campbell (Senior Independent)	3/4		3/4
Clare Halsted	4/4	4/4	
Mark Lyttle (Chair)	4/4	4/4	4/4
Caryl Oliver	2/4		
Anne-Catrin Sallaba	2/4		2/4
John Troiano	2/4	2/4	
Tomas Curran Jones	3/4		
Matthias Ossyra	3/4	3/4	
Yashmin Harun	2/4		
*Reedah El-Saie	0/4		

*Authorised leave of absence

2. PRESIDENT'S REPORT



As Chair of British Fencing's International Relations Committee (IRC) I worked closely with Georgina Usher and UK Sport's IR representatives regarding our IR strategy and our long-term succession planning. UK Sport funding continues to underpin our IR activities and this enables us to play an international role, working with the FIE and the international fencing community to protect and develop the future of our sport.

I was Head of Delegation at the FIE Annual Congress in Lausanne, Switzerland, in November 2019, and at the EFC Annual Congress in Dusseldorf, Germany, in June 2019, which was followed by the senior European Championships. Georgina Usher, as CEO/General Secretary, attended both events as 2nd Delegate and Pat Aiyenuro attended the EFC Congress as an observer.

I attended the Junior & Cadet World Championships in Torun, Poland, in April 2019 and the Senior World Championships in Budapest, Hungary, in July 2019. I also attended the Wheelchair Fencing World Championships in Seoul, South Korea, in September 2019 as a member of the Directoire Technique.

During the year I participated in two international 'Good Governance' workshops, the first of which was hosted by the Swedish Fencing Federation in Stockholm in September 2019, and the second by the Italian Fencing Federation in Turin in February 2020. I had arranged to host the 3rd such workshop in the UK in March 2020, but this had to be postponed at the eleventh hour due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

I continued as a member of a Commonwealth Fencing Federation Commission which has the specific long-term objective of fencing's re-entry into the Commonwealth Games.

At home I attended a number of events at both domestic and international level and, as always, I had the pleasure of presenting the Honours awards at the BF AGM.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UPDATE

Great Britain continues to have strong representation on the FIE Commissions and Councils. FIE post-holders include Clare Halsted (Medical Commission & Head of the Anti-Doping Programme), Steve Higginson (Chair of the Rules Commission), Janet Huggins (SEMI Commission), Peter Jacobs (Legal Commission), Caryl Oliver (Veterans Council) and Georgina Usher (Women in Fencing Council).

A number of post-holders were selected by the FIE for the major championships:

- Junior & Cadet World Championships in Torun, Poland, April 2019: Clare Halsted participated as FIE Medical Delegate and Anti-Doping Lead, and Georgina Usher as one of the two Safeguarding Officers which were appointed by the FIE for the very first time.
- Senior World Championships in Budapest, Hungary, July 20: Janet Huggins participated as one of the FIE SEMI delegates.

Our FIE post-holders attended the annual Commission & Council meetings in Bucharest, Romania in June 2019, with Steve Higginson, Janet Huggins and Peter Jacobs also attending the FIE Annual Congress in Lausanne.

Steve Higginson, Janet Huggins and Peter Jacobs acted as FIE Supervisor at a number of World Cup foil and epee events – Steve in Tauberbischofsheim, Paris and Dijon, Janet in Tallinn, Estonia and Leszno, Poland and Peter in Bucharest and Budapest.

As always, thanks are due to all our IR representatives, who continue to make their contributions to the world of fencing and its future.



3. CEO'S REPORT



Up until the impact of Covid-19, 2019-20 represented a year of 'business as usual' activity and delivery for the BF executive team, as would be expected for the third year in a funding cycle.

Since March 2019, there were no changes to the size of the executive team consisting of a total of 19 members of which 10 work part time. The executive team continue to be supported by an extended team of hardworking volunteers who serve on various BF workgroups and committees and we remain as ever extremely grateful to them.

We have continued to meet the aims, objectives and targets set out by our funding bodies through delivery of our projects and programmes and are grateful for their support and that of the National Lottery in the work that we do.

Ending the year in lockdown as we did, we recognise more than ever the wider impact of fencing, the work that we do and the opportunities that exist to play a part in positively impacting people's lives.

Throughout the year the UK Sport Aspiration Fund provided financial support and subsidised opportunities to our athletes on the journey to Olympic qualification, whilst also delivering on a programme for these athletes to 'give back' and inspire others. This included opportunities for athletes to inspire others (both within and outside of the fencing community) with their involvement in social impact projects and mentoring activities with the True Athlete Project (TAP).

We are delighted with the progress of our work with the True Athlete Project (TAP), supporting athletes and coaches across the GBR pathway. Our work with TAP is supporting fencers and coaches to create the non-judgemental and safe space where there can be compassion, openness and 'challenge'. Our belief is that we must do more to support the 'whole person' thus enabling them to reach the next level of competitive advantage in performance sport.

This year we have worked on our BF Sport for Social Change Strategy which sets out how we will deliver on the Board objective to 'maximise the wider benefits of fencing and the positive impact it can have on people's lives'. This strategy creates the platform to identify and apply for alternative sources of funding to support and grow the work we do in this area. Our work in this area continues to be highly thought of by partners and stakeholders.

Membership and club numbers remained consistent up until February 2020. Much of the work that we do for our members and clubs is solely funded by membership revenue, with significant expenditure in areas such as insurance and safeguarding. As a sport our largest challenge (or opportunity) remains the numbers of people fencing in the UK uninsured without affiliation which in turn means their clubs, coaches and associated committee members are uninsured by BF. Importantly this revenue loss significantly restricts longer term sustainable investment in athlete, referee, coach, volunteer and club development driven by the needs of the sport, and has the potential to impact our speed and ability to respond to the unfolding Covid-19 situation.

Our commercial activity is therefore an important element of our long term sustainability plans, as we expect to become more reliant on commercial surplus to subsidise membership and club activity. Our commercial income levels were maintained in 2019-20, and with investment in products and services, plus multi-year license agreements we continue to build for a more sustainable future.

As the financial year drew to a close in lockdown we recognise that in the last year of the funding cycle (2020-21) delivery to our funding partners will potentially look very different. The needs of our members and clubs will also change, our event portfolio will be impacted, and commercial opportunities will be more limited. We will continue to work closely with Sport England, UK Sport, our partners, clubs and members as the whole sport sector rises to the challenges of Covid-19.

Across the UK at all levels of the sport (local, regional or national) fencing is supported by dedicated volunteers to whom we are incredibly grateful. We are optimistic that their passion, commitment and energy shown will ensure that fencing will endure.

Diversity note: As at end March 2020, 65% (11/17 - compared to 47%, 9/19 in March 2019) of staff were female. These numbers do not include contracted fencing coaches.



4. BF COMMITTEE REPORTS

4.1 SAFETY COMMITTEE

Chair: Peter Jacobs

<https://www.britishfencing.com/about-us-zone/committees-zone/safety/>

The Committee continued to:

- Advise BF on safety issues.
- Respond to members' queries.
- Remind membership of specific safety related requirements and rules when considered necessary.
- Monitor and investigate incidents and accidents and assess the risks facing those involved in our sport.

The Committee met on February 6th, 2020, at which time it was decided not to make any changes to the BF Safety Guidelines.

The Committee reviewed the FIE requirement to use the second safety strap on contour masks in the UK (it being compulsory at all FIE competitions since Sep 2018). The committee agreed that making this compulsory for domestic fencing is still not justified based on safety data (incidents etc).

The Committee clarified the issue of use of the blade lengths when fencers of different ages meet, for example, a child aged under 14 in a cadet event fencing a 17-year old – i.e., that under the clothing rules children under 14 'should normally' fence with size 3 blades but 17 year olds fence with size 5s. The Committee's view was that participants follow the safety standards of the higher, more stringent category (i.e. in this case the full adult requirements) and that the difference in blade length is not a material safety issue.

The Safety Committee would like to take this opportunity to remind all members to fence in a safe way and with equipment and clothes that fully protect themselves and their opponents. In particular we would remind you again of the danger of badly fitted masks, and the requirement for sabre gloves.

To help ensure that Fencing continues to have one of the best safety records across Olympic sports, the membership is strongly encouraged to report all incidents, accidents and near misses to the Safety Committee. Forms can be found on the BF website:

<https://www.britishfencing.com/policy-zone/medical/>

4.2 RULES COMMITTEE

Chair: Steve Higginson

As the last congress before the Olympics, 2019 is a year in which no proposals from National Federations would be considered. Therefore our one meeting in early November was held to consider the proposals made by the FIE Comité Executif and various of the FIE Commissions.

Here is a summary of the main rule changes affecting fencers agreed by the FIE in December 2019:

The Committee would like to draw members attention to the following FIE rule changes:

- Unwillingness to fence - final modified version of t.124.
- Sabre Blades - m.2, all sabre blades to be maraging from beginning of 2020-21 season
- Epees - m.18.3, wires inside épée guard must pass through two holes in the socket block before being connected to the sockets.
- Gloves (all weapons) - m.25.3, making sure to have any overlapping of zips to be on the correct side and making sure velcro fastening on gloves is upwards.
- Mask Wires - m.32.5, making sure connections between crocodile clips and mask-wires are correct as far as the soldering is concerned.

As ever, the Committee has also answered a number of requests for information and interpretation from members of BF.

FIE chest protectors are now required for BF Cadet, Junior U23 and Senior BF Ranking competitions.

4.3 INTERNATIONAL CADET MANAGEMENT GROUP

Chair: Clare Halsted

This season (Sep 19 to Apr 20) 24 cadet squads competed in nominated European Cadet Circuit events abroad, with Manchester Foil and Camden Sabre again involving many more of our fencers.

Highlights were:

CWF Carolina Stutchbury Bronze Cadet European Championships; 6th Manchester
Amelie Tsang 8th Manchester

GBR 1 4th Poznan (losing by 1 hit in semi-finals)

CMF Oliver Strange 7th Budapest

CWE Isabella Summers 2nd, Patrycja Krzyzaniak 6th, GBR1 1st GBR2 3rd Copenhagen
Sophie Peat 8th Bratislava

CME Alec Brooke 5th Edward Scott-Payne 7th Cadet European Championships
Edward Scott-Payne 3rd, Joseph Walmsley 7th, GBR1 3rd Copenhagen

CWS Bethany Brierley Gold, Lexie Craze Bronze, GBR1 1st, GBR2 2nd Camden

CMS Rory McLellan Silver Samuel Allen 5th Ian Ho 8th, GBR1 2nd, GBR2 3rd Camden

The Cadet and Junior World Championships were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Congratulations to the 17 cadets who had qualified for the GBR team but then had to cope with the huge disappointment of not being able to compete.

Grateful thanks to the 3 volunteer squad managers, Ian Williamson (foil), Maggie Maynard (epee), Margie Mascolino (sabre), the other members of the ICMG and all the BF officials and coaches at the European Championships for supporting our cadets.

4.4 BF HONOURS COMMITTEE

Chair: Peter Jacobs

The process for proposing 2019 honours by the membership closed on May 24th 2019, and the Honours Committee met on 12th June. The awards, which are listed in full at the end of this Annual Report, were announced at the 2019 AGM. Proposals for the next round of BF honours, for the 2020 AGM, were solicited from the membership from the beginning of January 2020.

4.5 ATHELETE REPRESENTATIVES PANEL

Chair: James Honeybone

It has been an exciting and challenging time for the Athlete Rep Panel, with the pressure (both positive and negative!) of an upcoming Olympic Games on the horizon, although this has obviously been replaced with very different challenges and difficulties in more recent times.

When the Athlete Rep Panel was formed we set out our aims and areas of focus, which have progressed as follows:

Improve communication - Within each weapon, the rep has set up a platform (including Whatsapp groups, email chains, regular face to face meetings) to communicate and distribute information given to us, to the senior and relevant fencers. Whilst also using this platform to allow fencers to voice their opinions and concerns to us, for us to then feed this back to BF.

Review Selection Policies - Each rep has engaged with the fencers from their weapon about both draft selection policies and current selection policies. This has allowed us to feedback concerns regarding selection documents and have a more detailed understanding and input on the documents that so relevant to us, the athletes. Being able to have this open dialogue between the athletes and BF has been invaluable for a deeper understanding of the documents and developing trust in the processes behind them.

Improve Athlete Wellbeing - The life of an athlete can be tough mentally at the best of times, but none more so than in an Olympic Cycle. We have been available as a port of call for any athlete experiencing problems or stresses, and have been able to direct them to the best place to help with these issues. Projects that we have been engaged with relating to this include; TAP (mentoring young fencers on the True Athlete Project), The Big White Wall (a UK Sport led initiative for free mental health support), Muslim Girls Fence, and being actively involved in the Black Lives Matter conversation.

Whilst obviously we are in a time of uncertainty, we as Athlete Reps are excited to continue on in our roles moving towards Tokyo 2020(1), and working to overcome whatever challenges we may face.

5. MEMBERSHIP

During the 2019-20 financial year, membership reached a high of 10,886 in November (comparably the highest peak membership in 2017-18 was 10,638)

End of year total individual membership was 10,630, in comparison to the 2018-19 total of 10,717. Club membership ended the year on 436, in comparison to 2018-19 total of 440.

The overall picture of membership for 2019-20 was fairly steady with the start of a decline in March 2020, which we expect to continue in response to the Covid-19 lockdown.

Overall this represented around a 1% decrease in membership. Excluding the Introductory membership which rose year-on-year from 385 to 431, the underlying paid membership total dropped by just over 1% to 10,199.

Analysing the 10199 total in more depth there was an increase in Recreational (138/10%) and Supporter membership (154/33%), but a fall in Starter (45/7%) and Compete (380/5%).

As of 31 March 2020, the auto-renewal rate of all individual memberships was 59% (compared to 62% in March 2019).

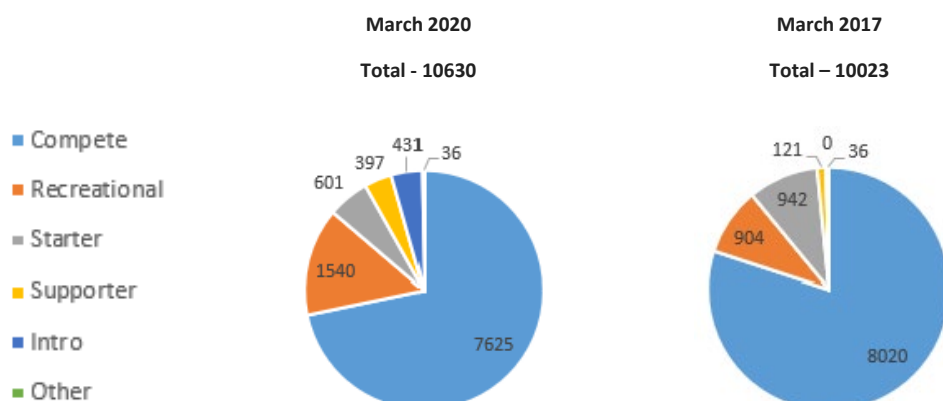
After several years of growth, Membership income stabilised at just under £260k (similar to the 2018-19 figures). The majority of this income continues to be taken up in five expense categories – insurance, The Sword, safeguarding, events and standard office/organisation running costs (rates, utilities and so on).

The lack of membership funds to cover staff cost, support athlete development or drive development of and participation in the sport continues to be of significant concern and leaves BF reliant on external funding from Sport England and UK Sport for these activities.

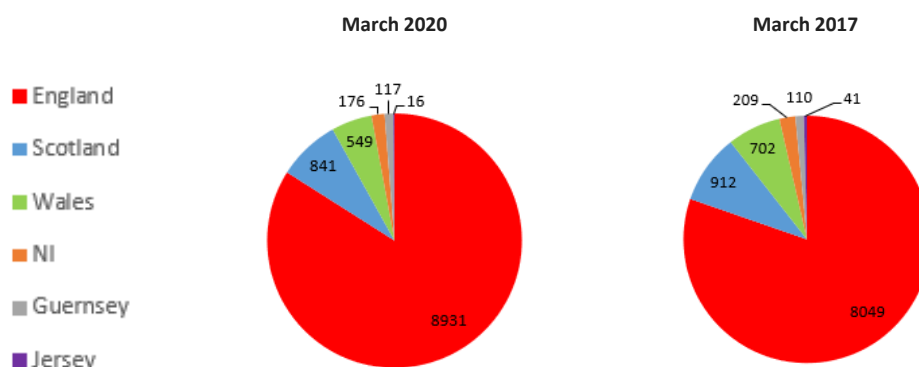
<i>Mar-20</i>	Compete			Recreational		Starter		Supporter		Life	Intro	Grand Total
Home Nation	Full	U14	U20	18+	U18	18+	U18	18+	U18		-	
England	2565	2023	1879	873	349	124	355	303	3	26	431	8931
Scotland	283	154	166	86	56	6	42	44	1	3		841
Wales	181	63	81	98	40	36	21	24	0	5		549
NI	58	44	47	6	7	0	6	6	1	1		176
Guernsey	35	15	17	7	17	2	9	14	0	1		117
Jersey	7	2	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	0		16
Grand Total	3129	2301	2195	1071	469	168	433	392	5	36	431	10630

The following charts show the breakdown of individual membership types and membership distribution across the Home Nations. As year on year movement is gradual, 2017's figures are shown for comparative purposes.

Individual Membership by Type



Individual Membership by Home Nation



6. SAFEGUARDING

British Fencing is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and adults at risk in the sport of fencing across the UK. Creating a safe and positive place to participate in our sport is our greatest responsibility and this commitment sits at the heart of everything that we do.

All sports clubs and sports events should have trained welfare support in place and all BF affiliated clubs must have a welfare officer in place unless they already exist within a formal safeguarding structure (eg a school club exclusively for pupils of that school will have a school Designated Safeguarding Lead). Affiliated clubs that find themselves without a welfare officer must be proactively working with their regional or national welfare officer to ensure there is a suitable welfare structure in place whilst identification and training of a club welfare officer takes place. All BF licensed events must have a welfare officer in place and this is the first point of contact for anyone with welfare concerns at an event.

We must all do more to ensure we have a culture where welfare provision is as much a part of an affiliated club as coaching. Parents and guardians play an important role in checking that fencing clubs have registered coaches and welfare officers.

To support the welfare structure, 10 safeguarding courses were delivered on a needs led basis with almost 150 participants attending over the 2019-20 period. These supplement external courses delivered by bodies such as UK Coaching. Continued advice and support was provided to those operating at regional and home nation level to help them in turn support local club welfare officers. In response to the lockdown in March, BF moved quickly to provide opportunities for welfare officer training to continue (through online modules and live classes held on Zoom) and this will likely be a continued focus area for 2020-21.

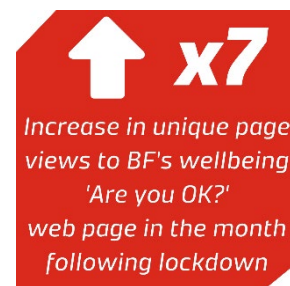


During 2019-20, BF participated in a Sport England funded safeguarding project, along with several other National Governing Bodies (NGBs) including Badminton England and Table Tennis England. As part of the project BF piloted a system and a process which allows NGBs to manage and record safeguarding cases in a consistent manner with expert support from Sport Resolution. The benefits of participating in this pilot included

- Improved case management
- Increased reporting capability
- Access to expert support from Sport Resolution – specifically independent investigations and panels.

An additional outcome is that anonymised data can be exported from all sports involved to provide government and funding bodies with a comprehensive view of safeguarding cases across sport.

Clubs and members have access through the BF website to a growing set of resources around safeguarding and welfare. Early in 2020 as part of our commitment to keep the conversation around wellbeing alive and accessible we launched an 'Are you OK?' webpage, which received a seven fold increase in unique page views (515) in the month following lockdown.



Total numbers of welfare incidents (either reported directly to BF or escalated through the club/regional /home nation structure) remain steady in number.

Most of our cases continue to fall into the poor practice category and are dealt with through training and education.

There has been a fall in the reported number of incidents of poor behaviour in competitive environments (eg aggressive supporting/coaching) and we hope that this continues once competitive fencing resumes. BF published a number of articles and resources on the BF website covering the expectations that we have on those (coaches and parents) supporting young people at events.

The number of incidents involving members of the fencing community that are handled by Statutory Authorities remain steady. We are guided in our response by the authorities, and our initial priorities are typically to take appropriate steps to protect our community, supporting any members (individuals or clubs) affected, whilst investigations take place.

Supported by:



Child Protection in Sport Unit

NSPCC

7. CLUBS & REGIONS (ENGLAND)

In April 2019 Hannah Gavin joined the BF team in the EF funded role of Development Officer – England Clubs and Regions.

The purpose of the role is to support our affiliated regions, clubs and members. Whilst the focus is on England, much of the work done is applicable across the UK.

The Club Digest, launched in March 2018, continues to keep clubs up to date on a quarterly basis. During our 2019-2020 period topics included:

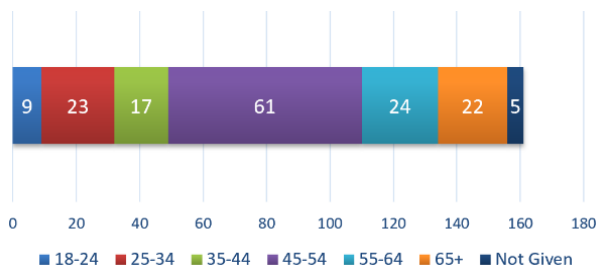
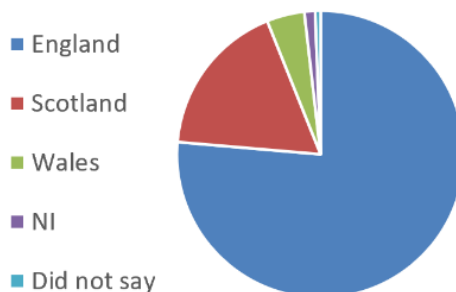
- How to attract and keep volunteers
- Updates to BF Membership and how to keep participants covered
- The GB Cup and how it has evolved since its launch in 2017
- The importance of mental health and links to advice and guidance
- Further information around our social campaigns and how members can get involved

As at March 2020, there are over 600 members signed up to receive the digest. Sign-ups have been increasing steadily since it was introduced, with the open rate sitting just under 50%.

In summer 2019 BF launched a volunteer survey to better understand who donates their time to help our members, what roles they perform and what support they need. The survey ran from August to October and was completed by over 160 individual members from across the UK, 37% of which have been volunteering in fencing for over 10 years.

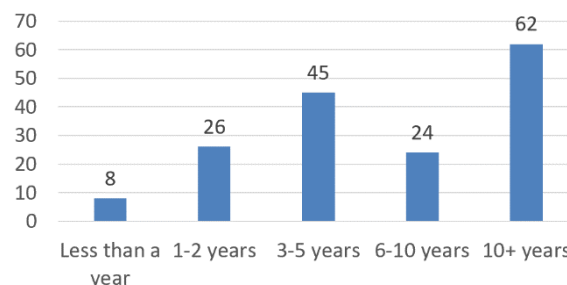
A wide range of ages are involved with 32% being under 35 and 45% of respondents were female.

RESPONDENTS BY HOME COUNTRY



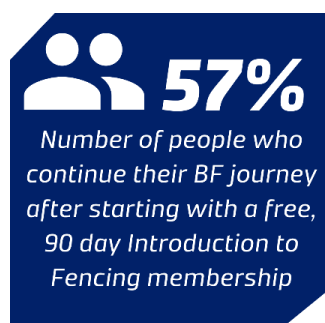
Volunteer roles involve many traditional areas (such as coaching, running competitions, etc) however supporting social media/website is now one of the most common areas which volunteers now get involved with. The most common reason for people to get into volunteering is that they 'want to improve the sport/help people'. Further analysis of the results will provide the basis for more tailored research as we develop a Volunteer Strategy to be used across the sport to better engage and support volunteers.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN VOLUNTEERING?



A focus for club development over the last couple of years has been attracting and retaining new participants, through gaining a better understanding of how the needs of beginners are delivered in the experience they have in the sport.

Our Introduction membership gives BF the opportunity to tailor engagement with new participants, whilst at the same time insuring them to participate. This membership type lasts for 90 days and is free to anyone participating in fencing in an affiliated club. Since the



membership began in 2018 there have been 3,704 individual Introduction memberships registered with 1744 of those being converted into a paid membership option. Feedback from clubs and members useful and invaluable this membership has been in helping them at a grassroot level and this is demonstrated with 57% of users continuing their journey with us. Further qualitative research was commissioned to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons why Introduction member participants were, and maybe more importantly, why they weren't continuing with the sport.

BF took up an opportunity from Sport England to utilise its 'Mystery Visits' tool to gain insight into how we can better support clubs to support members. The programme is delivered in partnership with Right Directions who specialise in collecting and presenting feedback on different interactions with clubs. The first 'visits' took place in February 2020.

Once all the information from the research project and mystery visit programme has been collated and presented, BF will share and use the insights to inform and develop resources for clubs to help build on and improve their current offers to beginners and build on the good work they are doing.

At a regional level, BF has been awarded a Sport England grant to undertake an independent review of Regional Governance practices on behalf of England Fencing and BF.

Improving regional governance and providing clarity around purpose and function will allow Regions, EF and BF to work more closely and effectively together to develop the sport. It will also ensure that our sport is better able to take advantage of public funding opportunities at multiple levels.

On a national front BF is continuing its work with the Sports Membership International Network (formally the NGB forum). This group formed in 2017 has members from over 45 different sporting organisations across the UK and US. Its purpose is to be “a collaborative community network that stimulates conversations and ideas, to maximise membership programmes”. With Hannah Gavin joining the steering group we look forward to further opportunities to share best practice in delivering more to our members.

8. EVENTS

The executive team continue to work towards the BF Board objective to reverse the trend of increasing financial losses made by the events programme.

In accordance with the Board recommendations following the 2018-19 results, the Leon Paul FIE Men's Foil Satellite was dropped from the portfolio after attempts to run it separately from the Eden Cup (as required by the FIE calendar) proved unsustainable.

The GLL Camden International EFC Cadet Sabre Tournament and associated FIE Men's Sabre Satellite was run by a consortium of clubs, supported by local patrons and sponsors.

Therefore, the reduced Events Portfolio for the 2019-20 financial year consisted of:

National Events

- 2019 Senior British Championships (April)
- 2019 British Youth Championships (May)
- 2019 GB Cup (June)
- 2019 Cadet & Junior British Championships (September)
- 2020 British School Team Championships (March)

International Tournaments:

- 2019 FIE Junior Men's and Women's Foil World Cup – *The Eden Cup*
- 2019 EFC U23 Men's and Women's Foil – *The London Cup*

Overall, income from events for the period 2019-20 remained comparable with the previous financial year, with an income of £151,291 compared to £151,832 in 2018-19. Expenditure reduced, at £134,031 (excluding staff costs) for the year, compared to £156,656. Therefore, a surplus of £17,260 is recorded (excluding staff costs). This is a significant improvement on the 2018-19 year where a small deficit (excluding staff costs) was recorded.

The reduction in expenditure can be part attributed to the removal of the EFC Cadet Sabre, FIE Senior Men's Sabre Satellite and Leon Paul Cup (FIE Senior Men's Foil Satellite) from the events portfolio, which in previous years have made a loss.

BF is exploring further opportunities to making additional savings from 2020-21 onwards, such as holding the GB Cup alongside other event weekends. By combining events in larger venues, the intention is to create a better participant and supporter experience for all and reduce associated costs with separate event weekends such as accommodation and travel. Our environmental impact is also reduced through reduction in travel for Staff, Volunteers and Referees.

The combined Eden Cup and EFC Senior/U23 weekend lost slightly more than the budgeted amount of £10K excluding staff costs. Participant numbers overall rose by 30% to 630 from 486 in 2018 and 41% of the entries over the weekend were from women (from 40% in 2018-19).

At National competitions, participant levels remained consistent, with a total of 2,414 entries across all National competitions in 2019-20 compared to 2,555 in 2018-19 (which included two British School Team Championships due to rescheduling of the event in 2018 due to adverse weather).

Senior National saw a decrease of 35 (8%), GB Cup of 16 (13%) and School Teams of 38 (23%) which was offset by increases in British Youth Championships (+4% from 1085 to 1129) and the Cadet and Junior Nationals (+2% from 652 to 666).

Following feedback from the previous year, piste numbers at the British School Team Championships 2020 were reduced and an accreditation system introduced to improve the field of play



experience for fencers. Although reduced piste numbers meant a cap on entry numbers the event received its most positive feedback to date

"It was a pleasure to be at the school teams event...amazing organisation on the day... a smooth running machine. Friendly, efficient. And good at keeping the fencing area safe...all in all hugely impressed with what was probably the best day of School Team Championships that I have ever attended."

The Senior National Championships saw a small decline in entries, in comparison to the 2018 event (-8.35%). BF is looking to increase participation at the Senior Nationals in future years, with the introduction of the 'B' Nationals to future Senior National competitions. Fencers eliminated from the poule stage of the Senior Nationals will be promoted to the B Tableau and compete for the British B Championships on the same day, which will also carry senior ranking points.

As March 2020 progressed it became clear that the next financial year would start very differently to the previous one due to the impact of Covid-19. Senior Nationals, BYC's and GB Cup were all postponed. 2020-21 events will be inevitably and significantly impacted and the BF team will focus efforts on supporting the wider resumption of competitive fencing under government guidance.

BF would like to thank the dedicated team of volunteers who work tirelessly and give up their time to make events happen throughout the year. Referees, Armourers and Event Support staff play a vital role in ensuring the competitions are run to a high, international standard. Without this team of dedicated individuals BF would not be able to deliver the events that we do.



9. SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

Social media and communications activity in 2019-20 built on the innovation and progress made in 2018-19. We continued to increase audience size and engagement across our major communication channels, creating original and interesting content that linked to our website, whilst keeping our audience informed.

Content creation has been supported by additional staff training and a small amount of equipment has been secured to enable the executive team to provide more meaningful content to our fencing communities through the different channels. This 'behind the scenes' access is intended to help members and stakeholders understand more about what BF do whilst also engaging with new and existing online audiences.

Website

Since launching in June 2018, the website continues to be a focus area for improvement. It remains the 'home' of all the information, news and resources from BF. A new, improved events calendar was launched with mobile-friendly appearance that the user can filter by day, week, month or list view. Licensed events that have been approved through Sport80 appear on the new calendar alongside BF training courses and community events. In 2019-20 we recorded 14,294 clicks on event organisers' links, made by 12,233 unique users on the site. In response to Covid-19 in March 2019, a Covid-19 zone was created to provide the latest updates, resources and guidance for our members. Looking forward into 2019-20, a new Athlete Development Programme Zone will be designed and launched.

In 2019-2020 we registered 39,273 page views on www.britishfencing.com/activityfinder of which 9,562 were 'unique page views', representing a 5% increase year on year.

The Sword

The Sword underwent a full rebrand in 2019-20, with a modern new look more in line with the BF brand. In light of continual falling funding, feedback from members and the popularity of the online edition, the publication moved to digital distribution with a small print run for members who are unable to access content online.

Podcast

The Be You. Be Different podcast, first piloted in 2018-19, continued into the 2019-20 year with the completion of Series 1. The interviews covered a broad range of subjects sharing insights from the world of fencing, with the aim of informing our listeners even if they were not fencers themselves.

Episodes included discussions about finance in sport and a guide for parents on how to create a positive sport environment for their children (with Gordon Maclelland from Parents in Sport). We also took a deep dive into our partnership with London Youth, with interviews from John Jones and the coaches at Cray Wanderers Football Club, who described how the partnership gave them the opportunity to successfully deliver fencing to their urban communities.

The podcast also featured an interview with Marcus Mepstead as part of his social impact activity supported by the Aspiration Fund. Marcus shared insights into his Olympic qualification journey and the people who inspire him, just weeks before winning his silver medal at the 2019 World Championships.

Social Media

Our social audience continued to grow in 2019-20. We created Facebook events to follow GBR progress in major events (at all levels from U17 to Veterans) and continued to support our partners and stakeholders by sharing their messages. We increased the amount of video content created, upskilling staff so we can create more content in-house.

In line with general trends in social platform demographics, we saw a reduction in audience growth rate on Facebook, where our audience increased 5.2% from 10,535 at the end of 2018-19 to 11,086 by March 31st, 2020, versus an increase on Instagram where our audience grew from 2,165 at the end of 2018-19 to 3,099 by the end of 2019-20, an increase of 43.7%. We responded with increased activity on Instagram including video, Insta stories and highlights of the European Cadet and Junior Championships. We began to share more on LinkedIn, growing our audience of industry professionals, sharing industry insights and interacting with stakeholders on this platform. Our Twitter rate continued to maintain a high engagement rate of 1.1% against the 2020 median benchmark of 0.045% across all industries (0.066% for sports teams), which illustrates the quality of our fencing specific audience on this platform.

Overall across the five leading social media channels BF had over 27,000 followers, an increase of 8% year on year.

Whilst we continue to produce and publish traditional content (for example our reports on major international events), our insight led 'Be you, Be different' brand message gives us the opportunity to use our content, channels and partnerships to further explore areas such as social and environmental responsibility. Building on industry research, this will help us connect with new members and a younger audience and deepen our awareness of how fencing can have a positive impact in our audience's lives, irrespective of their ability.

10. GBR PROGRAMMES

The focus of the GBR Programmes for 2019-20 was the continued development of an integrated pathway for fencers from cadet (U17) to senior representation, whilst developing a more financially stable programme less reliant on public funding.

In 2019-20 BF has continued to deliver the UK Sport funded Medal Support and Aspiration programmes, the Department of Education, Diploma in Sporting Excellence programme (DiSE) and the Sport England Talent Funding April 19 – March 21 programme as part of the overall BF Athlete Development Programme (ADP).

As part of our person-centred approach to developing athletes, the ADP programme has been working with the True Athlete Project (TAP) an organisation supporting athlete performance with increased awareness of themselves and personal development. (See report Section later).

10.1 MEDAL SUPPORT & ASPIRATION - THE JOURNEY TO TOKYO

The focus for 2019-20 financial year was on maximising the qualification potential of GBR Teams by supporting qualification and medal opportunities for individual athletes most likely to qualify directly or via the zonal qualification route. This was combined with our commitment to deliver on the social impact plan which forms the basis of the Aspiration Funding.

Johnny Davis was appointed as the Olympic Team Manager to provide leadership and support across all weapons to athletes targeting qualification for the Olympics – initially focussing on those athletes with a realistic opportunity to qualify for Tokyo.

Where possible UK Sport funded (Aspiration and Medal Support Plan) activities were aligned to maximise available resources and by working with the BF Charity, the Epee Club and private patrons BF provided a package of support to our top athletes which included:

- A Team Manager, Team Coaches in Foil, Epee and Sabre and a Sports Therapist to support the whole GBR squad at the 2019 European and World Championships
- Team Entry Fees for all weapons competing at 2019 European and World Championships (2019)
- World Cup Team Entry Fees for all weapons over the qualification period
- Grants of £500 to athletes competing in the Men's Foil Team at World Cup Team events over the qualification period. In addition, some funds have been raised to support athletes in the Men's Sabre Team along their qualification journey

In July 2019, Marcus Mepstead won silver at the World Championships in Budapest. This was our second medal in two consecutive years. BF made an application for additional funding based on this result, a comprehensive evidence based training and competition plan and a professional performance support set-up. This resulted in UK Sport confirming a further Medal Support Plan investment of up to £57,264 to support Marcus Mepstead in the lead up to Tokyo 2020.

To be eligible to receive Aspiration funding, BF is required to deliver an agreed social impact plan. This plan demonstrates how athletes benefitting from funding will in return engage and inspire communities both inside and outside of fencing. Throughout the year athletes who have benefitted from Aspiration funding have been involved in community and social engagements including London Youth Projects, the Great Ormond Street Hospital Sports Day and Muslim Girls Fence.

Through BF's partnership with the True Athlete Project (TAP) a mentor training and engagement programme was offered, matching senior funded athletes with aspiring fencers from within the Athlete Development programme (one senior fencer to one development fencer). The programme lasts a full year with sessions taking place approximately every two to three weeks, for a duration of between 30 minutes - 90 minutes.

The outcomes for the Mentors included

- Enrichment through being a positive influence in the life of a young, ambitious athlete.
- Increased sense of meaning from passing on their experiences of the inevitable ups and downs in high level sport.
- Hands-on experience working with coaching and mentoring techniques that can be used in sporting or professional contexts.

BF is looking to continue the mentoring programme by identifying mentors for the 20/21 year.

Looking forward, BF and TAP will be releasing a series of webinars on a range of topics including mindfulness, identity & values and community responsibility, all in the context of performance sport.

The 2019-20 season was stopped in March 2019 due to Covid-19 with all competitions either being cancelled or postponed. Our focus in 2020-21 will be to keep supporting those athletes still on track to qualify for Tokyo through these uncertain times.

Highest World Ranked GBR fencer in each discipline (as at end March 2020)

	Epee	Foil	Sabre
Women's	Susan Sica 72	Kate Beardmore 104	Caitlin Maxwell 122
Men's	Philip Marsh 119	Marcus Mepstead 15	Will Deary 52

BF would like to formally thank all the organisations and individuals who have made all this work possible including UK Sport, the National Lottery, The British Fencing Charity, Epee Club Charity, individual patrons and Leon Paul.

10.2 GBR ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Going into 2019-20, the objective of the Athlete Development Programme (ADP) is to deliver a six-weapon programme through which every GBR athlete aged between 15 and 23 can access development opportunities that support them to maximise their potential. Over time this objective is broadening in scope as we seek to provide further development opportunities for those athletes over 23 still on a pathway to Olympic success.

The ADP is not designed to replace the personal development programmes provided by clubs and personal coaches that existing and aspiring GBR athletes will be following, but to complement, help and support these athletes to make the transition between top level domestic and top level international performance and ultimately become successful senior athletes.

The updated 2021 objectives of the GBR ADP are to:

1. Put in place a sustainable world leading ADP which produces robust and resilient GBR senior athletes

2. Put in place robust pathway performance standards across all six weapons
3. Maximise athlete development opportunities for athletes aged 15-23 through an aligned delivery structure which includes Club, DiSE, GBR Development Centres, GBR Development Camps and Home Country Development programmes at an individual level
4. Align to on one development/performance pathway, connecting the transition stages between Juniors and Seniors
5. Provide opportunities to GBR athletes to support a lifelong and meaningful participation in the fencing community

In 2019-20 we progressed the objectives as follows:

1. Objectives 1 & 4

In 2018-19, work started to define the basis of an end to end athlete development pathway aligned with a formal world leading athlete development model (FTEM). In 2019-20, further work has been undertaken to define each of the stages of the pathway with a focus on the Talent and Elite elements of the FTEM model. Each stage consists of defined pathway components including Behaviour and Commitments, Technical Excellence, Adaptability & Decision Making and Performance Results. These were further developed in conjunction with UK Sport and the English Institute for Sport alongside performance evidence and analysis.

This enables us to focus the opportunities, resources and support available to assist athletes to move to the next level the pathway.

It also creates the platform on which we can build our development programmes and apply for Sport England and UK Sport funding thereby maximising alignment and opportunities for our athletes.

For 2020-2021, work will be undertaken to further align the pathway to senior fencers with a continued focus on the concept of 'dual career' and independent fencers.

FENCING ATHLETE PATHWAY – E2 SAMPLE

ACHIEVING MEDAL SUCCESS IN PEAK INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS SUCH AS SENIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, SENIOR WORLD CUPS/GPS & OLYMPICS

E₂

ELITE ATHLETE
 Achieves a podium performance at (Senior) FIE World Cup, Grand Prix, World Championships or Olympic Games. 'Professional' Athlete Lifestyle. Dedicated to driving excellence in day to day practice in world class environments and FIE Senior Circuit competition to maintain and hone skills and execution. Leading development of own goal focussed programme requirements integrating leading edge technical, tactical, physical, physiological and psychological components. World Class focus on preparation (eg performance analysis and tactical planning) and consistency in delivering quality competitive performances. Ability to execute consistent and accurate performance skills for relevant disciplines. Ability to manage and prioritise sport and vocational commitments to maintain a sport-life balance and lifestyle activities supporting psychological and physical wellbeing. Preparing for a life after sport, including formalised coaching/mentoring opportunities.

PROGRAMMES
 BF PODIUM PROGRAMME

COMPETITION TARGETS
 SENIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, SENIOR WORLD CUPS/GRAND PRIX, OLYMPICS

TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS
 PERFORMANCE CLUBS*, PODIUM SESSIONS, INTERNATIONAL PREPARATION CAMPS*, S&C FACILITIES

ADAPTABILITY & DECISION MAKING
 Independently maintain and update pre-emptive fight strategies to beat every athlete in World Top 32 - includes 3+ alternative tactical scenarios based on online and offline analysis of opponent and own strengths & weakness. Ability to execute strategy during fight and anticipate when to switch tactics, selecting and executing successful actions under pressure. Ability to plan and adapt in fight to referee interpretation. (# win/loss ratio by 1 hit)

PERFORMANCE RESULTS
 FIE World Ranking (Senior top 16), 77% DE wins against top 64 World Ranked opponents and consistent average top 8% finishing position at FIE events

ATHLETE BEHAVIOUR & COMMITMENT
 Level 5 leadership - Building enduring greatness through paradoxical combination of personal humility and professional will.
 Experienced 'CEO' - Role modelling high performance values and culture. Driving, tracking and managing own goal focussed programme and managing those that support it to ensure needs are met. Leading the difficult conversations and comfortable to give and receive +ve and -ve feedback. Managing detailed 4 year financial plans. Demonstrating excellence, commitment to self improvement and professionalism in all areas. Seeking out opportunities for innovation and self-reinvention through changing team members, cultivating relationships with overseas clubs/coaches and relocation abroad.

CONTROL AND DOMINATE DISTANCE
 Ability to creatively evaluate, innovate and adapt to control & dominate distance to effectively execute a successful action at the right time (tempo) at World Class level in high pressure complex competitive situations. (3P model)

TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE
 Ability to utilise a wide range of weapon specific actions against World Class opponents and have a select 3-4 actions (Super Skills) with high proficiency/efficiency/ %age success rate against World Top 16. Excellent understanding of the FIE rules. Ability to plan for and adapt technique to interpretation of different senior circuit referees. (3P model)

ABILITY TO TOLERATE LOAD (MENTAL & PHYSICAL)
 Adherence to adequate training load 2 x quality training per day (10-12 session/wk, 25-35 hrs/wk). Psychologically robust, with sound motor function and maximum fitness to tolerate increasing load in training and competition (i.e. ability to maintain performance over 120-180 mins). Mentally resilient under stress. Actively managing training and competition load to allow for longevity of career.

SUPPORT (COACHES, S&C, BF TEAM, PARENTS)
 Supporting sporting efforts and role modelling BF values and positive sportsmanship. Showing respect to athlete, leadership personnel, coaches, and officials. Promoting athlete autonomy and problem solving. Enabling high performing collaborative partnership between athletes, coaches, clubs and BF. Commitment to supporting athlete to lead and manage relationships and feedback to all support staff in a constructive manner to drive performance. For professional support staff, commitment to own ongoing personal development in elite medal winning space, ability to research, critically review and innovate to gain competitive advantage.

2. Objective 2. Performance Standards

In order to measure progression along the pathway, work continued on defining the qualitative and quantitative standards for the Pathway components.

Work was focused on those pathway components directly linked to performance:

- Behaviour and Commitment
- Adaptability & Decision Making
- (Ability to) Control and Dominate Distance
- Technical Excellence
- Ability to tolerate mental and physical load
- (Consistency of) Performance/Results

Identified quantitative measures include:

- Ratio of fights won by 1 hit to those lost by 1 hit
- Senior World Ranking (for athletes competing on the senior circuit)

- % finishing position, % DE wins against World Ranked Fencers at FIE Competitions (excluding Satellites)
- Hours spent training/week

At cadet and juniors as well as %finish position and DE wins, we are also capturing poule conversion rates and their final fight scores.

The next stage is to continue collating and analysing data (both from our athletes and from identified medal winning international athletes) to provide normative value sets at different stages of the pathway, which will further inform the pathway stages.

Cadet & European Championships 2020

Overall there was an improved performance at the 2020 European Championships in Porec, Croatia. 79% of the fencers made the Direct elimination phase and more (7 vs 5) fencers making L16s or better showing greater success in the Direct Elimination phase of the competition. Significantly all Cadet & Junior Men's Epee squad members made the DE, with the Cadet Men's Epee squad having the best combined results in 10 years (including 2 L8s & 1 L16) along with a personal best L8 by Ben Andrews in Junior Men's Epee. The highlight of the competition was the Bronze medal finish for Carolina Stutchbury in Cadet Women's Foil, losing out to the eventual Gold medallist in the semi-final 15-12. The total number of fencers finishing in the top 10% of the competition doubled from 3 in 2019 to 6 in 2020.

Team World Rankings

Overall 2019-20 was primarily a year of stability with the overall Team Ranking across 6 weapons remaining the same from 2018-19 (12.3), with 1 weapon ranked in the top 8. There are 4 teams ranked in the top 16 and 1 team ranked in the top 20.



3. Objective 3 & 5

Camps

Over the course of the year a series of ADP Camps provided opportunities for athletes to receive high quality coaching, sparring and education opportunities.

Numbers attending camps have steadily increased over the last 12 months (ranging from 73 to 167, with an average of 102 per camp) and the programme is now at capacity. With the expectation that programme athletes attend camps and any future growth in attendance numbers is likely to arise from greater frequency of attendances by the fencers, rather than more fencers.

In line with the intention to provide end to end (U17 to Olympic) development opportunities, the camps now include more Junior (U20) and U23 fencers, with Senior fencers invited where possible. Camps have been run across various locations including Manchester, Nottingham, Rickmansworth and London. They are either multi weapon camps or increasingly due to the size of the cohort single weapon camps.

DiSE

The integrations of the DiSE programme into the ADP has allowed the sharing of cross programme learning. DiSE has maintained its growth in 2019-20 with a cohort of 45 enrolled on the programme and 43 still on the programme from previous intakes. Moving forwards we are moving to provide an on-line learning option, this allowing more contact opportunity with DiSE assessors. It will be expected in 2020-2021 that any eligible fencer already part of the ADP programme will be expected where applicable to sign onto the DiSE programme.

Development Centres

Regional GBR Development Centres were run in Truro and Bath. The centres provided team matches, high quality sparring and sport science support. A third centre was run in London. Driven by the needs of local ADP fencers, they identified a suitable time, and venue where coaching and sparring could take place, with a number of Foil athletes using it as preparation for the European and World Championships. This time limited centre was an effective use of coach and athlete time and is a possible model for the future.

The True Athlete Project

The True Athlete Project has been incorporated into the ADP programme to support improved performance through the use of holistic techniques such as mindfulness. Mindfulness can strengthen our ability to handle high-stress situations and pressure, work with doubt anxiety, help us overcome injuries and stay focused and present in training and competition. Mindfulness practice have been incorporated into ADP Camps working with both fencer and coaches.

"Just a quick note to say what a pleasure it was to work with you over the weekend. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of the new partnership between BF and TAP. This side of the equation has been missing for a while when it comes to the coaches/NGB programmes roles in athletes development in a lot of sports. In my opinion the holistic and wellbeing approach is one that I truly believe is the best approach to produce the best person possible, be that an elite athlete or not.." - ADP Coach

"My son really enjoyed it, particularly the meditation. He thought that was 'really cool,' and is going to try it again before the next camp." – Parent

"TAP has been so helpful. The sessions Sam and the TAP have run at our ADP camps have been so useful and have already helped me out on the piste. His project really reminds and enforces what sports should be about." ADP Fencer

In more practical news John Rees and Jon Salfield joined Chris Galesloot as the ADP weapon leads. These three coaches are now driving the training programmes at ADP camps, based on the developing BF Weapons Framework and the needs of the athletes based on their personal athlete profiles. The coaches are also responsible for building the teams of coaches that deliver at competition, development centres and on the development camps.

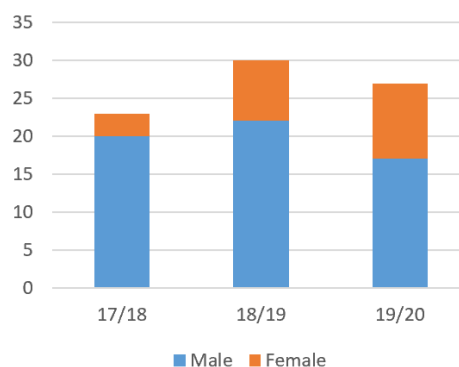
10.3 GBR PERFORMANCE COACH DEVELOPMENT

The key drivers within ADP Coach Development was increasing team cohesion within each weapon team and building the knowledge of the True Athlete Projects interventions, such as mindfulness. The Coach Development approach taken was for the ADP coaches to experience the activities that the fencer undertook and start to work with Sam Parfitt (TAP) to

1. Run these interventions themselves
2. Understand how TAP work connects to performance
3. Embed TAP work them into the culture in 2019-20.

In 2020-21, the project will be delivering a number of training course for ADP Coaches to inculcate the learning. These include a six-week course "In the Zone: Mindfulness for Coaches"

Whilst there remains an under- representation of female coaches at a GBR level, each weapon team has a greater representation. This work is critical to provide the role models to our female fencers.



Year	Foil (m/f)	Epee (m/f)	Sabre (m/f)
17/18	8/2	6/1	6/0
18/19	10/2	4/4	8/2
19/20	7/2	3/5	7/3

11. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

11.1 REFEREE DEVELOPMENT

2019-20 – Domestic Training and Development

Following the successful 2018 pilot of the Level 3 exam (theory, video and practical assessment) further Level 3 exam and practical assessment opportunities were rolled out in 2019-20. Sophie Abrahams, David Fielding and Duncan Morrison successfully passed their Level 3 exams.

The 2018 pilot also identified the need for additional training to prepare Level 2 candidates for Level 3 exams. A referee development event was held on June 21st-22nd 2019 at The David Ross Sports Village, Nottingham for nominated Level 2 referees (a total of 20 referees across the Regions and Home Nations) looking to progress through the new Level 3 referee assessment process within the next 2 seasons. A total of 14 referees attended this exam, along with one referee educator.

A Level 4 referee exam (which is run under the same format and conditions as an FIE referee exam) took place during the Cadet and Junior National Championships (21-22 September 2019) at SportsDock, London. Daniel Vasquez (ESP) and Vilem Madr (CHZ) were the international FIE examiners for the exam. All pathway referees, especially the current EFC C-grade referees were invited to attend this level 4 referee exam as preparation for their FIE exams. A total of 25 referees participated in this exam.

An international refereeing seminar took place in November, led by Martina Ganassin of Italy and the EFC Referee Commission. This was aimed at referees wishing to develop their domestic refereeing abilities, begin the level 3 referee assessment process or who are part of the GBR Referee Pathway Program. There were opportunities to referee the following day at the London Cup U23 Foil competition. A total of 8 referees attended this seminar.

Due to the Covid-19 lockdown the level 3 exams scheduled for the 2019 Senior Nationals in April 2020 were postponed.

The referee working group that reviewed the Level 3 exams process and established the new systems comprised of Adrian Speakman, Julian Rose, Luke Deamer, Chris Lennon, Jen Sancroft, Patrick Jennings, Mike Selig and Peter Huggins. All have worked tirelessly to establish a new system that would best prepare referees for the demands of top domestic refereeing and the international circuit. BF would like to thank the referee working group

for their continued involvement in ensuring the new Level 3 assessment process evolves into a solid working model.

International Qualification & Selection – European Fencing Confederation

Following the completion of the 2019 EFC circuit, two more GBR Referee Pathway Program referees; Noah and Seth Blackmore were awarded an EFC C-grade category licence.

To be awarded an EFC C Grade a referee must achieve a mark of 4 or 5 in a minimum of 5 EFC competitions from an EFC observer within a maximum of 2 seasons. C Grades are awarded at the end of the EFC Cadet season.

The EFC rules also state that referees that fail to achieve a minimum score of 2 in a competition will not be able to referee for the rest of the season. It is therefore important that the referee development pathway and qualifications adequately prepare referees to be successful prior to allocating them to EFC events.

For the 2019-20 fencing season, Adrian Speakman was again selected by the EFC for their Referee Master list from which all European Championship referees are selected. He was subsequently selected to referee at the 2019 Senior European Championships and the 2020 Junior and Cadet and the (now cancelled) 2020 U23 and Senior European Championships.

International Qualification & Selection – International Federation – The FIE

The last set of FIE exams before the Olympics were held in October 2019 in Germany and GBR had two epee candidates entered.

Both Chiara McDermott and Kola Ayanwale successfully passed.

For the 2019-20 season Adrian Speakman was again selected by the FIE for the FIE Referee Master List from which referees are selected for the major FIE events including Senior World Cups, Grand Prix and World Championships. Adrian was selected for a number of World Cups (although many of these were subsequently cancelled).

Stakeholder Funding

Most of the funding to support the development of international level referees comes from the UK Sport International Relations Programme. In 2019-20, training was again focused on GBR candidates on the Referee Pathway Programme who were intending to sit FIE exams in the next 1-3 years. In addition, financial support was made available to existing GBR FIE

qualified referees to further their careers as they seek Grand Prix listing and ultimately Senior World Championship and Olympic selection.

11.2 TEAM MANAGER DEVELOPMENT

With significant delivery of training courses in 2018-19, this season saw the consolidation of the learning with four new Team Managers undertaking the next stage in the development process by travelling internationally with the support of the Lead Performance Team Managers (LPTMs).

11.3 WELFARE DEVELOPMENT

The majority of BF safeguarding courses are run in response to community need. 10 face to face welfare courses were run in the 2019-20 financial year delivering to a total of 149 delegates. Moving forwards the intention is to provide more online training to supplement other delivery methods and increase the overall understanding of welfare across the community.

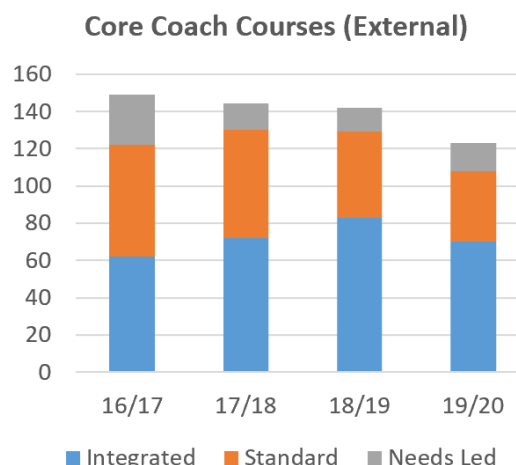
11.4 COACHING DEVELOPMENT

Courses & Resources

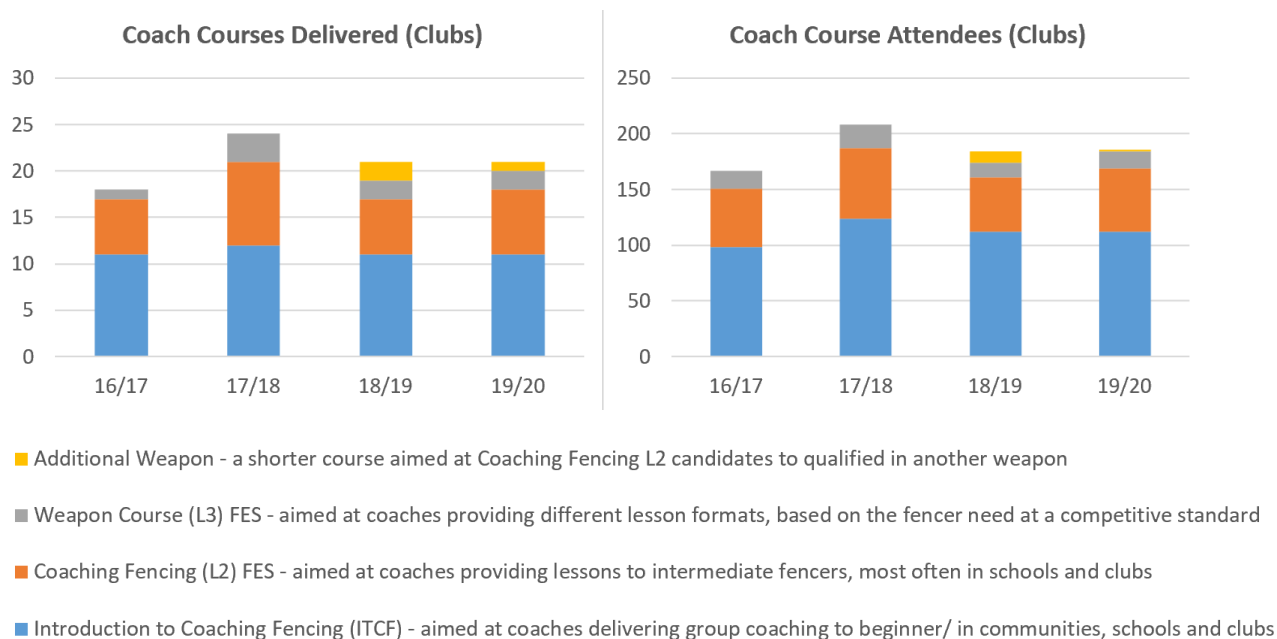
Building on the BF Coaching Framework principle of flexible modules, in 2019-20 the Core Coach has established itself and is under pinning other developmental projects such as Muslim Girls Fence and the Primary School Resource pack.

Course Delivery

The integrated and standard core coach delivery was impacted slightly by Covid-19 in the last quarter of the delivery year. Analysis of the integrated delivery up to that point indicated that less delivery is in part due to better staff retention within organisations resulting in less need for internal training.



2019-2020 figures for coaching courses delivered to our clubs have also been impacted by Covid-19 with a number of courses cancelled in March. This impact will continue into 2020/2021.

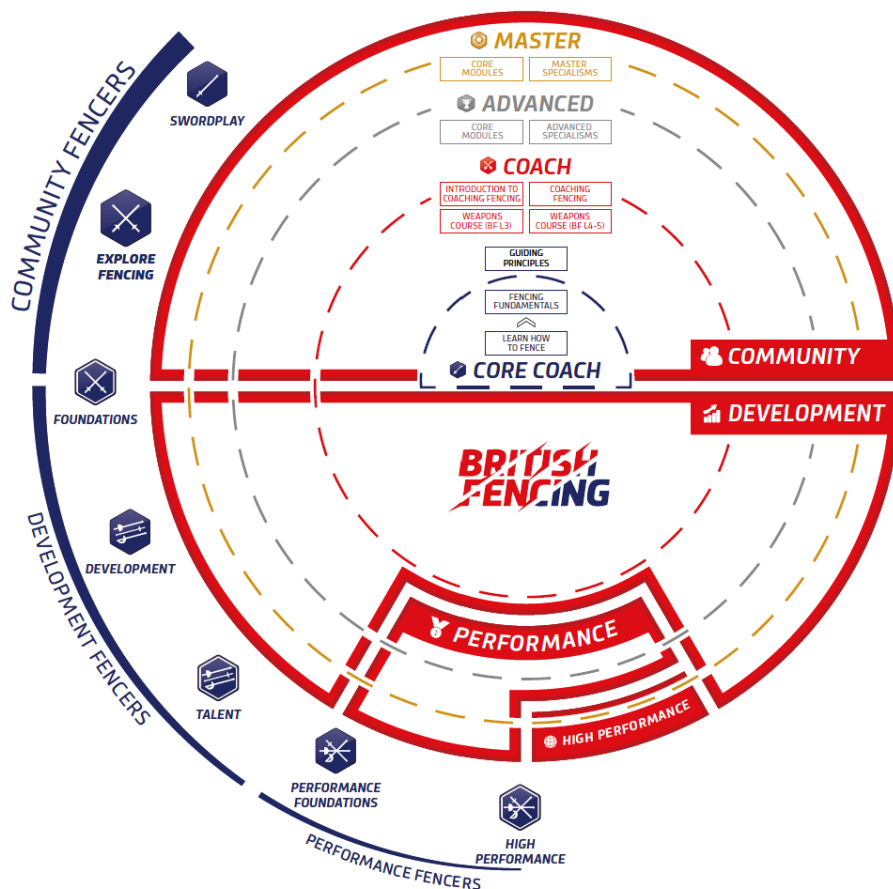


There is lack of transition to weapon specific level 3 courses (WSL3). The anecdotal insights including cultural, working to the minimum standard required rather than being the “best” coach they can become, historic poor development experiences in the sport and fear of judgement, continue to be validated as a barrier.

What is more evident from course observation in 2019/2020 is the jump in delivery standards required between CFL2 and WSL3. Initial indication is that more clarity of the technical delivery standards and the coaching process required at WSL3 standard is needed within the coach community.

Internal Verification and Quality Assurance (IV&AQ) has taken place with 50% of the 2019-20 licensed partners through review and CPD events. IV&AQ took place on 100% of the CFL2 and WSL3 courses. The purpose of this was to develop insight into the coaches understanding of the skill and attributes of advance coaching practice, and the competency of the workforce to deliver content relating to advanced coaching practice. This will inform the delivery of the training of requirement included in the High Performance Coach Development Strategy and Action Plan recommendations.

THE COACH'S JOURNEY



Coach Digest

The Coach Digest is a quarterly newsletter sent to coaches and the mailing list remains at 800 coaches receiving articles on coaching, good news stories and coach course information (including the FIE Coaching Course) and a range of article relating to Coaching for Performance, eg the Coach/Athlete relationship, and performance analysis, The open rate of the coach digest is currently averaging 56%, up slightly (3%) on last year.

Coach Developer Workforce

With use of in-situ development, two new coach developers have joined the delivery team in 2019-20. 28 of our 37 BF Coach Developers delivered one or more courses last year and their knowledge continue to be a strength of the framework. The Quality Assurance process has identified a need to re-visit some areas including the Coach Developer feedback processes.

About the Coach Developer(s) who delivered the course Score (0/10)	17/18	18/19	19/20
Had a good knowledge of the subject matter	9.8	9.8	9.3
Used a range of learning materials	9.2	9.2	8.5
The Coach Developer engaged well with the group	9.5	9.5	8.8
Made good use of examples	9.5	9.8	9.0
Allowed opportunity to discuss topics	9.8	9.5	8.8
Allowed opportunity to contribute and/or learn from other participants	9.8	9.8	9.0
Answered all your questions effectively or agreed a follow up query	9.8	9.8	8.3
Overall	9.5	9.6	8.7

Coaches Register

The number of coaches on the coach register at the end of March 2020 was 668 up from 621 in March 2019. The ratio of male/female coaches was 522/146 representing a 88%/22% split with no significant change from previous year. Work has continued on a comprehensive Coaching Register.

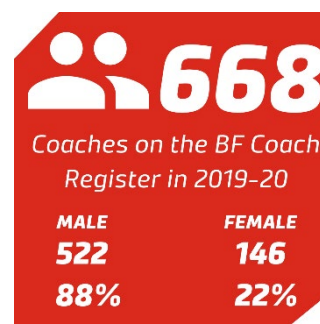
The register recognises the wider role, skills and qualifications of the coach and provides better information

about our trained workforce to our partners and fencing providers. The transition to a web-based register fully powered by the BF membership platform will start in the summer of 2020 with a removal of the current system by the end of 2020.

The current register will show 3 levels of compliance.

1. Fully compliant, meets the criteria
2. A non-conformity, eg a recently expired criterion
3. Non-compliance, a criterion that has expired beyond 3 months

In order to create the best competitive environments for fencers, a Coach Accreditation scheme was piloted at the British Youth Championship and continued at the Cadet & Junior, and Senior Nationals. This scheme allowed registered coaches access to the field of play areas at competition. This initiative was very well received by the fencers and referees and will continue for the foreseeable future.



Coach Accreditation was also employed for those coaches attending international competitions and will continue as the emphasis in coaching moves from minimum operating standards to the professional standards of coaches. Additional minimum standards are now expected from coaches supporting athletes in international competition (such as Coach Clean – UK Anti-doping certification). These additional standards will also be required from any coach applying through BF for an FIE licence which will be required for coaches operating at FIE events.

Performance Coach Development

2019-20 has seen a consolidation of the coaches based on the 2018-19 review. Coaching teams are more settled and are providing greater consistency at camps and competitions. The coaches have spent developmental time building an understanding of the True Athlete Project and the underpinning concepts of mindfulness, as these are integrated into the Athlete Development Programme (ADP)

Further Development Opportunities will be provided on-line with a number of interactive workshops, these include:

- Harnessing the Power of Athlete Identity and Values
- Compassionate Communications
- The importance of Love and Compassion for Athlete Performance
- Mindfulness for Coaches

Some of these opportunities will be available to all registered fencing coaches in 2020-21. There will also be further activity around the recruitment and development of female coaches to address the lack of suitable female coaches in all weapons, but particularly Foil and Sabre.

12. PROJECTS & PROGRAMMES

During 2019-20, Core Market investment from Sport England successfully supported and enabled BF to develop and strengthen its portfolio of Projects and Programmes (P&P) with partners such as London Youth, the Scout Association and BUCS. Driven by insight, partnership working and continuous evaluation BF's Core Market work during 2019-20 has continued to develop opportunities that speak to the 'Alternative' and 'Leading Edge' tribes, as identified in BF's 2014 Crowd DNA research.

BF engaged a total of 1,544 young people through its programmes. Whilst the total number was smaller in comparison to 2018-19, a significantly higher percentage (59% vs 28%) took part in a sustained programme of activity with the remaining 655 taking part in 32 different one-off events. During this period the retention rate (based on attendance at a minimum of 60% of sessions) across the portfolio has decreased from 67% in 2018-19 to 58% in 2019-20.

Despite this small decrease, we have seen continued growth and sustained activity in certain areas. Below is a further breakdown of some of the key headline stats:

- Out of the 889 engaged in fencing activity, 53% of those were female and 60% of those females were retained in regular activity
- Nearly half (48%) of those engaged were BAME, with 61% of those being retained, compared to 55% of white participants being retained
- Only 2% reported as having a disability (70% reported as not having a disability). Although 28% did not report on this question, our activities are not reaching groups who provide opportunities for those with disabilities.

Below highlight further findings from a number of our key projects. The primary focus is on retention rates, which are measured on participants attendance at a minimum of 60% of the sessions.

London Youth

- Nearly 300 young people took part in fencing in a youth club environment and 73% were retained in regular fencing activity, up by 3% from 2018-19. Over the last 3 years retention rates have continued to rise, attributed to the drive to improve the offer for youth clubs, the training we provide and our overall ways of working and partnership with London Youth.
- Retention rates by gender, the rates for both males (75%) and females (68%) were high, showing a slight increase on last year.
- 66% of those engaged in the programme were BAME and importantly, 72% of those young people were retained in activity. 42% of BAME engaged participants were female and 67% of those females were retained in activity. For males, out of those engaged, 75% were retained.
- Analysing the data by age, the secondary school age group, notoriously one of the most difficult age groups to engage and retain, has a high retention rate:

- Age 11 – 13 has a retention rate of 90%
- Age 14 – 15 has a retention rate of 86%
- Age 16 – 17 has a retention rate of 89%
- Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 our Q4 figures were impacted and this is expected to continue into the 2020-21 deliver year.

Work in the HE Sector

Over the last 3 years the Sabre:lite programme has continued to grow, with 37 Universities now signed up. These are supported by an increase in the number of student volunteers trained as University Fencing Officers (UFOs); 43 in 2019-20, compared to 38 the previous year.

During the second half of 2019-20, the focus has been on building a clearer picture of the sport across the HE sector as a whole, from Sabre:lite and beginners courses to club and competitive fencing to athletes involved in the ADP programme. Moving into 2020-21 and beyond, the insights we gather will allow us to make informed decisions on where best to focus investment from Sport England to support the continued growth of the sport across all elements of participation.

"I found the training really useful yes, I've used lots of the exercises we were taught with this years novices, and we've had some really good feedback from them. Quite a few of our novices competed at the Lancaster Open, and we've had a consistent turn out to training as well as a few new freshers joining this term so I'm pleased with how things have gone"

UFO 2019-20 Course

BF's social responsibility initiative, Muslim Girls Fence (MGF) has continued to grow, with a further Core Coach course being delivered in Birmingham. Building on the success and feedback from previous courses, we have continued to develop and adapt the course to meet the needs of the partners we are working with. Our partnership with Maslaha, local community groups and place-based organisations continues to be a key driver to the growth and success of the project. In January 2019 we were invited to share our learnings and success at Sport England's national launch of "Sport for All? Why Ethnicity and Culture Matters in Sport and Physical Activity", as well as hosting the film premier of "Nobody's Metaphor" at the Tate Modern in London.

As part of BF's commitment to achieving Objective 5 of the strategy, 'Maximise the wider benefits of fencing and the positive impact it can have on people's lives' we have been

working with the Change Foundation, an expert in the Sport for Social Change arena. Taking our learnings from MGF and London Youth we are working on a strategy and plan that will support the expansion of the work that we do in this space.

13. SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMERCIAL

One of BF's core objectives includes providing services that are financially resilient. This will enable BF to continue to serve the sport and its members in the future, even if public funding and sponsorship declines. In order to achieve this in the long term, it is essential to generate revenue from sources other than membership.

Therefore, the primary purpose of BF's commercial activities is to generate revenue for the organisation that can be used to support the ongoing development of our sport and make BF more financially independent, reducing reliance on external funding.

Following a review of 2018-19 commercial activity the focus in this financial year was to increase our product and service offerings within our Licensed Partner Programmes (LPPs).

The Licensed Partner Programme (LPP) is designed to formalise our relationship with organisations involved in the delivery of fencing, whilst allowing BF to add value beyond the provision of one-off training courses. This added value includes access to subject knowledge experts that will help organisations better support their own coaching staff, the opportunity to build bespoke tools to support their coaches and ultimately create better fencing experiences for their participants. Many of these organisations are involved in delivery of the first experience that young people have with fencing and thus play a vital role in the fencing participant pathway.

Thus in 2019-20 the Commercial Department focused on three objectives to support the overall BF Strategy.

1. **Diversify** - Build a diverse portfolio of commercial partners
2. **Strengthen** – Increase product and services offering through the LLP
3. **Sustain** - Generate revenue that supports the organisation and reduces its reliance on external funding.

Diversify

During 2019-20, BF's portfolio of commercial partners has continued to grow. At the end of the financial year, formal relationships were in place with 15 partners an increase of 2 partners from 2019-20.

Our primary commercial offerings in the partnership space are delivered through our Licensed Partner Programme (LPP). Additionally, we have several bespoke official partner agreements which cover elements including sponsorship (e.g. Wilkinson Sword) and Value in Kind agreements such as Pulseroll Ltd (fitness/training products) and Woods Fleet (collaboration on corporate products and offer of hospitality services to BF).

As at April 2020 there were 8 organisations in the LPP, which is an increase of 3 from April 2019 with Crown Hills Community College (5-year partnership) and Ludosport UK (3 year partnership) as Official Training Partners new for 2019-20.

*Mini Case Study: Through our five-year partnership agreement with **Crown Hills Community College** we continue to support them to deliver Core Coach training opportunities to staff and local school teachers. Alongside this work, we have also supported the College to deliver fencing opportunities to its pupils. Within 9 months Crown Hills entered two teams into the British Schools Teams Championships and the girls team returned with a bronze medal. Our thanks to Chris Buxton (fencing coach) and Leon Paul for making this possible.*



Crown Hills Community College at their first British Fencing event – The British School Teams, 2019

*Mini Case Study: **PGL Travel Ltd** are in their fifth year in the LPP. In January 2019 they had a total of 20 licensed trainers forecasting to deliver training to over 450 coaches who will in*

turn be able to deliver more introductory PGL fencing experiences to young people. In 2019 alone PGL delivered fencing to c.97,500 (8.3% increase from 2018) unique participants (up nearly 28.3% from 2016). This demonstrates the potential size of the 'have-a-go' space for fencing in the UK in total.

Sharing of data from our Licensed Partners continues to evidence fencing as an activity that has significantly large latency demand. Qualitative insight also shows that more thematic and swordplay based activity is a successful route to engage young people into the sport as well as meeting the needs of our partners who deliver to these customers

Work to expand our portfolio of commercial partnerships will benefit from our new testimonial videos that highlights the unique selling points of Core Coach and the PSRP product.

Strengthen

BF's Education offerings delivered within the LPP are based on our leading-edge Coach Development system, endorsed by industry leaders and stakeholders. This system is designed to create a modern coaching workforce that meets best-practice education standards whilst inspiring and developing all coaches. (See Workforce section for education delivered to organisations outside of the LPP)

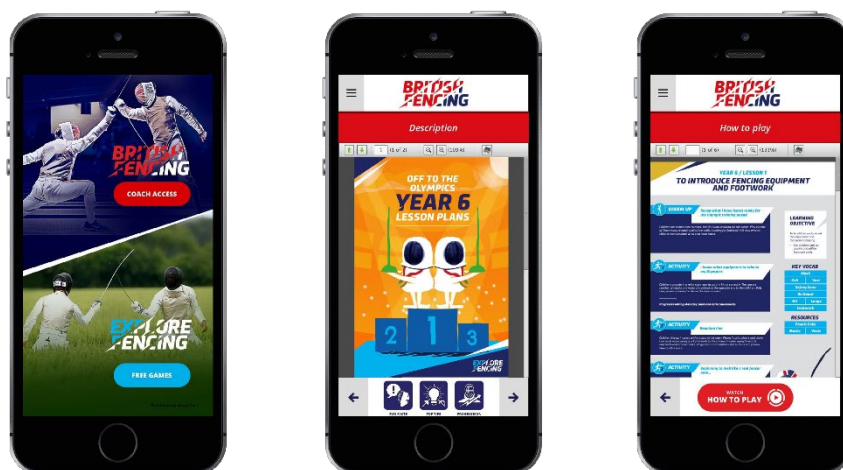
In 2019-20 as part of these programmes, BF directly delivered around 69 courses and supported 80 courses delivered under license (compared to a total of 50/83 in 2018-19 and 72 in 2017-18)

During the year we soft launched through our LPP the Primary School Resource Pack (PSRP). The PSRP is a personal development programme based on fencing that is relevant inside or outside of the PE syllabus. It has shown to be effective in engaging all types of the student population, including those that do not engage in traditional PE offerings.

The PSRP is aimed at schools looking for an Ofsted aligned programme designed to explore pupil's self-efficacy, and overcome the challenge of self-perception in relation to being 'sporty'.

In addition to challenging pupils self-perceptions, each one of the 36 lesson plans is aimed at building resilience. The lesson plans each have clear learning objectives which are sequenced to allow pupils the space to explore and build concepts and experiences of what resilience feels like. All the content and learning outcomes connect with BF's Achievement Awards and students will receive a badge and certificate.

In addition to the PRSP, work continued on the Explore Fencing Games App in preparation for a 2020-21 launch. Our initial focus will be on supporting our Licensed Partners to capitalise on the opportunities provided by the Explore Fencing App.



Sustain

The investment in expanding the commercial products and services impacted the growth in net surplus. Thus 2019-20 saw revenue maintained at £133K with net surplus reduced by 12.5%.

In June 2019 the vacant business administrator role was filled and the priority has been to create more efficient internal processes to support growing LPP education delivery and BF's community education programmes.

Covid-19 affected delivery in Q4 and for 2020-21 the full effect is unknown. Risk assessments and mitigating action plans have focused attention on developing our other projects, such as digital product and services. Online learning will be a new norm and during the year ahead we will be looking to increase our offering in this space.

In closing; the year has seen commercial income maintained and surplus levels falling in light of investment in future products and services. Establishing future contracted income through multi-year agreements allows BF to invest more time and resources in supporting our Licensed Partners to derive mutual benefits, alongside contributing to community learning and development. Whilst 2020-21 is expected to be a challenging operating environment, continued interest from commercial and educational organisations to partner with us has been encouraging.

14. BF HONOURS 2019

Silver Medal

Francine Robb

Jon Milner (Posthumous)

Piers Gilliver

Steven Paul (Posthumous)

Dimitry Coutya

Marcus Mepstead

Bronze Medal

Shaine Ryland-Gasher

Viv Mills

Marilyn Wheelband

Paul Davis

Award of Merit

Sheryl Chiu-Sosnov

Maria Jose Faustino

Tankard

Dan Kellner

Directors Award

Rob Bruniges

Goblet

Caitlin Maxwell

15. WITH THANKS TO

BOA

GLL

Scout Association

BUCS

Leon Paul

Sport England

BF Charity

London Youth

Sports Aid Foundation

Change Foundation

Maslaha Charity

True Athlete Project

Comic Relief

National Lottery

UK Coaching

The Epee Club Charity

NSPCC CPSU

UK Sport

The patrons that support our GBR athletes and teams.

And all the volunteers that give their time so generously to support BF and our sport.