



# Clubmark Accreditation Evaluation

## Research report for Sport England prepared by mruk - July 2014

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This work has been conducted in accordance with ISO 20252,  
the international standard for market and social research



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## Executive Summary

### Background and methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand the effectiveness of Sport England's Clubmark accreditation scheme, which was launched in 2002. The results of this research will enable Sport England to:

- Address Clubmark's weakness and build on its strengths
- Increase the scope of the scheme to reach more clubs

To achieve this, Sport England asked **mrug** to consult a range of its stakeholders, broadly categorised as clubs (Accredited, Lapsed and Non-accredited), Licencing Bodies (NGBs and CSPs) and other stakeholders (National Partners and Local Authorities).

To ensure that the views of each audience were explored in detail, a mixed methodology research approach was used. A quantitative survey was conducted to gain feedback from clubs, CSPs, non-participating NGBs and Local Authorities. Qualitative depth interviews enabled us to get detailed feedback from NGBs, National Partners and a small selection of clubs.

### Awareness and involvement with Clubmark

*Stakeholders were asked about how they became aware of Clubmark, why they decide to get involved and their specific role within it.*

#### How much do stakeholders know about Clubmark?

- Awareness and involvement with Clubmark is high amongst all audiences
- NGBs and National Partners have a good understanding of Clubmark. In particular, NGBs know what it is, why clubs should have it and what it means for a club once they are fully accredited
- Clubs who are aware of Clubmark are most likely to have heard via an NGB

#### How engaged are stakeholders with Clubmark?

- Clubs have high levels of involvement with Clubmark, especially when they are working to achieve the accreditation
- NGBs are heavily involved with Clubmark. Many tailor Clubmark to optimise it for their objectives and then constantly review the accreditation to make sure that it is having the desired impact
- National Partners tend to be less involved with the accreditation. Some were closely involved in the initial development of Clubmark, but are less involved in its day-to-implementation

### Perceived value of Clubmark

*Stakeholders were asked to identify the main benefits of Clubmark, as well as its drawbacks.*

#### What do stakeholders think are the main benefits of Clubmark?

- Stakeholders identified a broad range of benefits (unprompted) of Clubmark, with no one benefit mentioned by more than two fifths of the overall sample
- The most commonly identified benefits of Clubmark are:
  - It makes clubs safer environments by focusing on aspects such as participant welfare, safeguarding and general health and safety
  - It makes clubs more efficient by encouraging them to become more business minded and growth focused. Such benefits of Clubmark are particularly valued by NGBs and National Partners



### What do stakeholders think are the main drawbacks of Clubmark?

- Slightly over half (56%) have at least some concerns about Clubmark. Primarily around the bureaucracy and time-consuming nature of the accreditation process
- NGBs and National Partners feel there is a lack of tangible benefits. As a result, it makes it difficult to quantify what clubs gain, as well as difficult to 'sell' the benefits of the accreditation

### Clubs' experience of the accreditation process

*Clubs were asked to assess each of the stages involved in gaining the Clubmark accreditation, focusing on their level of satisfaction, challenges they faced and areas for improvement.*

#### Clubmark criteria

- Clubs report experiencing relatively little difference between the ease/difficulty of fulfilling each of the 4 criteria points of Clubmark
- Overall, the easiest criteria to fulfil is 'Club management'
- The most difficult criteria to fulfil is 'Knowing your club and its community'

#### Use of support materials

- Clubs use various support materials throughout the accreditation process including the Clubmark templates - used by 70% of both Accredited and Lapsed Clubs and satisfaction with these is high, and online support, with over one third using the Clubmark website. However engagement with Facebook/Twitter in relation to Clubmark is very low

#### External verification visits

- Just over half of Accredited and Lapsed Clubs have had a visit from a Clubmark licensing body (NGB or CSP). Experiences are positive and clubs find them helpful

#### How do clubs implement the Clubmark?

- Clubs take pride in the fact that they have achieved the Clubmark, with nine out of ten ensuring that members and non-members are aware of this. However, for many clubs (over 30%) Clubmark is not a central priority in the day-to-day running of their club and they only refer to it ahead of a health check or re-accreditation

### NGBs' experience of the accreditation process

*NGBs were asked to outline and assess each of the stages involved in administering the Clubmark accreditation.*

#### Tailoring and Promoting Clubmark

- NGBs are generally happy with the criteria covered by Clubmark and feel that it includes the relevant areas to improve the quality of sports clubs, although they do add and amend the criteria to make it relevant to their organisation
- NGBs generally take responsibility for promoting Clubmark to clubs with this being done through NGBs' regional development/ support officers
- NGBs' approach towards promoting Clubmark as Sport England's accreditation is variable:
  - NGBs that lack the capacity to support clubs through Clubmark do not actively promote it
  - NGBs are careful not to disadvantage clubs who cannot achieve it, such as by ensuring opportunities to access funding are not conditional to having Clubmark



- Many NGBs promote Clubmark as a ‘nice to have’ rather than a must

#### Assessment process

- NGBs tend to work quite closely with clubs in helping them to gain the Clubmark accreditation. Where possible, NGBs’ regional development/ support officers help clubs through the process. However this is becoming increasingly problematic with recent resourcing cuts, which are disproportionately affecting smaller NGBs
- Similar to clubs, NGBs also show concern over the time-consuming nature of the application process, with many citing the historically paper-based process as being particularly onerous. Some have taken steps to address this, creating an online application process

#### External verification visits

- NGBs tend to have mixed views about the benefits of external verifications
- Positive factors of external verifications are that they act as a barometer of how well clubs are doing, as well as enhancing NGBs’ relationships with clubs. However negative aspects are that they can be too generic and that they put excessive pressure on clubs, especially when they are given little notice

#### How do NGBs help clubs implement the Clubmark?

- NGBs’ level of on-going interaction with clubs who have achieved Clubmark varies
- Although they want to be more proactive in helping clubs make the most of Clubmark, many lack the capacity to give clubs continued support and worry that, as identified by clubs, Clubmark is not embedded within their day-to-day structures
- However others keep clubs engaged by creating incentive schemes for maintaining their Clubmark, such as yearly awards dinners to identify the best Clubmarked club

### **CSPs’ experience of the accreditation process**

*CSPs were asked about their level of satisfaction with being a licencing body.*

- CSPs are mostly satisfied with attaining and maintaining the accreditation licence. Although they identify challenges in attaining and maintaining their accreditation licence, with just half finding this easy

### **Impact of Clubmark**

*Stakeholders were asked to identify the actual impact of Clubmark and whether this met their expectations.*

All stakeholders consider Clubmark to have had some positive impacts. Overall, audiences from the quantitative survey feel that the impact of Clubmark has met their expectations, however very few feel that Clubmark has exceeded expectations and some do report that it has fallen short.

#### What do clubs perceive to be the impact of Clubmark?

Overall clubs are satisfied with Clubmark, with most feeling that the accreditation is appropriate for their club. Importantly, even Lapsed Clubs are also fairly satisfied, with over half satisfied with the accreditation overall and a quarter very satisfied.

#### What do NGBs and National Partners perceive to be the impact of Clubmark?

NGBs and National Partners identify a number of positive impacts of Clubmark, which mainly relate to improving the safety and efficiency of clubs.

- Clubmark is particularly valued for helping clubs to achieve a high standard in terms of health, safety and welfare of all, giving assurance to club members and parents





- Clubmark is thought to support the development of clubs by providing strong functioning structures. As such, it makes them more professional, and therefore attractive and fundable to grant- giving bodies
- Clubmark encourages clubs to think about and address aspects that they may not have otherwise paid attention to. National Partners particularly value this, as it increases awareness of a number of social issues which they represent, such as gender, disability and race equality

### Optimising Clubmark

*Stakeholders were asked if and how Clubmark could be improved, with a specific focus on its criteria, the accreditation processes, marketing and promotion.*

Whilst all organisations express that Clubmark is a highly important scheme with much potential, some improvements and developments are required.

#### Increasing the profile of Clubmark

- The Clubmark scheme as a whole would benefit from greater Sport England involvement, in terms of:
  - Supporting NGBs in developing their Clubmark offering
  - Promoting Clubmark through marketing campaigns and initiatives
  - Interacting with clubs (e.g. reward schemes, events etc.)
  - Coordinating its stakeholders and developing a more unified approach towards Clubmark
- Clubs' customers (i.e. parents) are not widely aware of Clubmark and the benefits of selecting accredited clubs
- Stakeholders that can provide support to clubs need to be engaged more effectively. Clubs currently feel that they lack support from schools, Local Authorities etc. Mobilising these sources will help to sell the benefits of Clubmark to the local community

#### Improving the accreditation process

- NGB support officers are the main source of help for clubs going through the accreditation process. However a decreasing number of development officers is proving problematic for smaller NGBs. Some NGBs may require additional help and support from other bodies in order to support their clubs through the accreditation process effectively
- The application process should be made less time-consuming and onerous
- NGBs need to be supported to help clubs make the most of Clubmark once it has been achieved
- Clubs and NGBs should be made aware that National Partners can offer additional support in relation to Clubmark

#### Increasing Clubmark's benefits

- Although all organisations do tend to identify benefits and impacts of Clubmark, many of these are not tangible and can therefore be undervalued. As such, clubs can be reluctant to re-accredit having experienced few tangible benefits from the scheme. The benefits of Clubmark therefore need to be made clearer



## 1. Background to the research

*This section provides a detailed understanding of why this research was conducted, including its specific aims, objectives and desired outcomes.*

The purpose of the study was to understand the effectiveness of the Sport England's Clubmark accreditation scheme, which was launched in 2002. Clubmark is Sport England's universally-acknowledged, cross-sport accreditation scheme, which seeks to develop high quality community sports clubs across the country. It incorporates key criteria that help clubs to achieve success, and that can be easily replicated irrespective of their specific sport. Clubmark also gives clubs access to important resources and support materials to help achieve and make the most of the accreditation.

There are four broad criteria areas within Clubmark, which clubs are assessed against:

- **Activity/playing programmes:** ensuring that services to members, including coaching, are of high quality
- **Welfare:** ensuring that all members are kept safe, particularly young people
- **Knowing your club and its community:** understanding the needs of current and potential members
- **Club management:** ensuring that clubs are run efficiently and focused on growth

For each criteria point, clubs must meet and show evidence of having achieved specific requirements. Currently there are just over 13,000 Clubmarked clubs with a further 4,000 working towards the accreditation.

Developing and administering the Clubmark accreditation involves a number of Sport England's key stakeholders. The accreditation itself is designed by Sport England, with the support of its National Partners who have specialist knowledge of key criteria areas. The Clubmark accreditation is administered to clubs by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) or County Sports Partnerships (CSPs), with support from Sport England. In order to administer Clubmark, these organisations receive training from Sport England.

Although the accreditation criteria are developed by Sport England, NGBs are able to build upon these and tailor the scheme to meet their specific needs. County Sports Partnerships provide additional support to clubs who are working towards Clubmark or, where NGBs decide not to become licenced, CSPs administer the accreditation to clubs.

Between 2002 and 2013, KKP, an external agency, was responsible for delivering Clubmark on Sport England's behalf. The contract is now up for renewal and will be awarded out again in coming months. However, to ensure that the future delivery model of Clubmark is as effective as possible, Sport England commissioned **mrug** to conduct this independent program evaluation.

The aim of this evaluation is to understand Clubmark from the perspective of all those involved with the scheme, to help identify current strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement in future. To achieve this, Sport England set five specific objectives for this research:





1. To establish the main perceived benefits of Clubmark for key stakeholders
2. To establish the wider impacts of the process of gaining Clubmark for Accredited Clubs and key stakeholders
3. To gather clubs' views (positive and negative) on the process involved in attaining and retaining Clubmark accreditation
4. To gather licensed and non-licensed stakeholders' views (positive and negative) on the process involved in managing, promoting and administering Clubmark
5. To gather key stakeholders' views on any changes/enhancements they would like to see made to Clubmark in 2014 and onwards

The results of this research will enable Sport England to:

- **Address Clubmark's weakness and build on its strengths:** ensuring that Clubmark retains its core purpose and value and that it plays an active role in driving clubs' on-going development and sustainability, as well as supporting an excellent customer experience within clubs
- **Increase the scope of the scheme to reach more clubs:** ensuring that all clubs have the opportunity to benefit from the scheme by addressing barriers to involvement



## 2. Methodology

*This section looks in detail at how the research was conducted and the audiences it involved.*

### 2.1 Audiences

Three broad audience categories were included within this research: **licencing bodies, clubs and other stakeholders.**

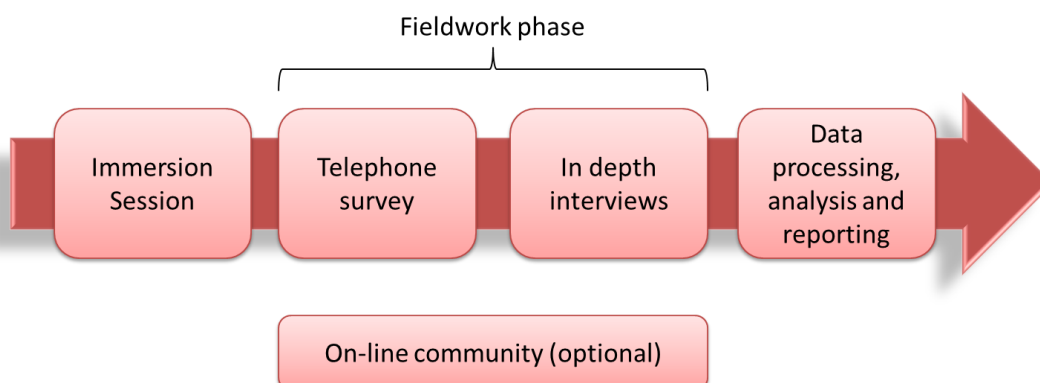
Below is a detailed description of the specific audiences within each broad category. Where audiences have unique insights and perspectives that this research aimed to explore, this is highlighted:

- **Licensing bodies**
  - ◆ **Licenced County Sports Partnerships (CSPs):** role as a licencing body
  - ◆ **Licenced National Governing Bodies (NGBs):** role as a licencing body; how Clubmark fits with the NGB's own objectives
  - ◆ **Non-licenced CSPs**
  - ◆ **Non-licenced but participating NGBs**
- **Clubs**
  - ◆ **Accredited Clubs:** experience of gaining and maintaining Clubmark
  - ◆ **Lapsed Clubs:** experience of gaining and maintaining Clubmark; barriers to renewing Clubmark accreditation
  - ◆ **Non-accredited Clubs:** barriers to achieving Clubmark
- **Other Stakeholders**
  - ◆ **Local Authorities:** how Clubmark fits with local policy objectives
  - ◆ **National Partners:** role as a supporting body for Sport England, NGBs and clubs; how Clubmark fits with their own organisational objectives

### 2.2 Data collection methods

A multi-staged approach using both **quantitative and qualitative** data collection methods was used. This approach maximised the level of insight provided, by gathering both robust and detailed data.

In particular, given the range of audiences within the research and their varying levels of involvement with Clubmark, a quantitative and qualitative approach gave us the flexibility to use the most appropriate data collection method for each audience.





Below is detailed description of each of the research stages, including their specific objectives, how they were conducted and which audiences they include.

### 2.2.1 Immersion Session

Stage one allowed **mrug** and Sport England to gather the necessary information to develop a robust research design. It clearly defined the objectives of the evaluation and the research context, ensuring that these could be embedded in all research materials. The immersion session was also an opportunity to pool understanding of the topic (including previous research) and to develop specific hypotheses to be tested.

### 2.2.2 Quantitative Phase

The specific objectives of the quantitative phase were to:

- Survey a large number of groups, therefore substantially increasing the findings' representativeness of the wider population
- Condense experiences of populations of interest to provide an overview of trends and what are 'typical' behaviours
- Compare all groups of interest and understand the specific issues for each
- Provide a basis for key issues and areas of interest to probe on further through the qualitative phase

Sport England provided **mrug** with the contact details of all participants, except for Non-accredited Clubs who were free-found via desk research. Participants were informed of the research by Sport England and given the opportunity to ask questions or opt out prior to being contact by **mrug**.

Quotas (target number of interviews) were set to ensure that a good representation of key sample audiences relative to their size in the wider population. Since clubs were a particular focus for this phase of the research a large number were included to ensure that their perspectives were represented across a range of sports. The table below shows a detailed breakdown of the quantitative sample by audience type.

Audience	Sample size	Other criteria
Licensing bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licenced CSPs</li> <li>• Non-licenced (CSPs)</li> <li>• Non-licenced but Participating (NGBs)</li> </ul>	26 3 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good geographic spread</li> <li>• Good spread by sport / leisure type</li> <li>• Good spread by club size and scale</li> </ul>
Clubs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accredited</li> <li>• Lapsed</li> <li>• Non-accredited</li> </ul>	487 71 50	
Other Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authorities</li> </ul>	31	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>670</b>	



For all audiences, the research consulted the person within the organisation who is primarily responsible for Clubmark's implementation.

**mrुक** and Sport England worked together to develop the questionnaire. It was designed to be exploratory and provide thorough insight into participants' experience, as well as to measure Clubmark against Key Performance indicators (KPIs). Given the range of audiences involved, the questionnaire included some sections that were asked of all respondents, and others that were only asked to certain groups, to cover their specific perspectives in detail.

The questionnaire consisted of closed and open questions. For the closed questions, participants were asked to select the most appropriate response from a predefined list (for example when measuring KPIs, rating scales were used). Open-ended questions where the respondent answers in their own words were included where participants' spontaneous reactions or depth of response was important.

Prior to the quantitative fieldwork beginning, the questionnaire was piloted internally and with a small number of research participants. These tests checked that question wording was easily understood, the desired level of insight was being captured and that the questionnaire did not exceed the agreed length.

Interviews were conducted by telephone using Computer-Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology and lasted 15 minutes on average. Where participants were unable to take part at the given time, an appointment was scheduled with them to take part at a later date. Interviewing took place between the end of April and middle of June 2014.

The findings from the quantitative phase were reviewed and informed the topics that were covered within the qualitative phase.

### 2.2.3 Qualitative phase

The qualitative phase of the research was used to:

- Provide greater depth of insight into the reasons behind the trends identified in the quantitative phase
- Explore in detail the unique perspectives of specific audiences

This phase included audiences who were likely to have unique experiences based on their organisation's objectives. As such, the primary audiences were National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and National Partners. However this phase was also used to gain additional depth of insight on the experiences of accredited and Lapsed Clubs, both of whom were included in the quantitative phase.

As with the quantitative phase of the research, Sport England provided **mrुक** with the contact details of all participants. Participants were informed of the research by Sport England and given the opportunity to ask questions or opt out prior to being contact by **mrुक** interviewers.

No quotas were set for NGBs and National Partners, as the research aimed to include all those in the actual population. For clubs (accredited and lapsed), quotas were set to ensure that a good representation was achieved across sports, clubs size and clubs that offer single sports versus multiple sports.

For all audiences, the research consulted the person within the organisation who is primarily responsible for Clubmark's implementation. For some organisations, this included two or



more individuals and they were consulted jointly. The table below shows a detailed breakdown of the qualitative sample by audience type.

Audience	Sample size	Other criteria
National Governing Body (NGB)	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good geographic spread</li> <li>• Good spread by sport / leisure type</li> <li>• Good spread by club size and scale</li> </ul>
National Partner	8	
Accredited Clubs	5	
Lapsed Clubs	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	

A different discussion guide was created for each of the three audience types (NGBs, National Partners and clubs), to ensure that the unique perspectives of each were explored in detail. The discussion guides were informed by the emerging findings from the quantitative phase.

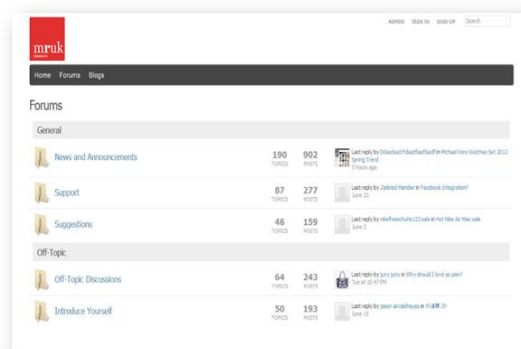
The fieldwork for this phase consisted of interviews lasting approximately one hour, including a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews. Face-to-face interviews helped to contextualise insights, by giving researchers the opportunity to immerse themselves in participants' environments and see how Clubmark is used on a day-to-day basis. The qualitative fieldwork took place between the end of May and middle of June 2014.

#### 2.2.4 Online community

An online community ran for the duration of the research fieldwork. It was open to all those taking part in the research, as well as to their stakeholders. The community provided an opportunity for those involved with Clubmark to provide their feedback in an on-going way, as well as for them to interact with other stakeholders.

Those participating in the research were asked if they wanted to take part in the community and, if so, were sent a link to the web site. Participants were also informed that they could share the link with anyone that is involved in Clubmark who might be interested in sharing their views, for example colleagues or clubs. The online community was also openly publicised on Clubmark's website.

The topics of discussion within the community were kept broad, to give participants the opportunity to provide open feedback on issues of their choice and to encourage dialogue with one another. Overall, it was felt that this approach would provide different insights to the more structured qualitative and quantitative phases.





Overall, there were 88 participants on the Clubmark online community, including Sports clubs, CSPs, NGBs, National Partners, Local Authorities and Sport England employees. Many participants logged on simply to follow the discussion, but overall, 28 participants posted their views, with many also commenting on what others had said. The forum was well received by stakeholders, with many discussing and publishing it on Twitter.

Respondent type	No. of participants
Sports Clubs	55
NGBs	14
CSPs	10
CSPN	1
National Partners	3
Local Authorities	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88</b>

## 2.3 Topics covered in the research

Five broad topic areas were included within the research, all of which were covered in both the quantitative and qualitative phases. Although the topics covered with each audience were the same, give their different perspectives, the actual questions were tailored to each audience.

In particular, it was important for the evaluation to distinguish between Clubmark's potential value and its actual current value. Participants were therefore asked to compare what they perceived to be Clubmark's value when they first got involved with what it has given them since.

It was also important for the evaluation to explore the actual processes involved in Clubmark accreditation in detail. To achieve this, those involved in accreditation process—administering, receiving or actively supporting—were asked to provide detailed feedback on each of the stages involved.

Below is an overview of the five topics covered within the research:

### Awareness and involvement with Clubmark

- How and why became involved with Clubmark
- Role with regard to Clubmark
- Relationship with Sport England and Clubmark team

### Perceived value of Clubmark

- Main benefits
- Main drawbacks
- Does the Clubmark accreditation meet its objectives?





### Accreditation Process

#### **Licencing bodies (NGBs and CSPs):**

- Gaining and maintaining accreditation licence
- Promoting Clubmark
- Supporting clubs in collating and documenting evidence
- Assessing applications
- Supporting clubs in maintaining and implementing Clubmark effectively
- Renewal process
- Improvements to the application process

#### **Clubs:**

- Collating and documenting evidence
- Submitting documentation
- Maintaining and implementing the Clubmark effectively
- Renewal process
- Improvements to the application process

#### **National Partners:**

- Support provided to organisations involved in Clubmark (NGBs, CSPs and Clubs)

### Impact of Clubmark

- Overall, is Clubmark meeting its potential?
- Key positive impacts
- Barriers to positive impacts being achieved

### Optimising Clubmark

- Clubmark criteria
- Accreditation process
- Marketing and advertising of Clubmark

## **2.4 Analysis and reporting**

The remainder of this report broadly follows the structure above, with each of the five topics treated as separate sections. Insights from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research are combined in each section, as are those from the online community where relevant.

As mentioned previously, given the number and varying perspectives of the audiences involved within the research, it was particularly important to cover their experiences in detail. The research materials were therefore developed in such a way as to cover the same topic areas with audiences, where relevant, but often using different questions.

Where comparisons can be made, we report on all audiences and comment on where distinctions occur amongst them. Elsewhere, the analysis provides detail on topic areas by commenting on the insights gained from specific audiences.



Along with audience type, Sport England and **mrk** identified a number of key variables that would impact participants' perspectives:

- Audience type
- Length of involvement with Clubmark
- Perceived level of positive impact of Clubmark
- Overall satisfaction with Clubmark
- Region
- Clubs:
  - ◆ Number of members: (1-20, 21-50, 51-75, 76-100, Over 100)
  - ◆ Types of members (Children only (under 16 years), Adult only, Both children and adults)
  - ◆ Sport
- NGB size: based on number of members playing the sport (small=less than 20,000 members; medium=between 20,001 and 100,000 members; large= over 100,001 members)

Where differences occur amongst the sample on the above variables, these are highlighted within the text. Where the analysis does not comment on differences, it can be assumed that behaviours are similar to the overall sample being discussed for that particular question or topic.

Where base sizes are low (generally below 30) results should be interpreted with caution. Where such low base sizes occur, differences within the sample are not commented on.

Generally 'don't know' and 'not applicable' responses have been included within charts as they provide important insight in the context of this particular project. However where they have been removed, this is highlighted within the text.

Percentages in the charts are rounded to the nearest whole number, so may not always add to 100%. Where answer options receive below 3% of mentions, they do not appear within the charts.

Answers for open ended questions have been coded by theme and then aggregated.

## 2.5 Margin of error

### 2.5.1 Introduction

The margin of error is a statistic expressing the amount of random sampling error in a survey's results. The larger the margin of error, the less confidence one should have that the poll's reported results are close to the "true" figures; that is, the figures for the whole population. Margin of error occurs whenever a population is incompletely sampled (in other words in almost all quantitative market research).

The margin of error can be defined for any desired confidence level, but usually a level of 95% is used. This level is the probability that a margin of error around the reported percentage would include the "true" percentage. Most people are familiar with the margin of error in connection with political opinion polling, where the result might be reported as "Conservatives on 35% in a survey with a margin of error of +/-3%". What this means is that there is a 95% probability that the Conservatives' true level of support amongst the population lies between 32% and 38%.



The sample design for a survey, and in particular its sample size, determines the magnitude of the margin of error. A larger sample size produces a smaller margin of error, all else remaining equal. For a given sample size, the margin of error is effectively zero if the measured value is 0% or 100% and is greatest when the measured value is 50%.

However, the issue is further complicated in a study such as this since most analysis often takes the form of comparing one section of the sample (e.g. clubs) against a second (e.g. licencing bodies). As such both statistics are subject to a margin of error and therefore any difference between them is normally only considered statistically significant if it is larger than both their margins of error. This potentially results in a huge number of calculations since the outcome varies for any pair of audiences within the sample (e.g. A vs. B, A vs. C, B vs. C and so on).

### 2.5.2 Ready reckoner

The table below is designed to provide a ready reckoner as to whether differences between each of the key audiences with the qualitative research are statistically significant. For each cell the number is the point at which a difference between the result in that segment and the value for the remainder of the sample becomes statistically significant. Only audiences with more than 30 respondents in the survey have been included.

	Segment result = 50%	Segment result = 25% or 75%	Segment result = 15% or 85%	Segment result = 5% or 95%
Accredited (n=487)	9%	8%	7%	5%
Lapsed (n=71)	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Non-accredited (n=50)	15%	13%	11%	7%
Local Authorities (n=31)	<b>18%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>

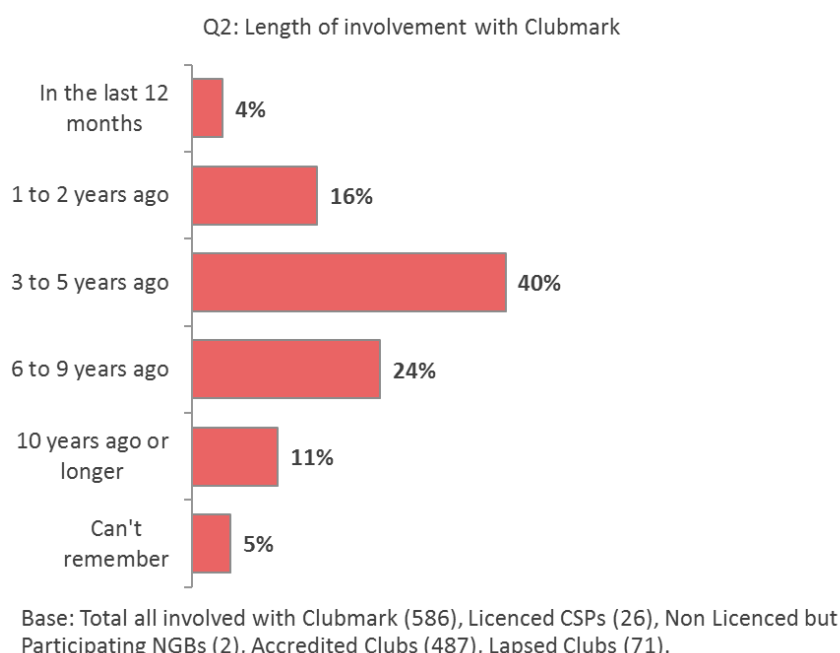
Please note that in some cases we have reported results which are not statistically significant because we feel they are consistent with other observations which are significant.

### 3. Awareness and involvement with Clubmark

*This section looks at how participants first became aware of Clubmark and why they decide to/ not to get involved. It then looks at their specific role within Clubmark.*

#### 3.1 Quantitative survey results

In order to find out more about the history of organisations' involvement with Clubmark, all audiences were asked when they first became involved with the scheme. A considerable majority (75% of those able to answer) have been involved for two years or more with over a third (35%) having been involved for more than five years.



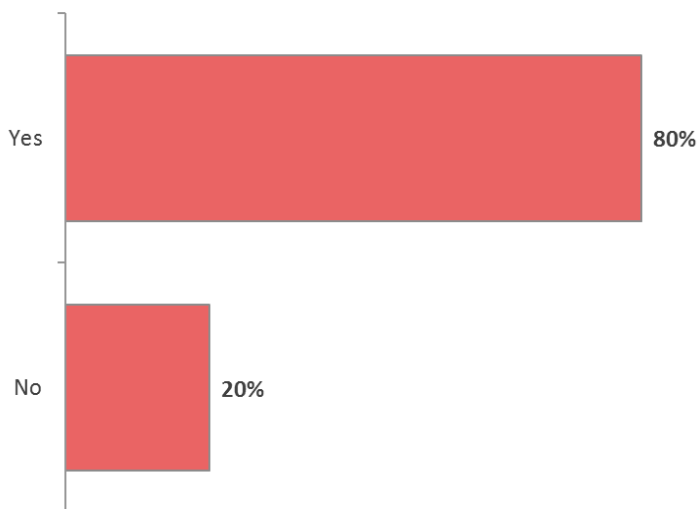
Generally the proportions shown above are reflective of the experiences of all participants. However, there are a few variations for certain types of clubs and the following have been involved for longer than average:

Type of club	Less than 2 years	More than 2 years
Lapsed Clubs	2%	90%
Clubs with 76-100 members	12%	87%
Cricket	0%	100%
Badminton	8%	90%
Hockey	11%	85%
Gymnastics	11%	85%
Athletics	17%	84%
Swimming	14%	86%
Canoeing	13%	88%



The sample included 38 organisations that had never been involved with Clubmark (including Local Authorities, Non-licensed CSPs and Non-accredited Clubs). Although not directly involved with Clubmark, the vast majority (80%) were aware of the scheme. Those aware included all Local Authorities and Non-licensed CSPs, and two thirds of Non-accredited Clubs (66%).

Q3: Awareness of Clubmark amongst those not involved in the scheme

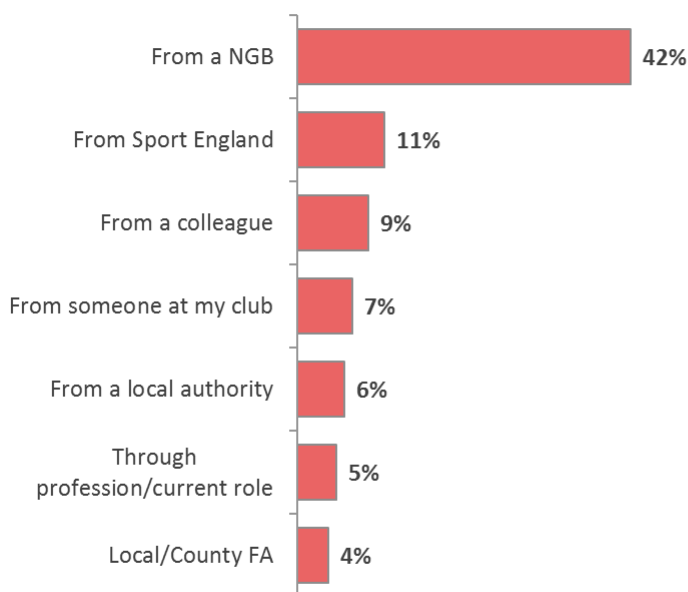


Base: Total all those not involved with Clubmark (84), Non Licensed CSPs (3), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).

When all audiences were asked about how they had first become aware of Clubmark, by far the most common individual response (42%) was through an NGB. The remaining responses can be grouped into two broad categories: 'through professional routes' (26%) and 'word of mouth' (16%). The former category is made up of: 'from Sport England', 'from my Local Authority', 'through profession/current role' and 'local county/FA' and the latter includes the remaining two categories: 'from a colleague' and 'from someone at my club'.



Q4: How first became aware of Clubmark



Base: Total all aware of Clubmark (653), Licenced CSPs (26), Non Licenced but Participating NGBs (2), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non licenced CSPs (3), Non Accredited Clubs (33), Local Authorities (31).

Clubs within some sports were more likely to have heard about Clubmark through their NGB. These are tennis (59%), badminton (58%), gymnastics (68%), angling (79%) and cycling (65%).

Some types of organisation were much less likely to indicate that they heard about Clubmark from their NGB. Unsurprisingly, given their role in relation to sports and NGBs, Licenced CSPs (12%) and Local Authorities (6%), were unlikely to indicate that they heard about Clubmark from an NGB.

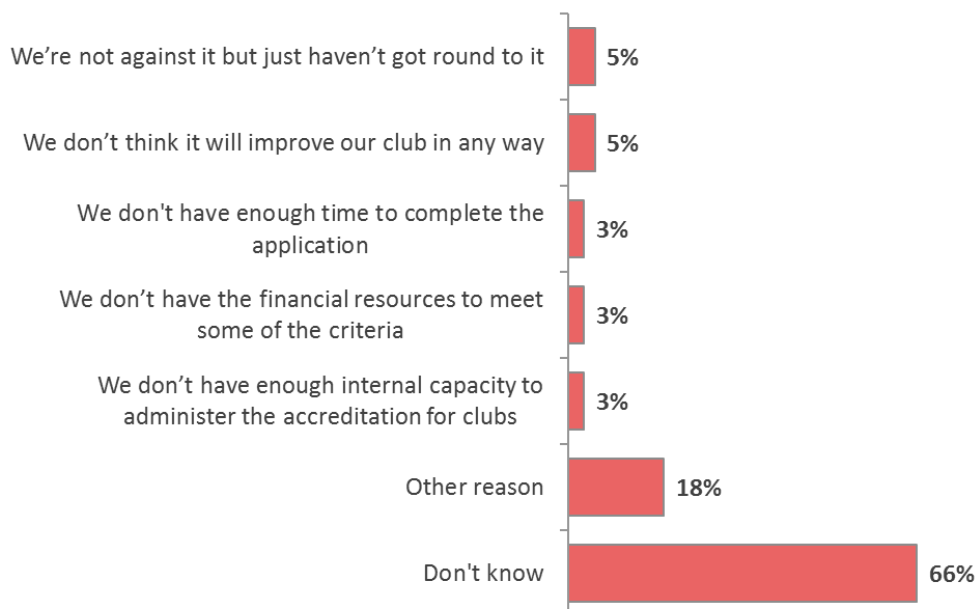
But interestingly, football clubs (12%), and adult-only clubs (16%) were also unlikely to have heard about Clubmark through this route. Football clubs were more likely to respond that they heard from either their Local/County FA (27%) or that Clubmark is a compulsory requirement (21%). Adult-only clubs were more likely to respond in a similar way to football clubs, with 20% stating Local/County FA and 24% that Clubmark is a compulsory requirement.





The 38 organisations that reported that they have never been involved with Clubmark were asked why this was. The most common response was that they didn't know, with two-thirds stating this. However the high number of 'don't know' responses should be interpreted with caution as it could be that the respondent was just not aware of the reasons why the organisation decided not to become involved with Clubmark (e.g. having joined recently).

#### Q5: Why they decided not to be involved with Clubmark



Base: Total all never involved with Clubmark (38), Non Licenced but Participating NGBs (2), Non licenced CSPs (3), Non Accredited Clubs (33).

The 7 clubs that answered this question with 'other reason' provided some additional details. These are as follows:

- ◆ Don't have a club structure
- ◆ NGB doesn't recognise it any more
- ◆ NGB has its own very similar scheme
- ◆ Haven't got the numbers to be accredited yet but are looking to gain it in the future
- ◆ Trying to find out about it so they can join
- ◆ Started the process but the goal posts kept moving
- ◆ Currently don't have consistent access to sports facilities (e.g. ground-sharing)



### 3.2 Perspective of NGBs (qualitative insights)

NGBs have high awareness of Clubmark – they know what it is, why clubs should have it and what it means for a club once they are fully accredited in terms of the evidencing criteria. Nearly all of the people within NGBs that we spoke to became aware of Clubmark either through a previous role (such as being a development officer) or through moving into the job and learning from the predecessor. No NGBs stated that Sport England or organisations working on its behalf approached the NGB with information about Clubmark.

Most NGBs do not feel that they have much of a relationship with Sport England. Many talk about KPP and how they would get together once a year in a workshop to discuss the Clubmark.

The amount of support that NGBs get from Sport England in terms of the Clubmark is also very variable. Some claim that they have never received support in this area while others state that they have been on training courses and keep in regular contact with Sport England.

This low support is not typically viewed as a negative though, as most NGBs realise that it is their duty as a licencing body to promote and administer Clubmark in a way that meets their own needs. They therefore do not necessarily feel that they need much support from Sport England, but that the support should be available to them when they need it.

The majority of NGBs do however feel that greater sharing of knowledge by Sport England in relation to Clubmark would be beneficial. For example, disseminating information on best practices by NGBs in the implementation of the scheme, or providing a platform through which they can communicate with and learn from other NGBs.

### 3.3 Perspective of National Partners (qualitative insights)

All National Partners are aware of the Clubmark scheme and all feel they understand what Clubmark does and what it is aiming to achieve.

However, National Partners have very varied involvement with Clubmark. Some National Partners were involved in the initial establishment of the accreditation, and provided their particular expertise where necessary by advising on acceptable standards and recognised training in order to form the different aspects of the scheme. For example, the National Partners were involved in creating criteria around child safety and welfare as well as in coaching requirements. Additionally, some had involvement in establishing alternative versions of Clubmark for specific groups of audiences, for example the university specific Clubmark.

The majority of National Partners said, that after their initial involvement they are ‘asked for a lot less input now’. This was attributed to the fact that the scheme has been fully set up and is now in operation. Therefore they do not feel that they have a close relationship with Sport England and as result tend to offer very limited support for Clubmark specifically. National Partners are regretful of this reduction in their involvement and express their desire to be more involved since they feel they possess the right knowledge and expertise to ensure that all scheme standards are not only up to date, but more importantly, are kept up to date on regular basis.

A small minority of National Partners provide active support to NGBs and CSPs in administering Clubmark, helping them to understand and then go beyond the set standards in set in place for their own tailored schemes, as well as helping to solve any queries that may arise. National Partners report that they are very happy to offer this support, and actively want to assist other organisations in regard to their own specific areas.



However, most National Partners question whether they are even known among the public as a national partner to Sport England on a wider basis, and feel their role should be better publicised to create higher awareness of what Clubmark is about and who is supporting the scheme.

Finally most National Partners say that they have no involvement in Clubmark per se, and rather focus on other values in the delivery of sport such as gender equalities and team sports in higher education settings.

Overall, the different National Partners are involved to varying degrees with the Clubmark scheme, but in most cases the on-going contact with Sport England is typically very limited regardless of the level of involvement.



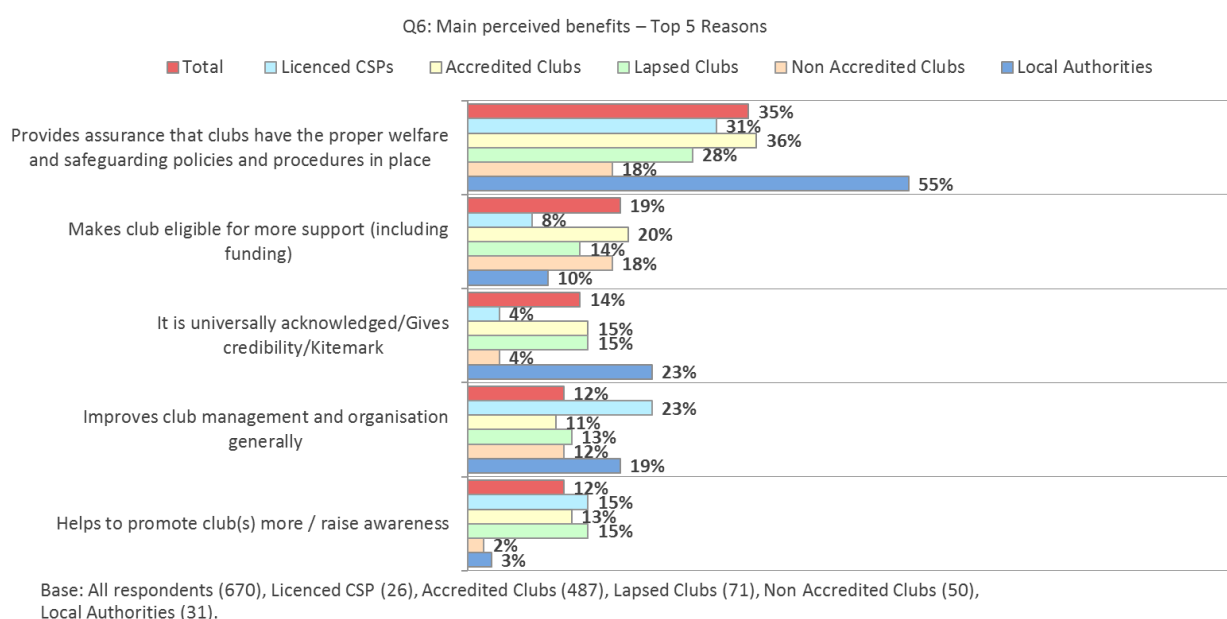
## 4. Perceived value of Clubmark

*This section looks at what participants think are the main benefits of Clubmark, as well as its drawbacks. In particular, it establishes whether perceived benefits are in-line with Clubmark's aims.*

### 4.1 Benefits of Clubmark

Organisations were asked unprompted to state what they perceive to be the main benefits of Clubmark. A broad range of benefits are identified and no one benefit is selected by more than two fifths of the overall sample.

The largest numbers of organisations indicate that they value **the assurances that Clubmark provides on welfare and safeguarding** (33%), nearly twice as many mentioned this as a benefit compared to the next most commonly mentioned. Local Authorities are considerably more likely to mention this than other audience types, with over half (55%) doing so.



The next most popular perceived benefit is that Clubmark *makes a club more eligible for support (including funding)*. Just under a fifth (19%) of all participants mention this. However the extent to which this is perceived to be a benefit differs by audience type. Licensed CSPs (8%) are much less likely to identify this as benefit, as were netball clubs (7%) and clubs in London (9%). Both football (35%) and cricket (32%) clubs are much more likely to state that this was a benefit.

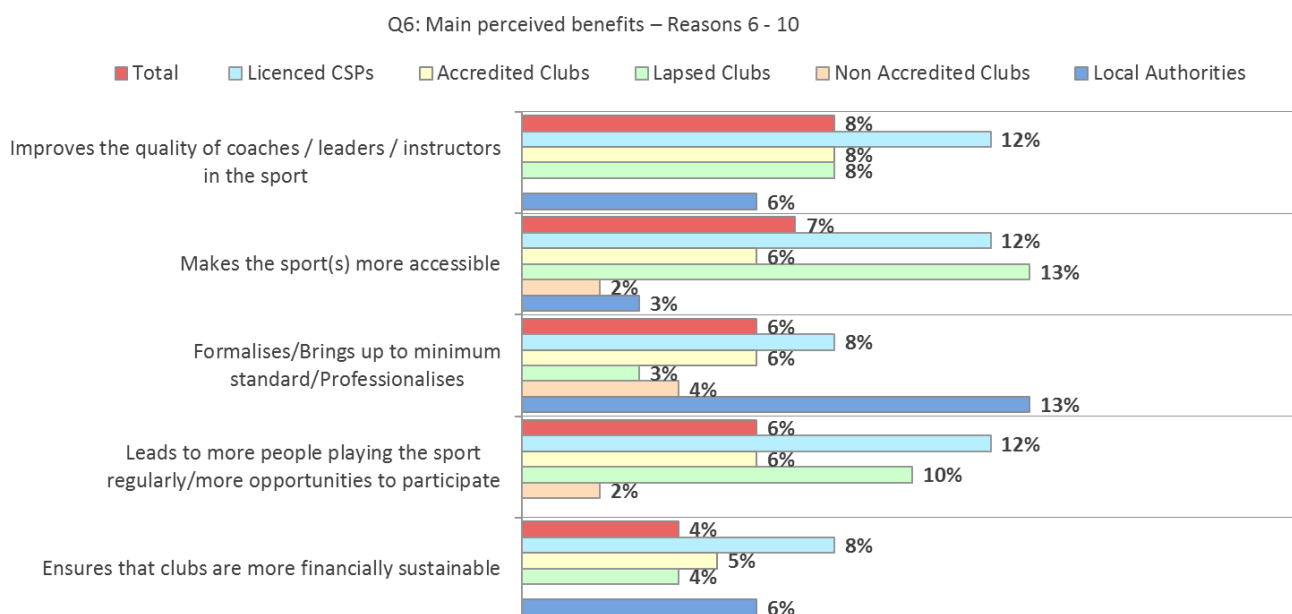
The third most popular benefit is that *Clubmark is universally acknowledged, and that it provides credibility and acts as a Kitemark*, with 14% of participants mentioning this. Local Authorities are more likely to mention this as benefit (23%), as are cycling clubs (27%). Organisations that cannot recall how long they had been involved with Clubmark (7%); and those who are dissatisfied with Clubmark (7%) are much less likely to indicate that this is a benefit.



Twelve per cent of organisations indicate that *Clubmark improves club management and organisation generally*. Licensed CSPs and Local Authorities are more likely to identify this as a benefit compared to other audiences (23% and 19% respectively). There are also some interesting differences amongst clubs: tennis clubs (27%), angling clubs (21%), and clubs with 21-50 members (19%) are more likely to mention this as a benefit, whilst cricket clubs (5%) are much less likely.

Twelve per cent of organisations also indicated that *Clubmark helps to promote clubs and raise awareness*. There are some marked divergences on this feature between clubs providing different kinds of sport, and also amongst organisations in different parts of the country. Golf clubs (24%) and canoeing clubs (26%) are more likely to mention this as a benefit whereas tennis (5%) and cycling clubs (8%) are less likely. Organisations in the North East (19%) give this response more often, particularly when compared to organisations in the West Midlands (9%), and in Yorkshire and Humberside (8%).

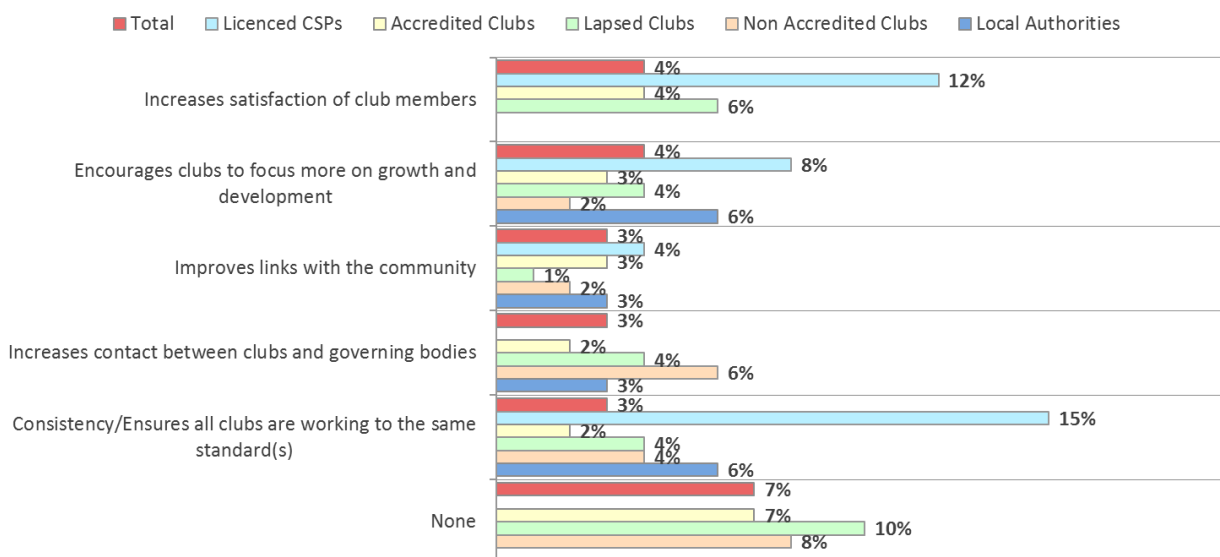
The remaining 10 benefits are less commonly identified, with none being selected by more than 1 in 10 of the overall survey population.



Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).



Q6: Main perceived benefits – Reasons 11 - 15



Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).

Importantly, Non-accredited Clubs are less likely than others to identify benefits of Clubmark. One quarter say 'don't know' compared to just 5% of the overall sample, and a further 8% indicate that they perceive no benefits ('none') to Clubmark. This indicates that, in total, over a third of this audience struggle to see how Clubmark can help their organisation.

Some other organisations also indicated that they struggle to see any benefits of Clubmark. This is most clearly the case with two particular types of participants: organisations that indicate that Clubmark does not have a positive impact on participation and organisations that express overall dissatisfaction with Clubmark. Of the former, 30% choose either 'none' (24%) or 'don't know' (6%) and of the latter, 35% choose either 'none' (28%) or 'don't know' (7%).

When the data are analysed by club type; a significant minority of adult only clubs and badminton clubs struggle to see any benefits of Clubmark. Thirty per cent of adult only clubs respond with either 'none' (14%) or 'don't know' (16%) and one quarter (24%) of badminton clubs say 'don't know'. This indicates there may be a communication problem with this particular type of club.



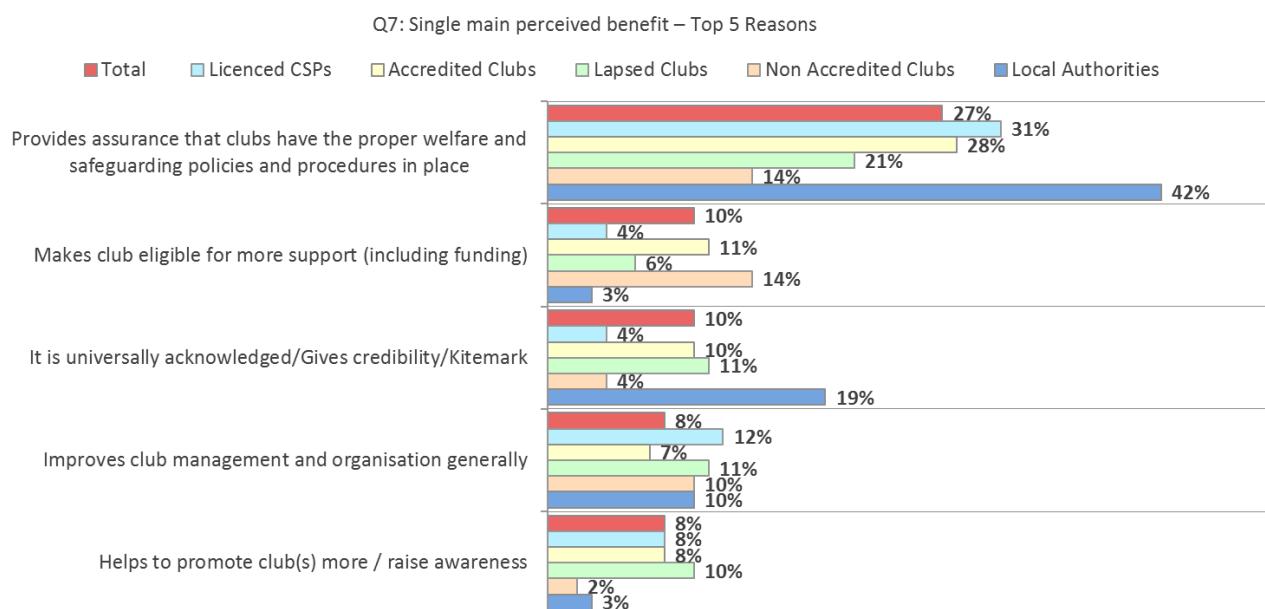


## 4.2 Single most important benefit of Clubmark

When asked to identify the single most important benefit, the top 5 responses are in the same order as the overall benefits. However, the relative importance of *assurance on welfare and safeguarding* increases dramatically. Organisations are nearly three times more likely to choose this benefit than the next most popular choice (makes clubs more eligible for support/funding). Netball clubs (40%) and organisations in the East of England (37%) are considerably more likely to identify this as the main benefit. Non-accredited Clubs are considerably less likely to pick assurance on welfare and safeguarding as the main benefit (14%), as are adult only clubs (12%) and rugby clubs (10%).

The second most popular response is *makes club eligible for more support (including funding)*, although only 10% of organisations choose this. Some types of organisation are more likely to choose this as the single main benefit, in particular, adult only clubs (16%), clubs for cricket (23%), football (18%), and gymnastics (16%). In contrast, Licensed CSPs (4%), Local Authorities (3%) and clubs in London (3%) are much less likely to pick eligibility for support as the single main benefit.

Responses relating to *universal acknowledgement* also make up 10% of responses to this question and this is the third most popular main benefit. However, it is the most popular choice amongst Local Authorities (19%) and Rugby clubs (24%) and organisations based in London (18%) are also more likely to pick this as a single main benefit.

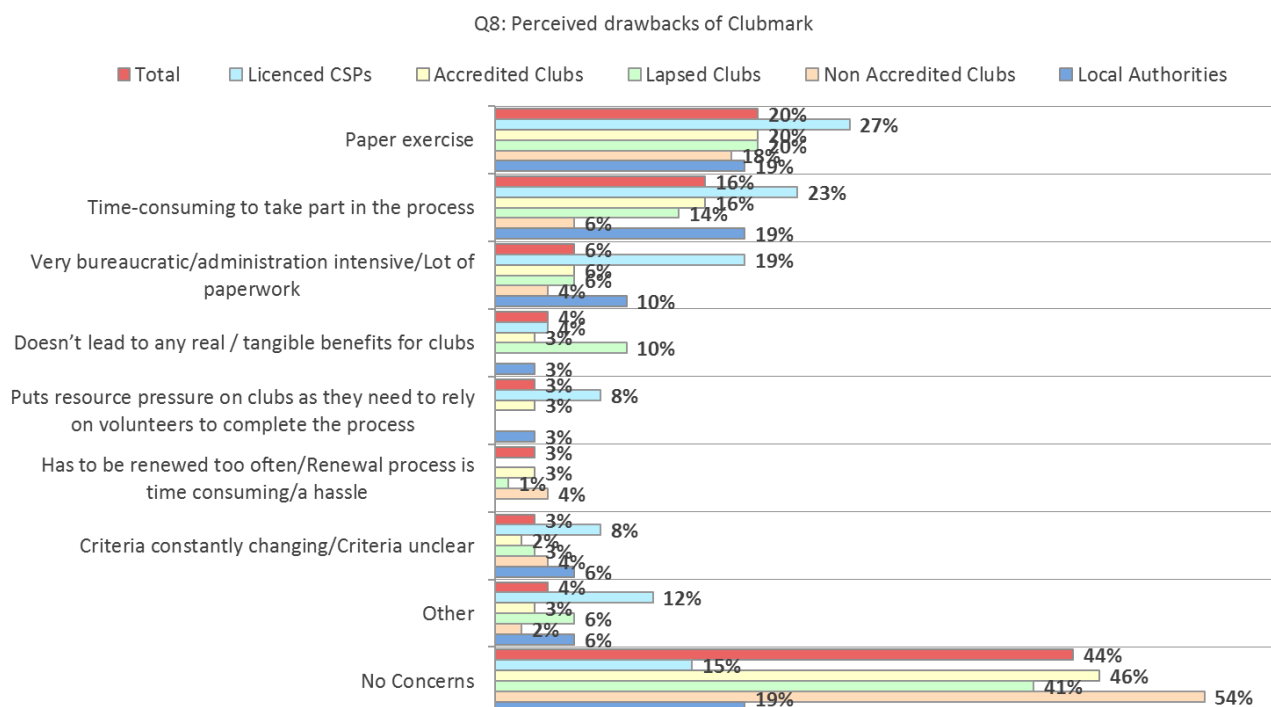


Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).



### 4.3 Dislikes of Clubmark

When asked unprompted about any dislikes of the Clubmark, nearly half (44%) have 'no concerns' about the scheme. However, some organisations are much less likely to indicate that they have 'no concerns' in relation to Clubmark. These are as follows: licensed CSPs (15%), Local Authorities (19%), those disagreeing that Clubmark has a positive impact on participation (21%), those dissatisfied with Clubmark (23%), hockey clubs (16%), and canoeing clubs (19%).



Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).

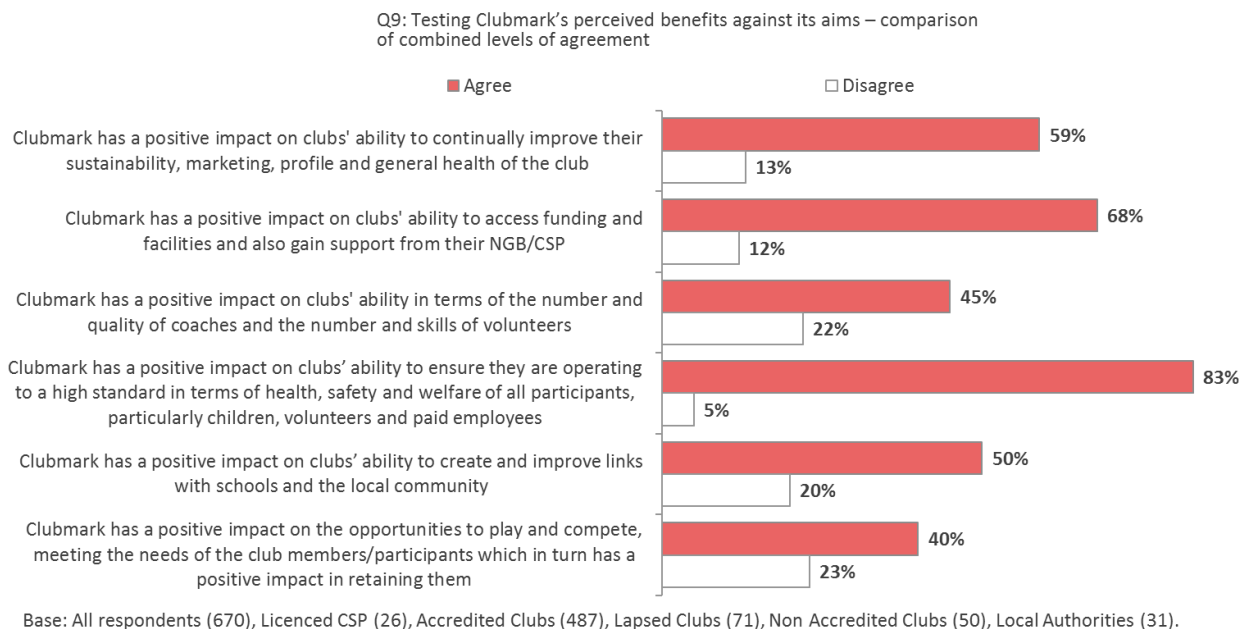
Nevertheless, slightly over half the respondents (56%) have at least some concerns about Clubmark. Within that group two fifths (42%) make comments about bureaucracy and time: 20% mention that they think it is a paper exercise; 26% indicate that it is time consuming; and 6% made comments such as 'very bureaucratic', 'administration intensive', and 'lots of paperwork'.

Some organisations are more likely to express these kinds of responses in terms of how onerous the Clubmark is. Overall, 79% of all hockey clubs, 74% of canoeing clubs, 69%, of licensed CSPs and 68% of cricket clubs comment of the onerous nature of Clubmark (interpret with caution due to low base sizes). Others are less likely to do so, specifically, angling clubs (15%), organisations that became involved in the last 12 months (20%), organisations with 1-20 members (20%), adult only clubs (20%), and football clubs (20%).



#### 4.4 Testing Clubmark's perceived benefits against its aims

In order to assess whether Clubmark is achieving what it sets out to do, participants were asked to rate its performance against 6 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Below is a summary of the overall results across the sample, followed by a detailed breakdown for each statement by audience type.



Overall, organisations are most likely to agree with the statement '*Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to ensure they are operating to a high standard in terms of health, safety and welfare of all participants, particularly children, volunteers and paid employees*'. Responses to this question generate the largest margin between the extent to which participants are likely to agree (83%) and the extent to which they were likely to disagree (5%). This is consistent with the finding in relation to Q6 and Q7 that organisations perceive Clubmark's main benefit to be the assurance it provides around welfare and safeguarding.

Organisations are also much more likely to agree with the statement '*Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to access funding and facilities and also gain support from their NGB/CSP*' for which 68% agree and 12% disagree. Similarly, the statement '*Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to continually improve their sustainability, marketing, profile and general health of the club*' receives 59% agreement compared to 13% disagreement. This indicates that, overall, organisations have a very positive view of Clubmark in relation to developing and funding clubs.

Organisations are least likely to agree with the statement '*Clubmark has a positive impact on the opportunities to play and compete, meeting the needs of the club members/participants which in turn has a positive impact in retaining them*'. Responses to this question show the smallest margin between those agreeing (40%) and disagreeing (23%).

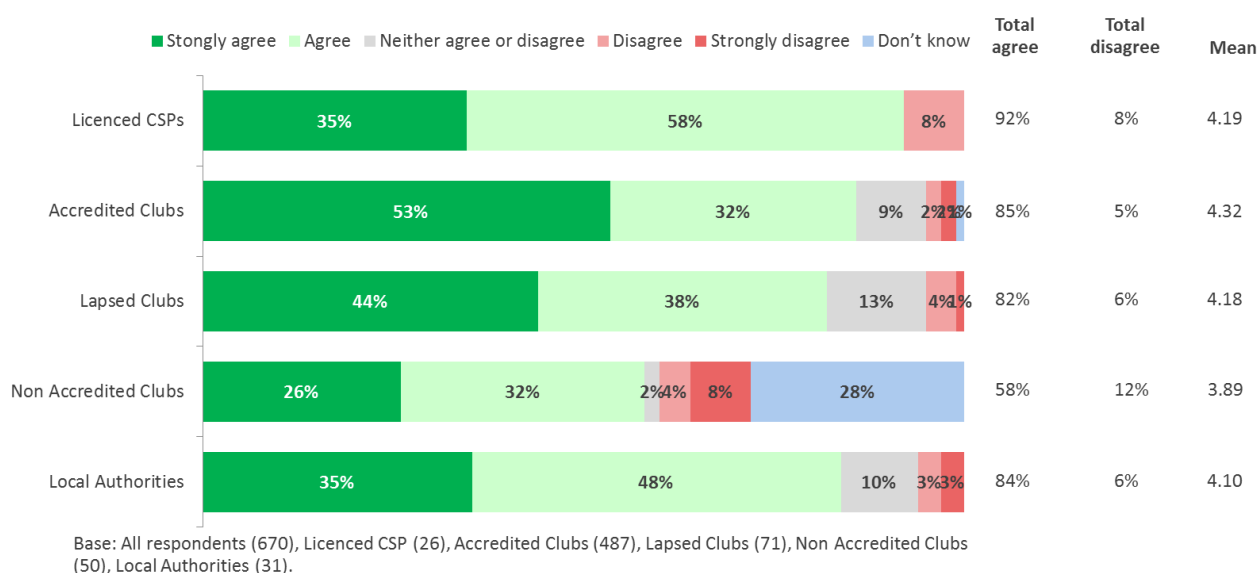
The following sections examine in detail the extent to which different types of organisations agree or disagree with each of the statements in Q9. The statements are ordered based on overall levels of agreement identified above.



The most favourably assessed KPI is 'Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to ensure they are operating to a high standard in terms of health, safety and welfare of all participants, particularly children, volunteers and paid employees'. Four fifths (83%) of organisations pick either 'agree' (42%) or 'strongly agree' (39%) and only 5% disagree.

Non Accredited Clubs are the least likely to agree with this statement and, as with the prior statements, substantial numbers of this audience (28%) respond with 'don't know'. When non Accredited Clubs are excluded, there are no substantial differences between the extents to which the remaining types of organisation are likely to agree overall with this statement. However, Accredited Clubs are more likely to 'strongly agree' (53%) than others.

Q9: Testing Clubmark's perceived benefits against its aims (1) – "Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to ensure they are operating to a high standard in terms of health, safety and welfare of all participants, particularly children, volunteers and paid employees"

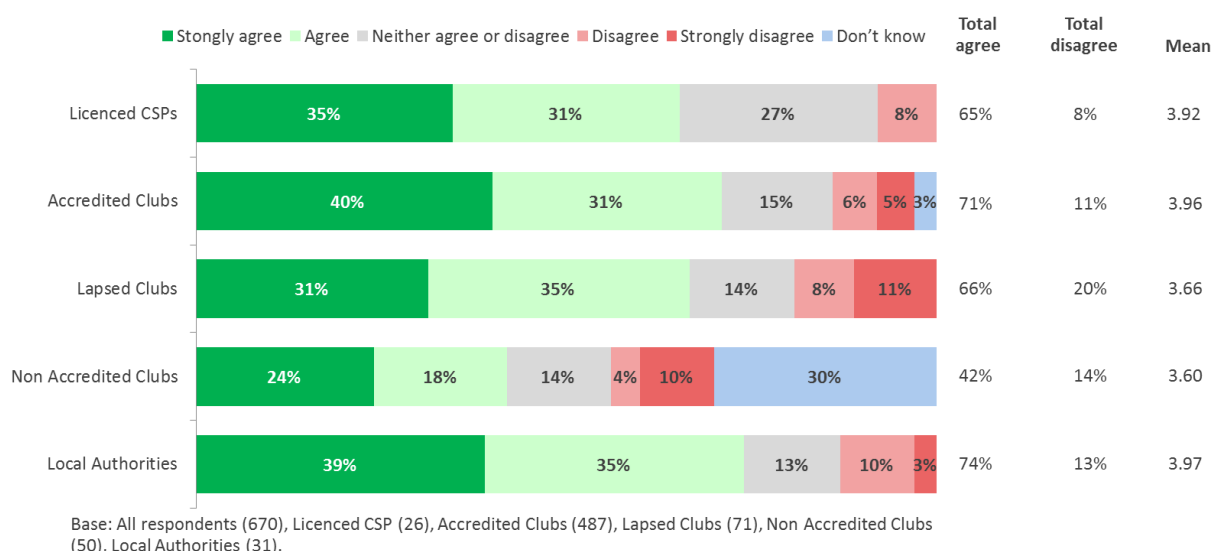


The second most favourably assessed KPI with 68% agreeing with the statement 'Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to access funding and facilities and also gain support from their NGB/CSP' and only 12% disagreeing. Furthermore, organisations are more likely to strongly agree with this statement; one third (34%) selected 'strongly agree'. Local Authorities are more likely than the other types of organisation to agree with this statement.

As with the previous statement, there is a discrepancy between the responses made by Non-accredited Clubs and other types of organisation. Only 42% per cent of Non-accredited Clubs 'agree' with the statement and 30% 'don't know'.



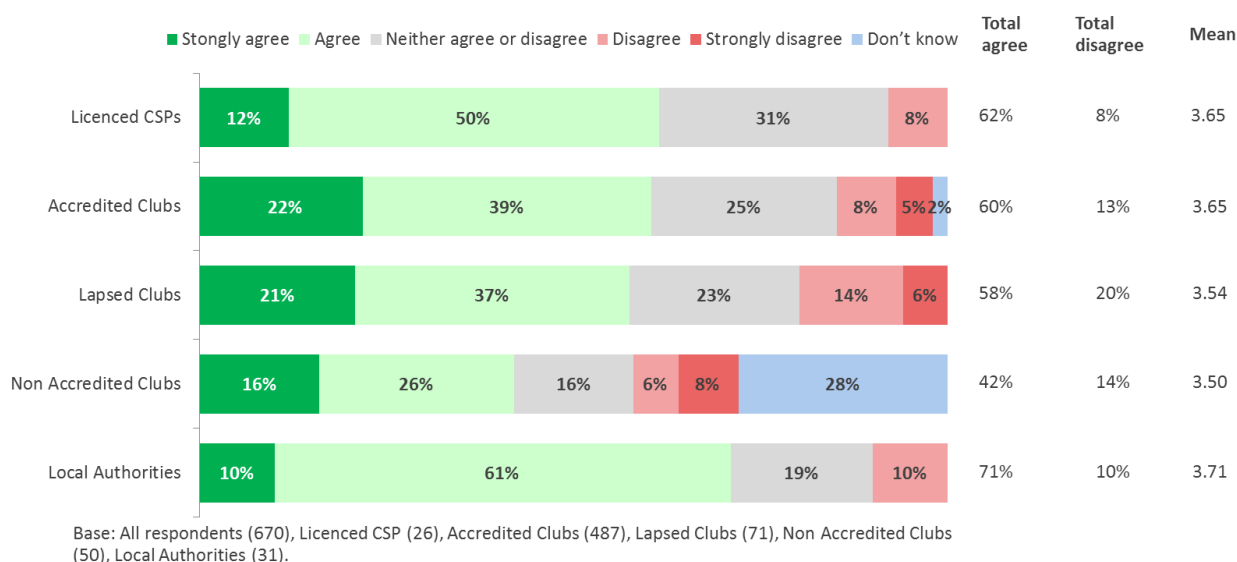
Q9: Testing Clubmark's perceived benefits against its aims (2) – "Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to access funding and facilities and also gain support from their NGB/CSP"



Overall, organisations are much more likely to agree (59%) with the statement 'Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to continually improve their sustainability, marketing, profile and general health of the club', than to disagree (13%). Amongst those who offer a favourable option 43% agree and 16% 'strongly agree'.

However, Non-accredited Clubs are considerably less likely to agree with this statement, with only 42% doing so in comparison to 62% of Licensed CSPs, 60% of Accredited Clubs, 58% of Lapsed Clubs and 71% of Local Authorities (who are the most likely to agree with this statement).

Q9: Testing Clubmark's perceived benefits against its aims (3) – "Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability to continually improve their sustainability, marketing, profile and general health of the club"

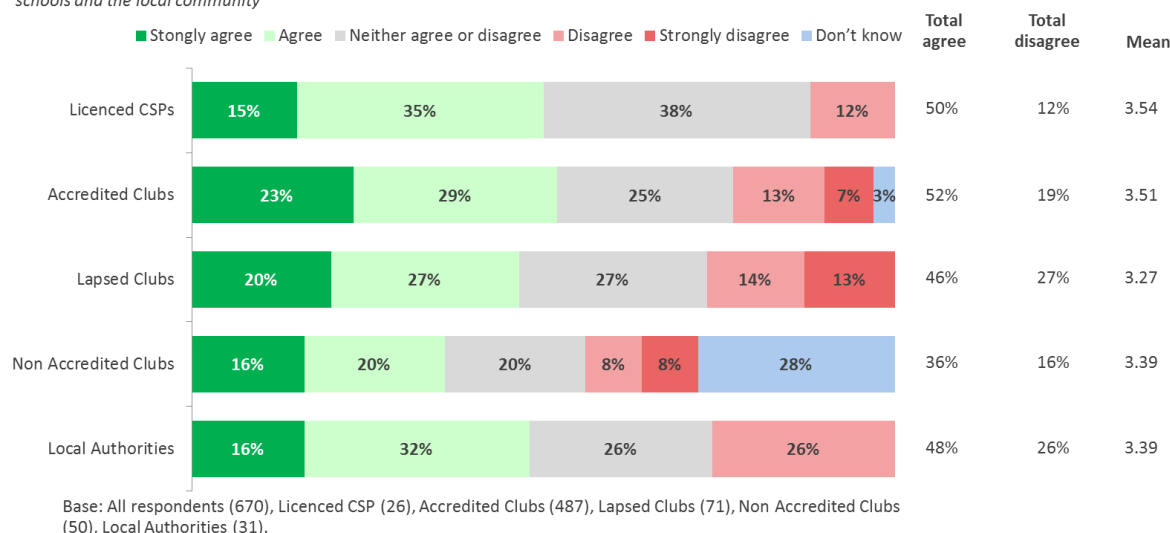




The statement ‘Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs’ ability to create and improve links with schools and the local community’ is another of the weaker KPIs, although organisations are still more likely to agree (50%) with than to disagree (20%) with it.

As with the previous questions in this section, Non-accredited Clubs provide a substantial number of ‘don’t know’ (26%) responses. When Non-accredited Clubs are excluded, there are no substantial differences between the extents to which different types of organisation agree with this statement.

Q9: Testing Clubmark’s perceived benefits against its aims (4) – “Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs’ ability to create and improve links with schools and the local community”



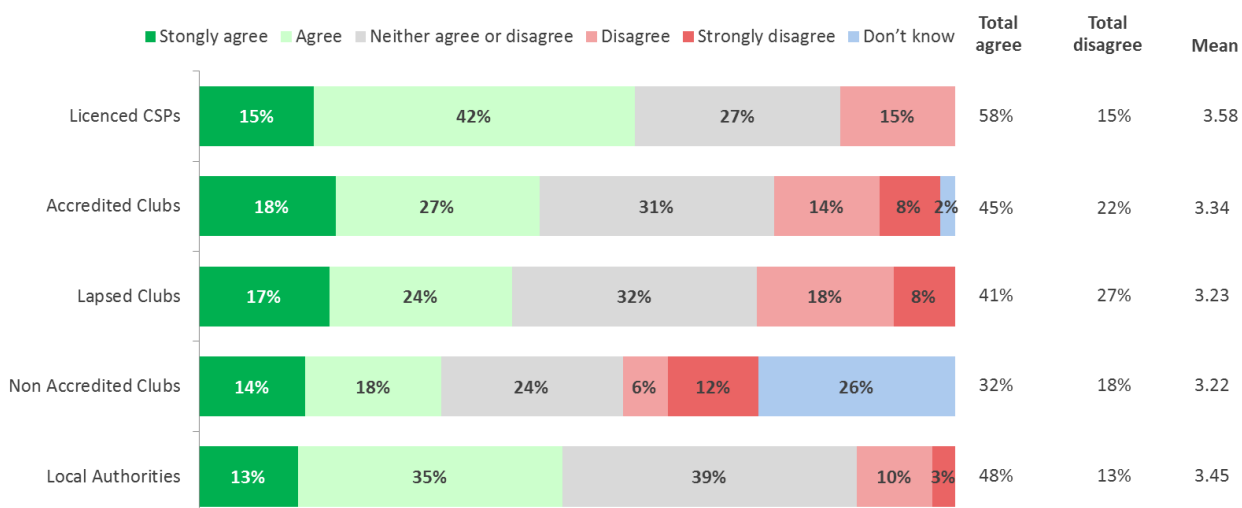
The statement ‘Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs’ ability in terms of the number and quality of coaches and the number and skills of volunteers’ is one of the weaker KPIs; although organisations are still more likely to agree (45%) with than to disagree with it (22%). Amongst those offering a favourable view sentiment is also softer, 29% picking ‘agree’ (29%) and only 15% ‘strongly agree’. Licensed CSPs are more likely than other types of organisation to agree with this statement.

Between the different types of organisation, the pattern of responses to this question is broadly the same as the previous two: Non-accredited Clubs are less likely to agree with the statement and over a quarter state ‘don’t know’ (26%).





Q9: Testing Clubmark's perceived benefits against its aims (5) – “Clubmark has a positive impact on clubs' ability in terms of the number and quality of coaches and the number and skills of volunteers”

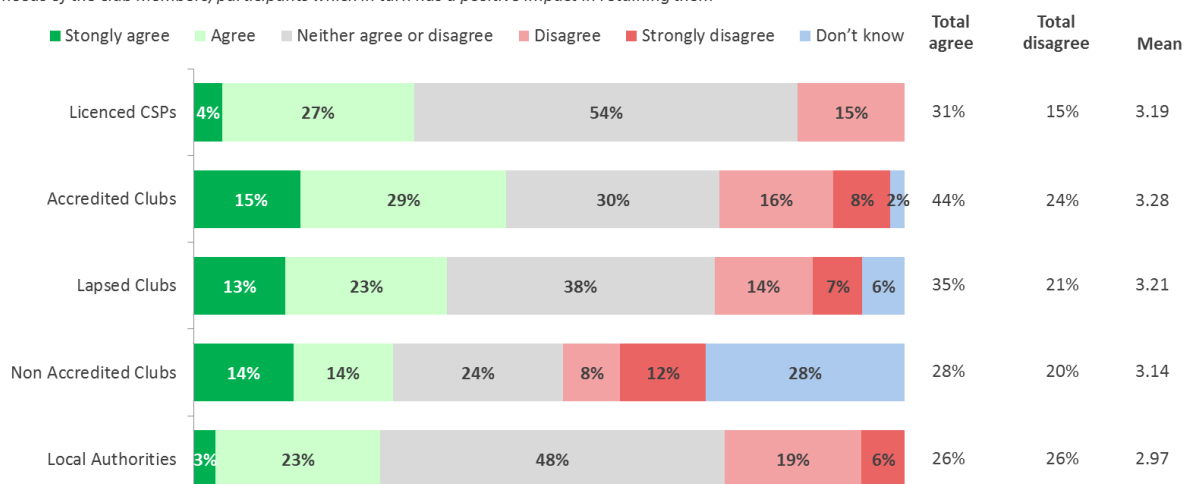


Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).

On balance, organisations are least likely to agree with the statement ‘Clubmark has a positive impact on the opportunities to play and compete, meeting the needs of the club members/participants which in turn has a positive impact in retaining them’. Overall, participants are only slightly more likely to agree (40%) than disagree (23%) with this statement.

Accredited Clubs are more likely to agree to this statement that other organisations, with just under half (44%) doing so. Local Authorities are less likely than the other types of organisations to agree with this statement (26%). As with the other questions in this section, Non-accredited Clubs provide substantial numbers of ‘don’t know’ (28%) responses.

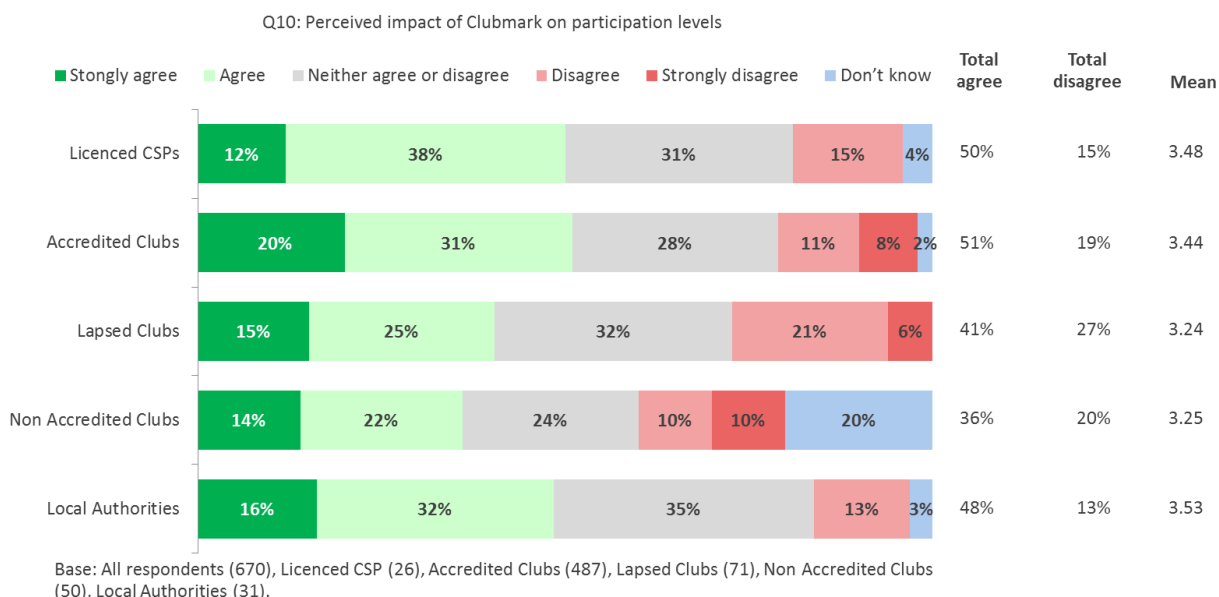
Q9: Testing Clubmark's perceived benefits against its aims (6) – “Clubmark has a positive impact on the opportunities to play and compete, meeting the needs of the club members/participants which in turn has a positive impact in retaining them”



Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).



Participants were specifically asked for their thoughts on the impact of Clubmark on sports participation levels. Overall, organisations are more likely to agree (45%) that Clubmark has a positive impact on participation than to disagree (18%). The tendency to agree with the statement is consistent across most of the different organisation types, although Non-accredited Clubs provided more ‘don’t know’ (20%) responses.



However, with approximately a third of all organisations saying that they ‘neither agree nor disagree,’ this suggests that there is some ambiguity over Clubmark’s impact on participation levels. Furthermore, Lapsed Clubs display the highest level of disagreement with this statement, with over a quarter doing so (27%). This suggests impact on participation levels may well be a key factor in clubs’ satisfaction with Clubmark.

#### 4.5 Perspective of NGBs (qualitative insights)

NGBs identify a number of intangible benefits that the Clubmark brings to clubs and these are seen as very clear and very important aspects of the scheme. These intangible benefits include equality, health and safety and child protection.

NGBs are keen for clubs to achieve Clubmark because it is a mark of a well-run club with a good structure and development plan in place. They also believe that Clubmark helps clubs to become better organised in terms of having paper work in one place and in many cases having it online.

However, NGBs find these intangible benefits hard to ‘sell’ to clubs. They therefore tend to sell them as part of a broader package that also highlights the tangible benefits of Clubmark, such as gaining more funding, better access to facilities and in some cases, an incentive from the NGB upon accreditation.



#### 4.6 Perspective of National Partners (qualitative insights)

Typically, National Partners perceive the Clubmark scheme as beneficial because it sets minimum operating standards for clubs, particularly in terms of safeguarding, and thus helps to ensure the welfare of children. Therefore Clubmark promotes and encourages thinking around safeguarding and places this issue at the forefront of people's minds and clubs' values.

National Partners also see a key benefit of Clubmark as offering a pathway for development; clubs can easily see any areas in which they need to improve, which in turn helps them to become better, higher quality clubs. Furthermore the scheme aids the capabilities of clubs to plan their development and work well as businesses. This is particularly beneficial to clubs in higher education facilities as students can gain essential soft skills and feel more professional and personal satisfaction as a result.

Another key benefit of Clubmark mentioned by National Partners is that the scheme helps to facilitate better working relationships between clubs and their partner organisations. Clubs working towards achieving Clubmark accreditation will work closer with their NGB/CSP, which encourages more dialogue and the exchange of support between organisations. Additionally the general association with Sport England is highly valued by the National Partners, as it shows clubs are part of a wider body governing all sport in England.

However National Partners do note some drawbacks to Clubmark as it now stands. These include the lack of visible tangible benefits that could help to 'sell' the Clubmark scheme to clubs since the most obvious benefits of membership are intangible as described above. Some National Partners also express anxieties that Clubmark sets the bar of standards quite low, and that the clubs could go above and beyond what the scheme is asking. It is also a concern whether the self-reported standards in clubs are adhered to on daily basis, as it is difficult to monitor this.

Some feel that Clubmark can become a 'box ticking' exercise, involving too much paperwork to evidence many criteria, while at the same time not enough stress is placed on demonstrating effective operating standards and values. National Partners also questioned one of the original aims of Clubmark: to increase participation in sport. Many do not consider Clubmark to be the driver or a reason for participation in sport; instead National Partners feel that scheme accreditation only becomes a factor when an individual has already decided to partake in sport. There is also doubt among National Partners whether the public is aware of Clubmark and what it means, and so consequently whether individuals consider the scheme when making their decisions on sport participation.



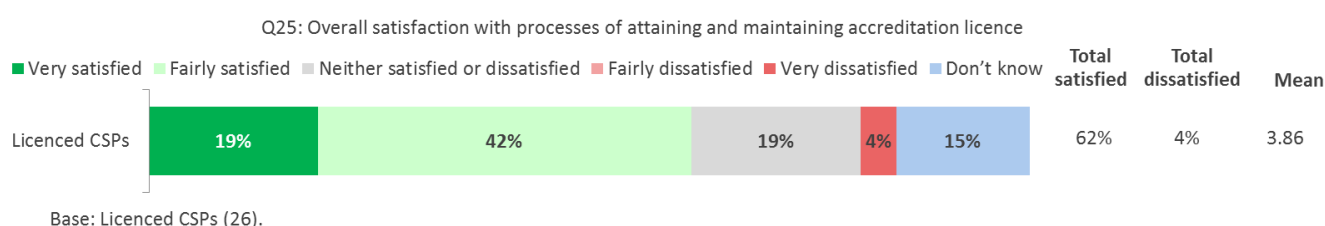
## 5. Accreditation Process

*This section looks at the stages of the accreditation process from the perspective of clubs and accrediting bodies. Each stage is assessed by looking at satisfactions, challenges and areas for improvement. This section also covers the perspective of National Partners who provide support to clubs and accrediting bodies.*

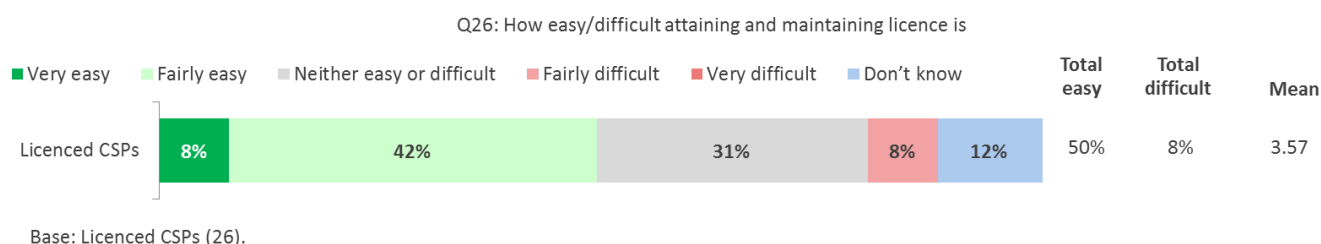
### 5.1 Accrediting Bodies (CSPs and NGBs)

#### 5.1.1 CSPs

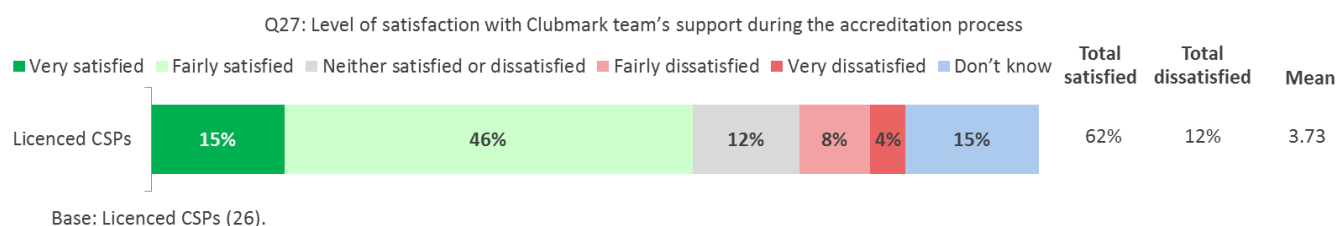
Licensed CSPs were asked about their overall level of satisfaction in regards to attaining and maintaining their accreditation licence. Results indicate that licensed CSPs are generally satisfied, with over half (62%) stating that they are either 'very' or 'fairly satisfied'. Dissatisfaction is very low, with just 1 CSP of the 26 interviewed expressing this.



Half of Licensed CSPs consider the process of attaining and maintaining their accreditation licence to be easy, with the majority judging the process as 'fairly easy' (42%). There are very few who find this a difficult process to achieve (8%).

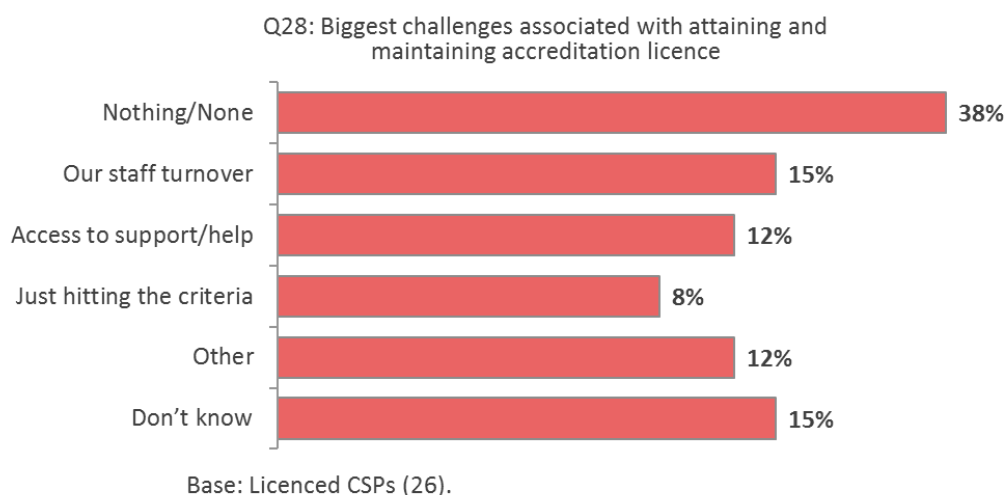


The majority of Licensed CSPs are satisfied with the Clubmark's team support during the accreditation process (62%). There is however a small number of CSPs who express dissatisfaction with the support (12%) and these CSPs tend to have been involved in the Clubmark for longer.





Overall, licenced CSPs have very few challenges associated with attaining and maintaining their accreditation licence, with over a third (38%) expressing that there are no challenges and only small proportions mentioning any individual challenge. Where challenges are experienced, these mostly tend to be due to staff turnover (15%), followed by access to support or help (12%).



### 5.1.2 Perspective of NGBs (qualitative insights)

#### *How NGBs tailor the Clubmark to meet the own needs*

A number of factors impact how much NGBs tailor the Clubmark to meet their objectives.

#### **Tailoring Clubmark – Name**

Approximately half of NGBs, generally the larger ones, have renamed Clubmark. Some keep 'Clubmark' within the name, for example British Judo calling the scheme 'The British Judo Clubmark award,' whilst others do not for example British Swimming (Swim21); Archery (OnTarget); Rugby League (Club accreditation scheme) and English Table Tennis (Premier Club).

#### **Tailoring Clubmark - Criteria**

NGBs, again generally larger ones, often see Clubmark as providing a useful platform for them to build upon and tend to tailor the Clubmark criteria to make it more relevant for their sports. For example it is quite common to see NGBs implement a tier system, normally bronze, silver and gold. Such tier systems are particularly common amongst NGBs who aim to get most or all of their clubs Clubmarked.

*"Clubmark is great because it gives us a structure to work with to improve our clubs. It has all of the relevant things in place and allows us to build upon them, if we need to. It's also good because it is a national accreditation from Sport England, so clubs don't think that it is just another thing that their NGB is demanding of them." (Large NGB).*



The lower tier (bronze) tends to be close to the standard Clubmark criteria, with silver and gold being used to achieve an even higher standard. Examples include having higher level coaches (England Netball), more detailed club development plans, doing more club and Clubmark publicity (British Gymnastics), having better facilities (England Table Tennis association), a higher trained welfare officer (Angling), increased female participation (England Basketball) and coaching sessions tailored to each age group (Lawn Tennis Association).

Although NGBs feel that they are best placed to develop additional criteria to optimise Clubmark for their sport, may do feel that they would benefit from some guidance from Sport England. This could be a meeting to look over the additional criteria set by the NGB, advice on best practices or even just access to other NGBs so that they could share knowledge on Clubmark in a centralised way.

*“Sport England has given us this platform and it is our responsibility to make sure that we make the most of Clubmark. Having said that, it’s has taken us a while to get it right and we feel that we added too much criteria at first, making it hard for our clubs to achieve. Some guidance from Sport England would have helped.” (Large NGB).*

*“It would be good to speak to NGBs to see how they develop their Clubmark. I think we’d all learn from that knowledge sharing. I often speak to others that I know in different sports to find this out.” (Medium NGB).*

NGBs also tend to make changes to Clubmark criteria in order to simplify the accreditation. For example, one large NGB has removed the need to know the community as they feel that this is not realistic for their clubs to achieve, and another has removed having to go on an equity course as they think it ‘irrelevant’.

Some NGBs decide not to change the criteria, but relax the accreditation award process. For example, one NGB states that they recognise that their clubs ‘aren’t very good at doing paperwork’ so assess and award Clubmark more on a gut feeling having visited the clubs, rather than by insisting that they follow the more formal application procedures.

The qualitative insight gained from clubs supports the need to tailor Clubmark to make it relevant to their sports. For example, a badminton club complained about having to meet the session plan criteria, as the type of sessions they are able to run are very much dependent on the profile of people who attend on the given day.

### *Promoting Clubmark*

Overall, NGBs’ approach towards promoting Clubmark as Sport England’s accreditation is variable. Some NGBs make sure that their clubs are fully aware of this, whilst others don’t. The latter is generally more common amongst those who incorporate Clubmark within a broader accreditation scheme, thus promote it under a different name.

How actively NGBs promote Clubmark depends on where it fits within their overall organisational objectives. Most NGBs have at least some clubs accredited and see supporting clubs to achieve the accreditation as an important priority. Those that don’t see the accreditation as a priority tend to be the ones don’t think it is relevant for their sport, for example if it does not have a strong club structure.



However, even though Clubmark may be important, very few NGBs set specific targets in terms of wanting to get a certain number or proportion of clubs accredited. Setting targets can be problematic for a number of reasons.

Firstly, NGBs realise that for some clubs it is near impossible to actually attain Clubmark status and they therefore do not strongly promote it to them. Reasons for clubs finding it difficult to achieve Clubmark include not being in a position to engage with the community, not having enough volunteers or access to quality facilities. NGBs therefore don't want to put excess pressure on such clubs, as it can risk damaging their relationship. For example, some smaller NGBs mention that they used to have targets, but found that this affected the quality of the relationship that they had with their clubs. Since then, they have removed targets and focus on quality rather than quantity when it comes to getting their clubs accredited.

*"We don't want to set targets anymore because we don't want to be jumping through targets. When we had targets it didn't work, it diluted the quality." (Small NGB).*

Secondly, NGBs are less likely to see Clubmark as a priority when they lack the capacity to support a substantial number of their clubs through it. As such, they do not actively promote Clubmark as much as they feel they could. This is becoming increasingly problematic with recent budget cuts, which are disproportionately affecting smaller NGBs. Overall, many NGBs rely on regional development officers to support clubs through the accreditation process. These officers are based in the club's local area and are their main point of contact. However, NGBs that are facing financial pressures have seen a reduction in the number of development officers, which has led to less support for clubs looking to achieve Clubmark. Some NGBs with such internal resource constraints are able to address these by signposting their clubs to other bodies, such as CSPs, where they can access additional support.

In summary, few NGBs actively push Clubmark. They take more of a 'carrot' approach by promoting it as a 'nice to have,' making it clear why it is good for clubs to have all of these procedures in place. However, NGBs are careful not to disadvantage clubs who cannot achieve it, such as by making opportunities to access funding conditional to having the Clubmark.

### *Communications channels between NGBs and clubs*

The way in which NGBs actively make their clubs aware of Clubmark differs substantially. For most, the main source is word of mouth, mainly through regional development officers and possibly other clubs. Most also have a page on their website dedicated to Clubmark.

Some NGBs take more innovative approaches to promoting Clubmark. One NGB (British Gymnastics) has made publicising Clubmark part of the Clubmark criteria for clubs. The NGB has found this effective and also arranges events themselves to promote Clubmark to parents. Another large NGB holds an award ceremony each year to acknowledge the best Clubmark club within their sport.





Overall, although most NGBs feel that it is their duty as a licencing body to promote Clubmark to their clubs, they do feel that they, and the scheme as a whole, would benefit from greater Sport England involvement in its proportion. Not only would this benefit those with less capacity, but many NGBs to comment that Sport England's involvement is a real strength and USP of the scheme. Promoting this more widely will increase 'buy in' from clubs.

*"It's great that it is a national, cross-sport accreditation scheme. Clubs like being part of something bigger and so this really needs to be publicised. We find it hard to convince them of the benefits of Clubmark, making them less inclined to sign up. But more promotion will mean more and more clubs come to us actually wanting to take part." (Medium NGB).*

NGBs' views on the challenges of promoting the Clubmark are very much supported by the qualitative insights gained from clubs. Clubs generally identify a key challenge as being the lack of awareness of Clubmark amongst parents. Although they can and do put the Clubmark logo on their newsletters and website, it is very rare for parents to ask what the logo represents. As such, clubs find that whether they are accredited or not is not much of a differentiating factor for parents deciding on a club for their children to attend.

### *Supporting clubs in collating and documenting evidence*

NGB support officers' are the main source of help for clubs going through the accreditation process. Once clubs decide to apply for Clubmark, where possible, officers will visit them with the relevant documentation and instructions on how to complete the scheme. Clubs can also answer any questions at this stage. However, as mentioned above, the increasing lack of hands-on development officers is proving problematic for smaller NGBs. They have always worked closely with their clubs to help them through the accreditation process and are finding this increasingly difficult.

The additional help that NGBs provide or offer to clubs comes mostly from the templates that Sport England provide. NGBs have received positive feedback from their clubs on these. Some NGBs keep the templates as they are, whilst others adapt them for their specific accreditation/ sport. Some NGBs also provide information on their websites with advice on how to complete the process, and most NGBs supply a checklist for clubs to follow and tick off.

Beyond the Sport England templates, some additional support materials from NGBs and, where possible, face-to-face contact with support officers; clubs are generally left to collect their own documents and evidence.

### *Assessing applications*

This process has historically been paper-based. Clubs can either send in their paperwork by post or in person, when a support officer visits them. If there is anything wrong with the application, such as missing or incorrect documents, they are sent back to the clubs to complete and return. This process continues until all documents are correct.

For most NGBs, the paper-based approach can be onerous. Some have even gone to the extent of hiring or commissioning internal teams to make the application process online. These NGBs include Rugby League, British Judo, Swimming, British gymnastics and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). They have found the online system to be much more efficient.





NGBs that haven't developed their own online systems do feel that moving all, or at least part or the process online would help. They suggest things like being able to download templates, so that clubs can complete them and return them via email, or upload them to a centralised portal.

Some suggest a centralised way of knowing when club members or coaches have been on the relevant courses, so that this information could go directly to NGBs. For NGBs, automating the application process as best as possible will reduce the workload of clubs and make management of Clubmark more efficient for NGBs.

One particular NGB has an online system that they are very proud of and feel has substantially increased the efficiency of their accreditation scheme. A key feature of this is the alert system. When a club makes a change to a document or uploads a new one, an alert goes out to the local development officer to say that the paperwork has been uploaded to the online portal and is ready to be checked.

There is a lot of trust involved with the assessment process. NGBs don't have the capacity to thoroughly check clubs through visits as much as they would like, so, where paper evidence is not asked for, they rely on clubs to be as honest as possible. For example, one NGB asks their clubs to do their own health check and report back on if anything is outstanding.

External verification visits from the Clubmark team have mixed reviews. Some NGBs view them negatively, stating that they are too generic. They are also thought to put excess pressure on clubs, especially when little notice of their visit is given. Furthermore, NGBs are frustrated by the fact that, often, feedback is not given to them or directly to their clubs.

However, NGBs that have had a positive experience find external verifications to be an important barometer of how well their clubs are doing, as well as how well they are doing in licencing clubs. External verification visits can also be seen as a way of enhancing NGBs' relationships with clubs: they are an opportunity for clubs to be recognised by NGBs for their hard work.

### *Supporting clubs in maintaining and implementing Clubmark effectively*

NGBs recognise that Clubmark is not just about achieving high standards, but maintaining and building upon these. Otherwise the benefits are minimised. They therefore feel that it's important that clubs have access to the necessary support to help them make the most of the accreditation.

However, most NGBs feel that they do not have the capacity or structures currently in place to allow this. Many comment that once the accreditation has been achieved, the relationship between the club and NGB comes to an abrupt halt. Ideally, they would like to have members of staff who are dedicated to visiting Accredited Clubs and helping them to implement the Clubmark effectively, but for most this just isn't possible.

Furthermore, some NGBs worry that because many clubs fail to see any tangible benefits once they have achieved Clubmark, they are less likely to take it upon themselves to maximise Clubmark.

Overall, regular contact with NGBs is seen as an important way of maintaining clubs' long-term engagement with Clubmark. For example, the yearly health check is valued for keeping clubs engaged and reducing apathy towards the accreditation once achieved. NGBs suggest having a centralised portal where Accredited Clubs can register and have more regular contact with their NGB. Some suggest making such on-going contact more structured, such as by having checklist where once a month clubs can tick or cross to indicate whether they are carrying out each part of the set criteria or not.



An example of the importance of thinking about long-term engagement and support comes from one particular NGB. This NGB set high targets to ensure that a number of its clubs were accredited, however in doing so, they rushed a number of clubs through the process. They are extremely busy and now have ‘too many’ clubs to provide on-going support to, which they simply can’t do. As such, they have seen their relationship with certain clubs deteriorate.

NGBs feel that it is not their sole responsibility to ensure that clubs are getting the most out of Clubmark. Many highlight the responsibilities of other bodies, such as Local Authorities or CSPs and feel that they should be mobilised to ensure that clubs get sufficient support.

### *Renewal process*

Clubmark renewal is normally every three years but it can be up to every 4 years. Some NGBs, usually those that set targets against the number of clubs they want accredited, send out a reminder to clubs that their renewal is due. This is normally done 4 months prior to their renewal date. NGBs that are less interested in Clubmark and see it as a ‘nice to have’ addition for their clubs, do not send out any reminders.

Reminders are seen as an important way to motivate clubs to renew their Clubmark. NGBs express concern that with clubs often having seen few tangible benefits of the Clubmark the first time round, they may be reluctant to continue. Furthermore, if there are tangible benefits associated with accrediting, such as the £500 that England Basketball gives to their Accredited Clubs, this monetary benefit is not given upon renewal.

If clubs have been diligent in maintaining Clubmark standards, such as by doing their yearly health check, the renewal process tends to be considered an easy part of the overall accreditation process. It simply consists of checking whether all aspects of Clubmark are still in place and up to the required standard. However if clubs haven’t been as diligent, the process can be more onerous.

The process of informing Sport England when a club becomes lapsed is problematic for some. In particular, one NGB notes that this is ‘too complicated.’ Instead, they suggest having a list of their clubs on Sport England’s website, so that they can simply login and uncheck a box next to the name of the club that has failed to renew.

## **5.2 Clubs (Accredited and Lapsed) – quantitative results**

### **5.2.1 Ease of application**

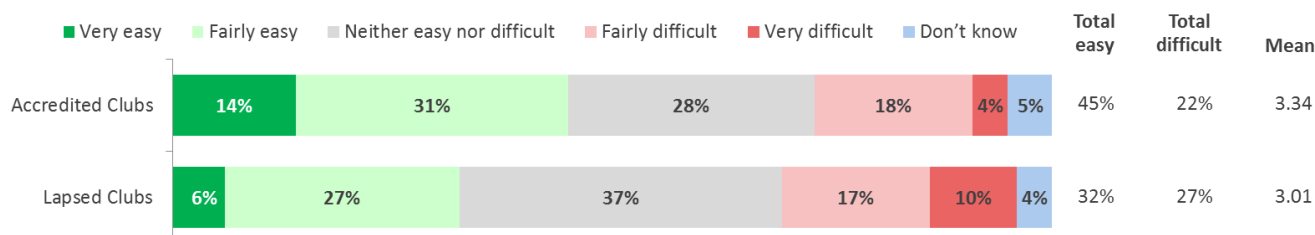
When considering the overall application process, Accredited Clubs tend to view this as an easier process than Lapsed Clubs, with nearly half of Accredited Clubs (45%) judging the process as easy compared to only a third of Lapsed Clubs (32%). However there are about a quarter of both Accredited (22%) and Lapsed Clubs (27%) that consider the application process to be difficult. Interestingly, there is a slight tendency for clubs that have become involved with Clubmark more recently to judge this process as easier than those who completed it a longer time ago.

Across all clubs, 43% found the application process easy and 23% found it difficult. Other than football clubs and golf clubs, clubs for different types of sport give responses that are similar to the overall levels: around 40-45% found it easy and 20-25% found it difficult. Football clubs, however, found the application process a lot easier: 65% rate it as easy and only 10% rate it as difficult. Of the football clubs that rate the application process as easy, around two thirds rate it as fairly easy, with one third as very easy.



Golf clubs seem to find the application process difficult, with 30% of them doing so. Of this 30%, around two fifths rate it as fairly difficult and fifth as very difficult.

Q11: Overall assessment of ease/difficulty of the application process



Base: Total all clubs that have been accredited (558), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71).

There is relatively little difference between the ease/difficulty of fulfilling each of the 4 criteria points for both Accredited and Lapsed Clubs and generally clubs feel that all of the criteria are not difficult to achieve.

However it is apparent that the criteria for 'club management' is considered the easiest element to fulfil, with 61% of Accredited Clubs and 68% of Lapsed Clubs judging this as easy. Furthermore this criteria section has the highest proportion of respondents saying that it is 'very easy' to fulfil.

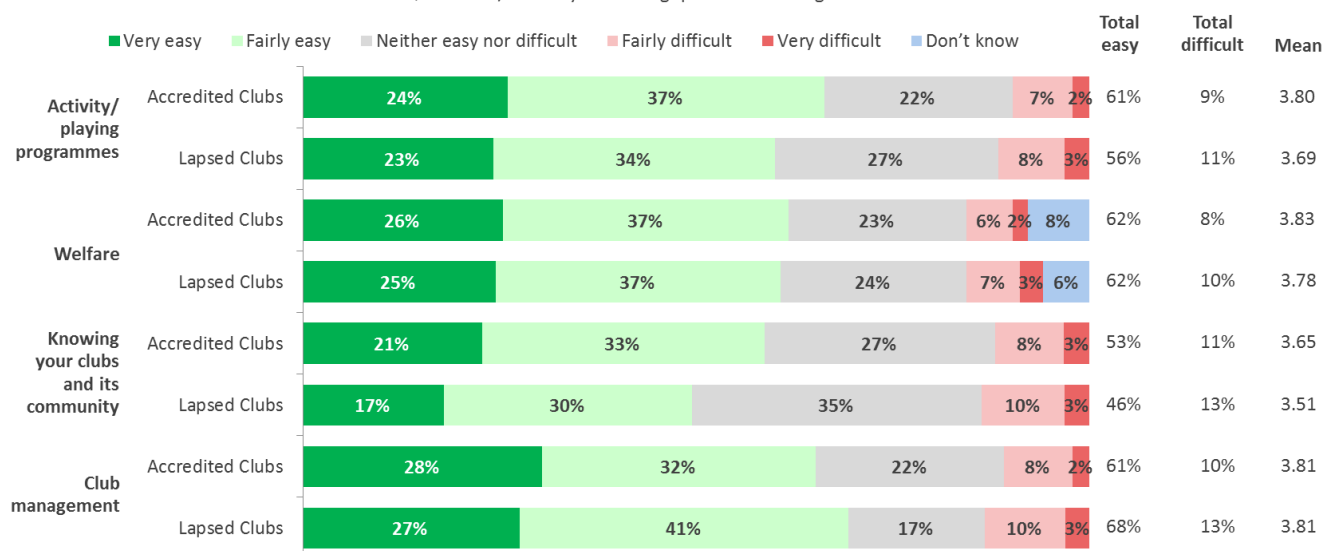
Some types of clubs are more likely to indicate that club management is an easy element to fulfil than other clubs, with 83% athletics, 82% angling, and 80% boxing judging this as easy.

Furthermore, overall, clubs with small NGBs are more likely than clubs with large NGBs to judge club management as easy to fulfil.

However other types of club are less likely to indicate that management is the easiest element to fulfil.

- Golf (48% total easy/ 20% total difficult)
- Tennis (47% total easy/ 33% total difficult)
- Cycling (46% total easy/ 12% total difficult)
- Canoeing (45% total easy/ 13% total difficult)

Q12a: Ease /difficulty of fulfilling specific evidencing criteria



Base: Total all clubs that have been accredited (558), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71).

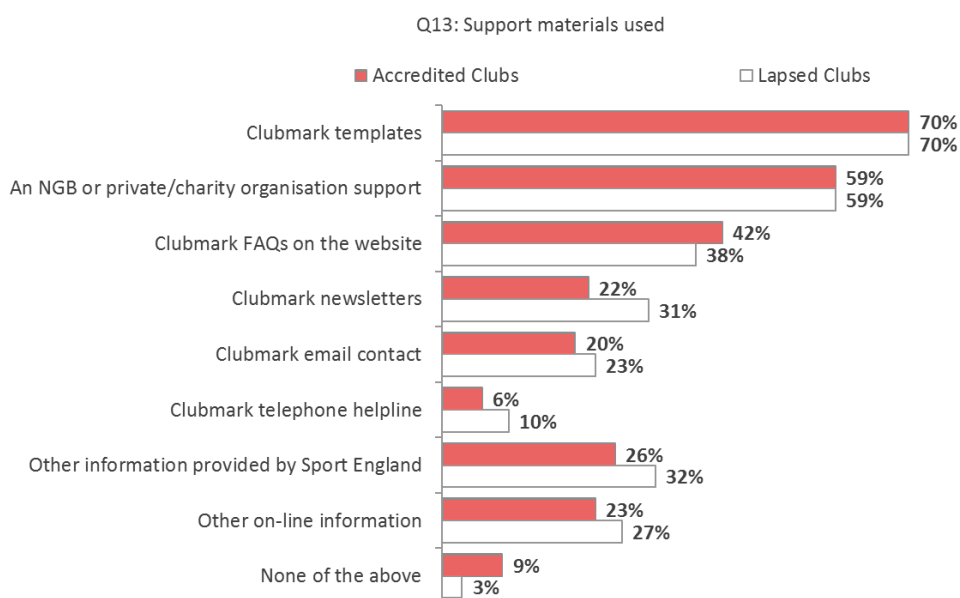


The most difficult criteria section to fulfil is 'knowing your club and its community,' although over half (53%) of Accredited Clubs and 46% of Lapsed Clubs still judge this as easy.

In terms of types of clubs, some clubs are more likely to report that 'knowing your club and its community' is easier than other clubs, with 86% of trampolining, 67% of athletics, 67% of lacrosse, and 65% of boxing judging this as easy. Conversely, some clubs are more likely to view this criteria section as less easy to fulfil, where interestingly, just 27% of tennis clubs find this easy, and also only 40% of fencing and 42% of cycling clubs. Clubs with small NGBs are more likely to find 'knowing your club and its community' easier than clubs with large NGBs.

### 5.2.2 Use of support materials

A broad range of support materials are used by clubs to help them with their Clubmark applications. Very few clubs report that they did not use any form of support materials.



Base: Total all clubs that have been accredited (558), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71).

On average across all organisations, clubs indicate that they used 2.8 different types of these support materials. Boxing/martial arts clubs are most likely to indicate that they have used some form of support materials. Boxing/martial arts clubs indicate that, on average, they use 3.9 different types of support materials. Football clubs are least likely to indicate that they have used support materials, using an average of 2.4 overall.

Clubmark templates are the most used form of support, with 70% of both Accredited and Lapsed Clubs having used these.

Support from an NGB or private/charity organisation is also used by a high proportion, with over half of both accredited and Lapsed Clubs using this guidance (both 59% respectively). Typically clubs tend to use online support (including the Clubmark website FAQs, email contacts, and other online information) more than telephone help, with only 6% of Accredited Clubs and 10% of Lapsed Clubs using the Clubmark helpline.

Some types of club have a different response profile to this question. Hockey, gymnastics and netball clubs all indicated that they are most likely to use an NGB or private/charity organisation for support. Clubmark templates are the second most popular choice for each of these types of club.



Perhaps surprisingly, Lapsed Clubs tend to have made slightly more use of a broad range of support materials than Accredited Clubs. For example, Lapsed Clubs made greater use of Clubmark newsletters than Accredited Clubs (31% and 22% respectively), and also 'Other' information provided by Sport England (32%/26%) and online (27%/23%).

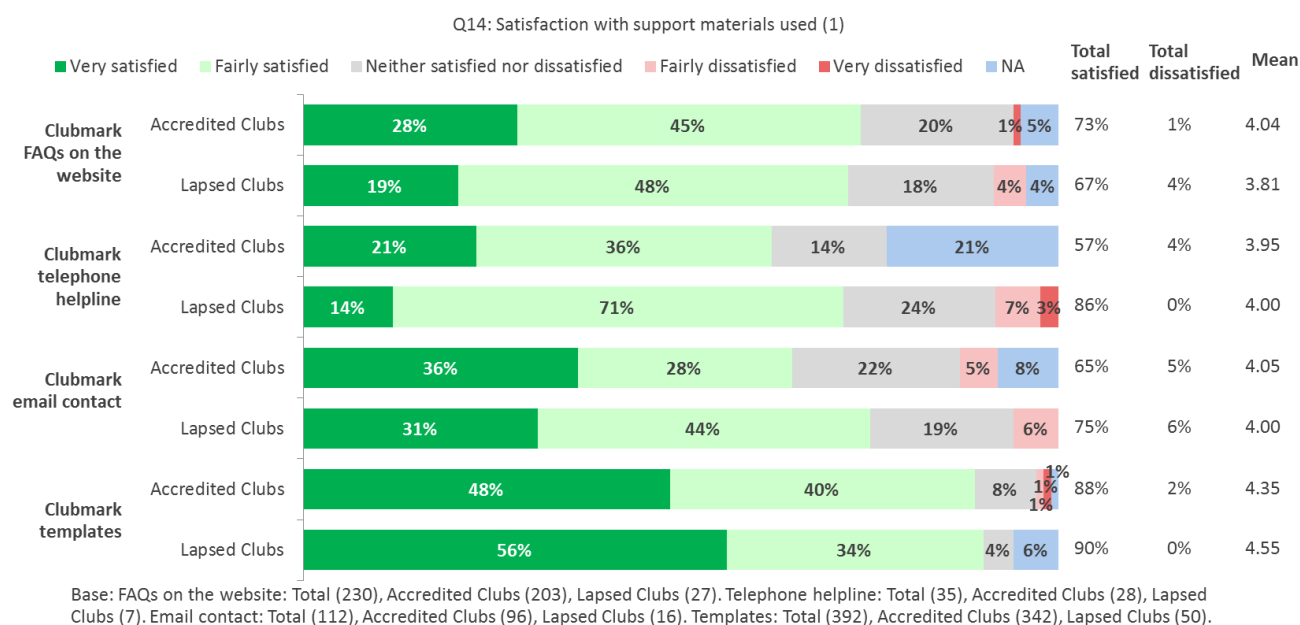
### 5.2.3 Satisfaction with support materials

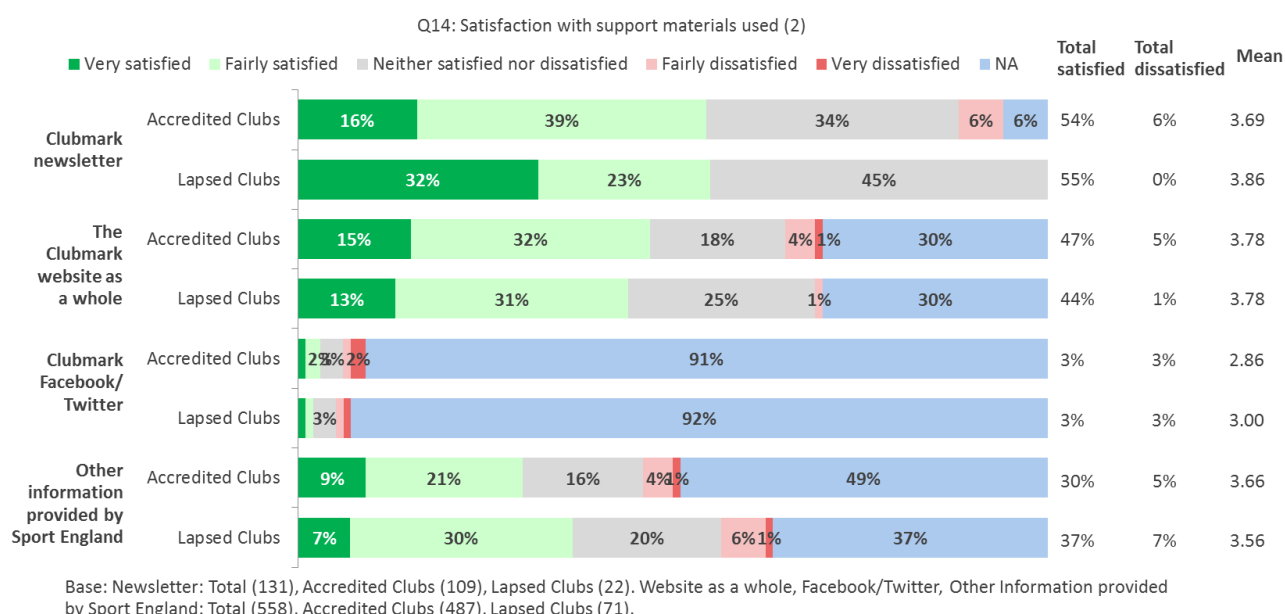
To assess the effectiveness of support materials, clubs were asked about their levels of satisfaction with the ones they use.

The most used support materials, Clubmark templates, are met with high levels of satisfaction, with 88% of Accredited Clubs and 90% of Lapsed Clubs stating that they are satisfied overall. Furthermore, of those are satisfied overall, nearly half of Accredited Clubs (48%) and over half of Lapsed Clubs (56%) state that they are 'very satisfied.' Such high levels of satisfaction indicate that Clubmark templates are an effective form of support.

Although not dissatisfied with the other support materials available, they did not achieve the same nearly universal satisfaction that the templates do. For example, Clubmark FAQs on the website, another widely used form of support, achieve 73% satisfaction from Accredited Clubs and 67% from Lapsed Clubs.

Of interest is the lack of use of some support materials. There is a very small minority of respondents (9% of Accredited Clubs and 8% of Lapsed Clubs) who use Clubmark Facebook/Twitter.





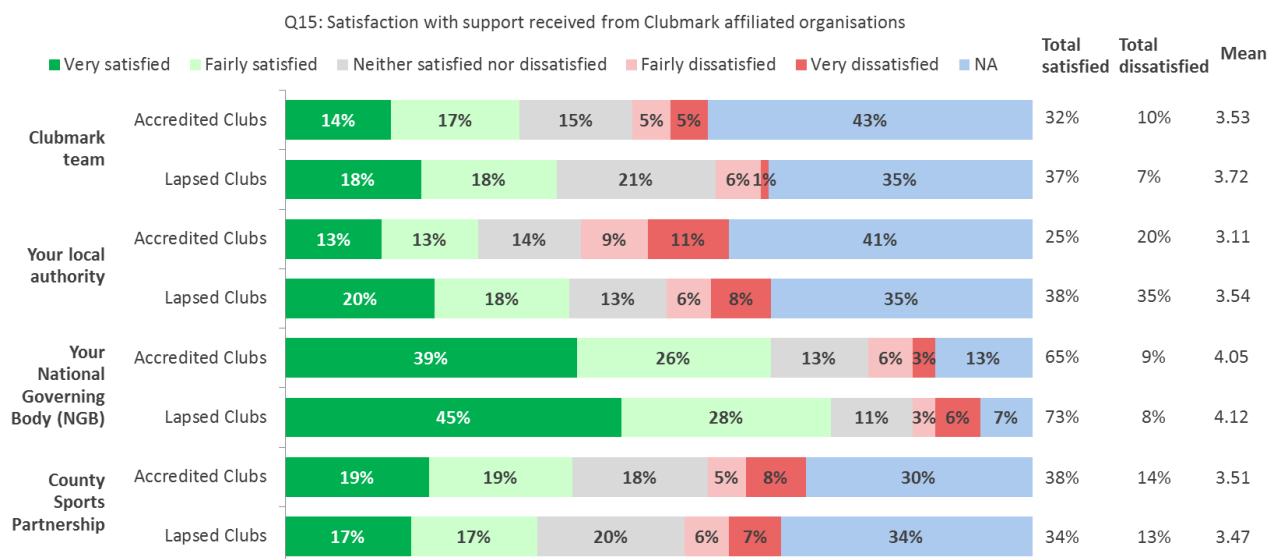
## 5.2.4 Support received from Clubmark affiliated organisations

There are substantial differences in the support received from Clubmark affiliated organisations. The highest proportion of clubs receive support from their National Governing Body (NGB), of which the majority are satisfied (65% of Accredited Clubs and 73% of Lapsed Clubs). However there are some differences between types of clubs in relation to satisfaction with the support provided by their NGB. In particular, football clubs and golf clubs are less satisfied with the support received when compared to the total sample of clubs (both 46% total satisfied, respectively). Interestingly, a very high proportion of football clubs (31% as opposed to an overall figure of 12%) don't know the answer to this question. Canoeing clubs (87%), angling clubs (86%) and basketball clubs (86%) are much more satisfied with the support they receive from their NGB. In addition, clubs with a small NGB are amongst the most likely to be very satisfied (49%) with this form of support and amongst the least likely to be fairly satisfied (17%).

Clubs use the other organisations for support much less, with over a third of all clubs not using the Clubmark team, their Local Authority or County Sports Partnership. Where these organisations are used, satisfaction with their support tends to be lower, in particular for the support from Local Authorities where 20% of Accredited Clubs and 35% of Lapsed Clubs are dissatisfied.

Some types of club are much less likely to indicate satisfaction with the Clubmark team when compared to the overall sample (32% of Accredited Clubs and 37% of Lapsed Clubs total satisfied, respectively). Only 12% of netball clubs are satisfied, along with 22% of squash clubs. However, within both netball and squash as well as many other types of sports, clubs often indicate that they don't know how satisfied they are with the support they receive from the Clubmark team, indicating that many of them may not have sought this type of support.





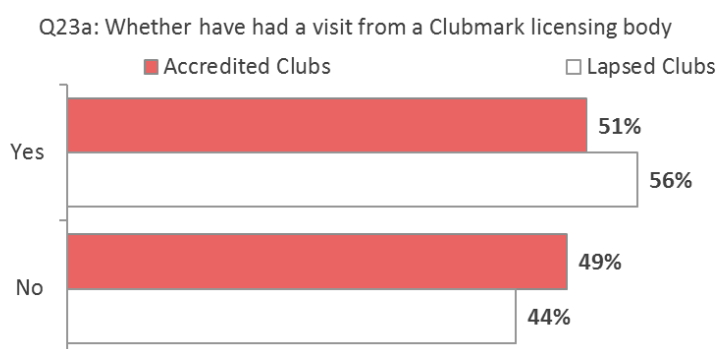
Base: Total all clubs that have been accredited (558), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71).

Just over half of both accredited and Lapsed Clubs have had a visit from a Clubmark licensing body (NGB or CSP) (51% and 56% respectively). Some types of club are much more likely to have received a visit from a Clubmark licensing body: cricket (87%) and crown green bowls (86%) in particular. Football clubs (14%) are much less likely to have done so.

Clubs report a variety of positive experiences from the visit from a Clubmark licensing body and the vast majority of both Accredited (72%) and Lapsed Clubs (75%) found the visit to be helpful. It is also felt by nearly a quarter of all clubs that the visit helped to identify areas where clubs needed to improve in order to achieve the Clubmark.

Despite this, there is only a small minority of clubs who state that they received some useful advice/information in the visit (14% of Accredited Clubs and 10% of Lapsed Clubs), suggesting that the visits could be more informative in terms of what they deliver to clubs. There is also only a very small proportion of participants who consider the visit to be the right length, with just 6% of Accredited and 3% of Lapsed Clubs expressing this.

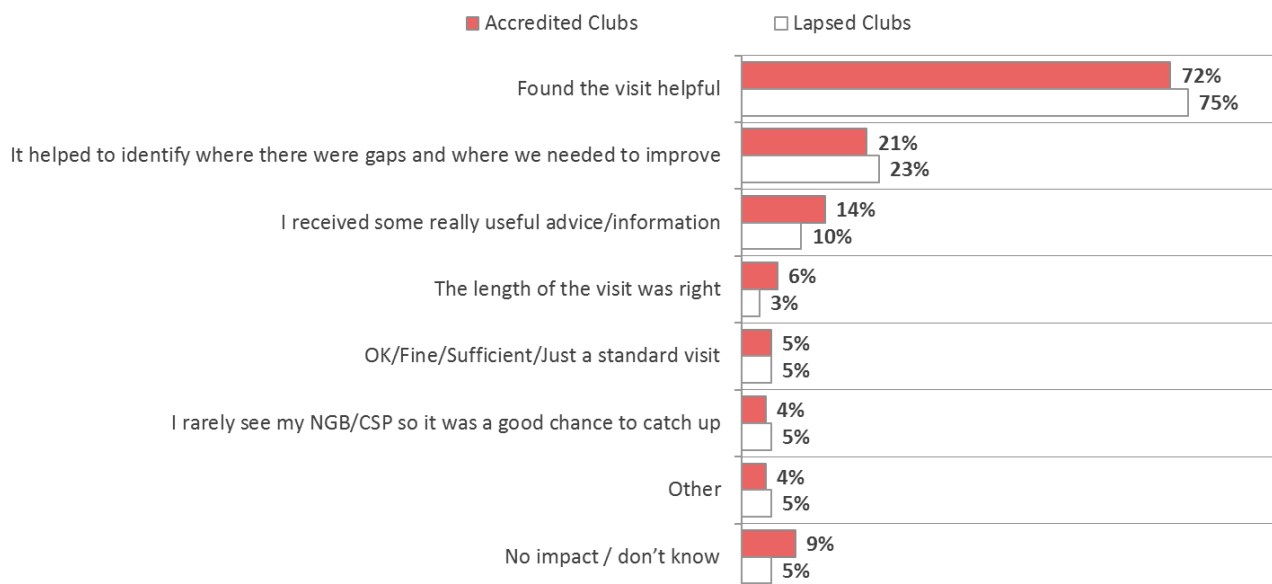
There are some notable differences between types of clubs in relation to this question. Gymnastics clubs (58%) are much less likely to find the visit from the NGB/CSP helpful than the overall sample of clubs (72%). In addition, 13% of gymnastics clubs respond with 'Assessors didn't seem very knowledgeable/ They learned more from it than we did' (although this should be interpreted with caution due to low base sizes).



Base: Total all clubs that have been accredited (558), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71).



#### Q24a: Usefulness of visit from NGB/CSP

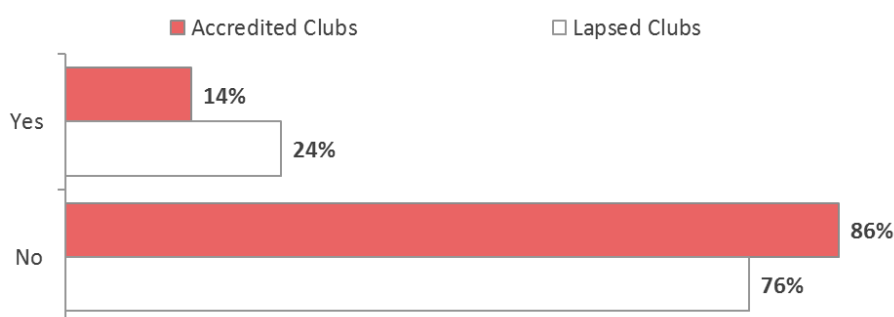


Base: Total all clubs that have had a visit from NGB/CSP (288), Accredited Clubs (248), Lapsed Clubs (40).

In contrast, only one quarter (24%) of Lapsed Clubs and even fewer Accredited Clubs (14%) have received an external verification visit from Clubmark. As well as the lower frequency of visits, clubs generally report fewer positives for the visit from Clubmark. Overall, clubs still tend to recognise more positive points from the visit, with 61% of Accredited Clubs stating that they found the visit helpful compared to 47% of Lapsed Clubs.

But 21% of Accredited Clubs and 29% of Lapsed Clubs report the visit had either had no impact or that they cannot identify an impact. Similarly, only small proportions of both accredited and Lapsed Clubs think that they received some useful advice/information or that it helped identify where there were gaps and they needed to improve. Where 'other' responses are indicated, clubs tend to feel that the visit was rather intimidating, or that they did not receive any further feedback subsequent to the visit.

#### Q23b: Whether have had an external verification visit from Clubmark

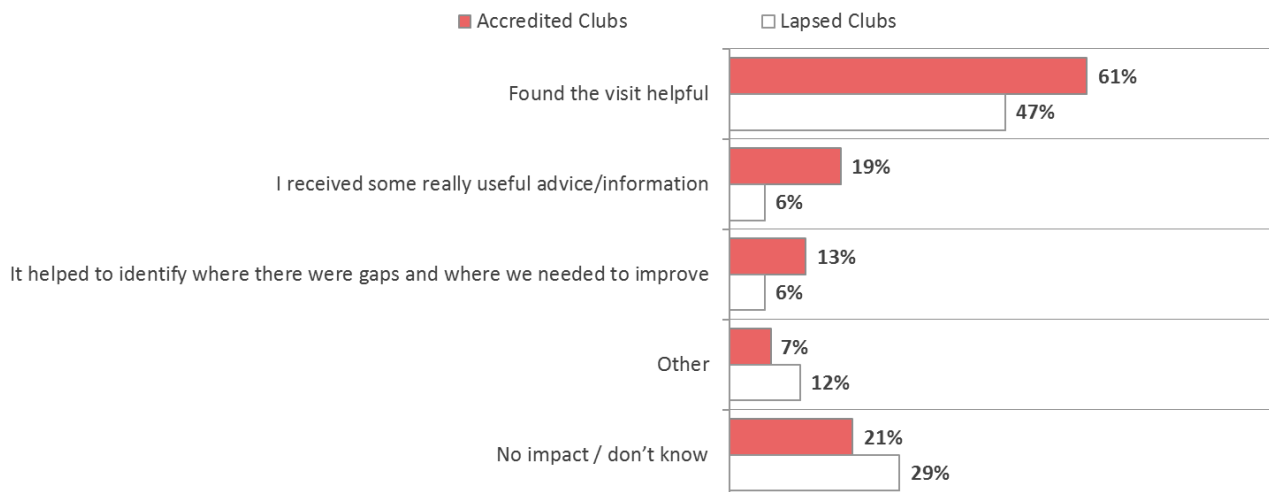


Base: Total all clubs that have been accredited (558), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71).





Q24a: Usefulness of visit from Clubmark



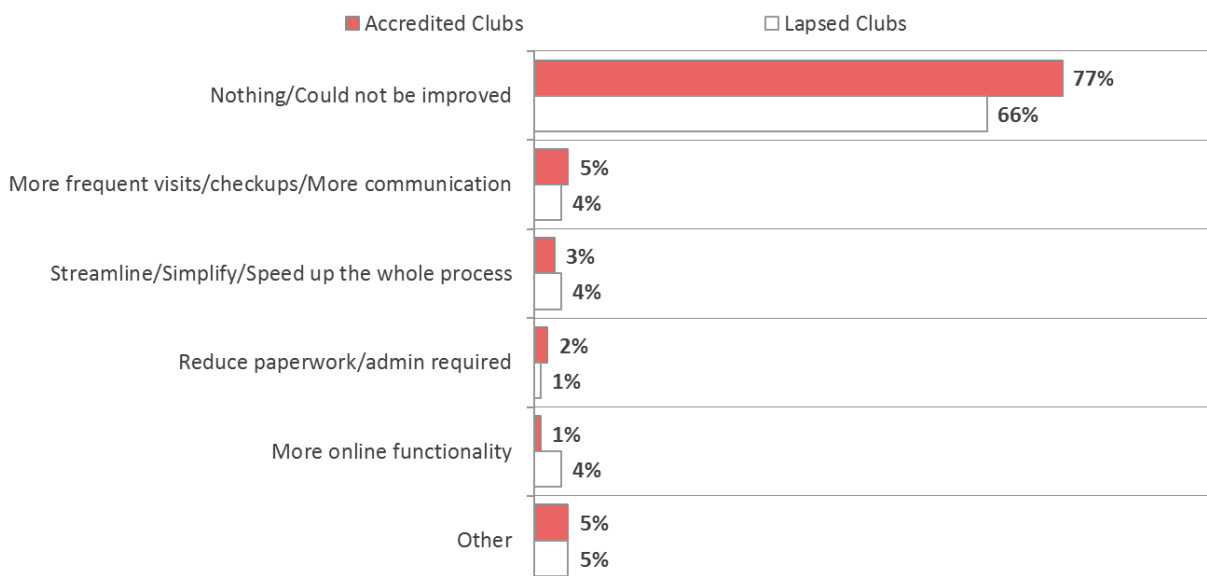
Base: Total all clubs that have had a visit from Clubmark (87), Accredited Clubs (70), Lapsed Clubs (17).

In terms of improving the visits from a Clubmark licencing body or external verification from Clubmark representatives, the highest proportion of clubs are unable to suggest improvements. The vast majority of Accredited Clubs (77%) and a large portion of Lapsed Clubs (66%) state 'Nothing/ Could not be improved' when asked about changes.

A small number of clubs feel that more frequent visits and communication would be better, as well as the process being simplified and sped up. Where 'other' improvements are suggested, these tend to be based around a need for the visitors to have a more detailed sport-specific knowledge, and provide more feedback and understanding of why and how the visits are important for clubs.

Canoeing clubs are less likely to say that nothing could be improved (58%). Their responses are fairly evenly divided across the remaining response options. Football and rugby clubs are much more likely to say that nothing could be improved (both 92%).

Q24b: How visit from Clubmark licensing body/external verification from Clubmark could be improved



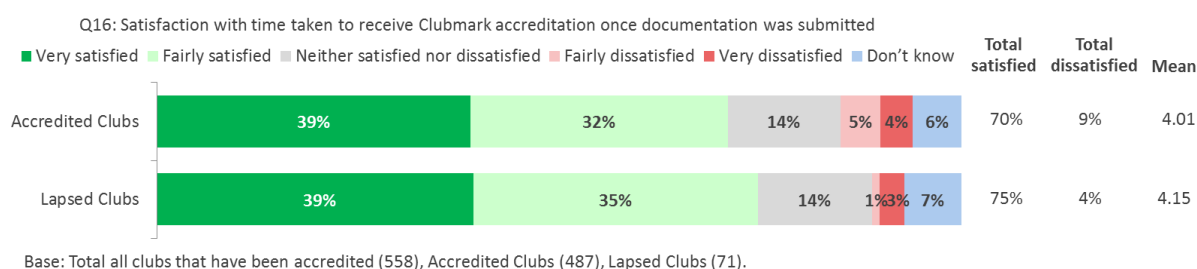
Base: Total all clubs that have been accredited (558), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71).



### 5.2.5 Time taken to receive the Clubmark accreditation

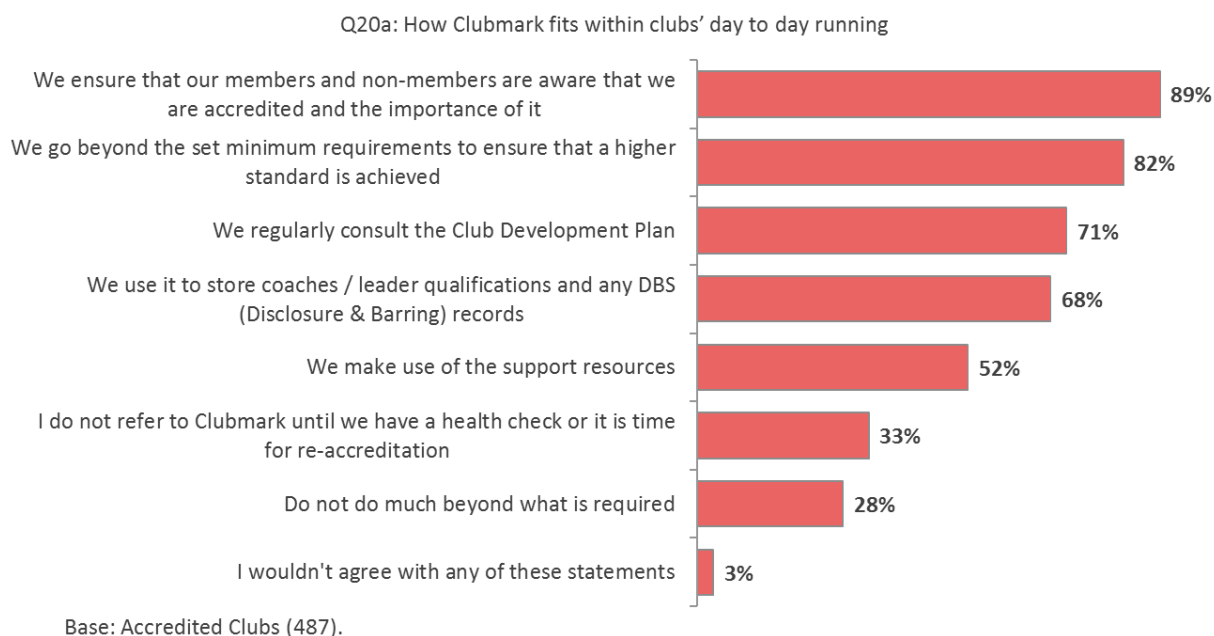
Clubs express high levels of satisfaction with the time taken to receive the Clubmark accreditation once the documentation has been submitted. Over two thirds of Accredited Clubs (70%) and three quarters of Lapsed Clubs (75%) state that they are satisfied. Importantly, over a third of Accredited and Lapsed Clubs report that they are 'very satisfied.' Angling clubs are particularly satisfied with the time taken to receive their accreditation (89%).

However there is a small minority of respondents who express dissatisfaction with the time taken to receive their Clubmark accreditation; specifically 9% of Accredited Clubs and 4% of Lapsed Clubs, implying some level of inconsistency in the time periods for this process. Specifically, gymnastics and crown green bowls clubs are less satisfied than the overall sample of clubs (both 57% total satisfied).



### 5.2.6 How embedded Clubmark is within their club structure

Accredited Clubs were asked about how embedded Clubmark is within their club structure. Typically, Accredited Clubs display most agreement with the statement '*we ensure that our members and non-members are aware that we are accredited and the importance of it*', which 89% of Accredited Clubs agree with. There is also general agreement (82%) with the statement '*we go beyond the set minimum requirements to ensure that a higher standard is achieved*.' Such agreement indicates that clubs do consider Clubmark to be an important part of their club framework, and that there is a desire to achieve higher standards in the club environment.





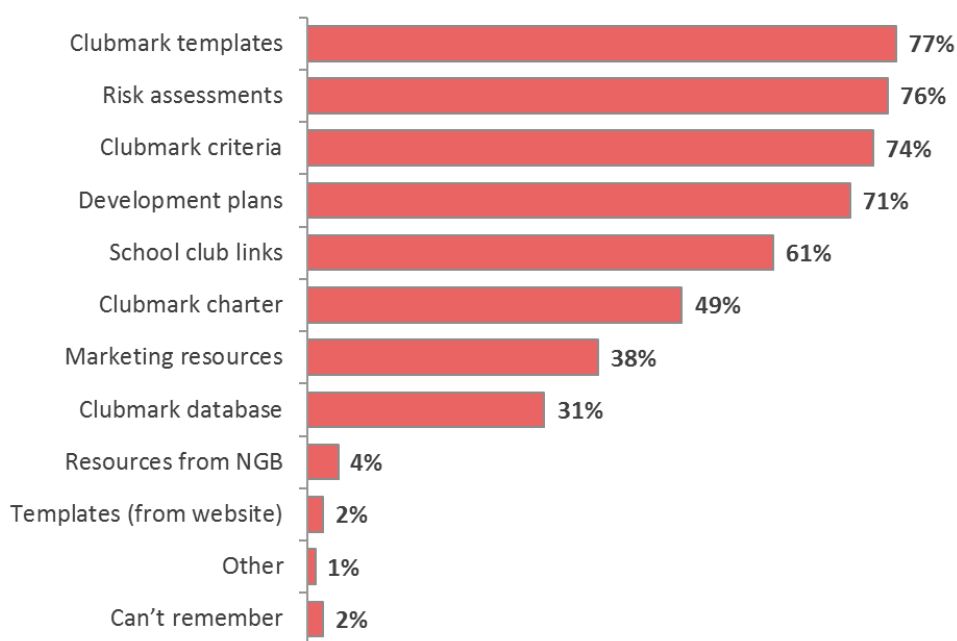
However a full third of clubs report that they *'do not refer to Clubmark until we have a health check or it is time for re-accreditation'*, suggesting that for some, Clubmark is not a central priority in the day-to-day running of the club. Furthermore, 28% of Accredited Clubs state that they *'do not do much beyond what is required'* and so use the generic template of Clubmark to achieve the standards it sets.

Some types of club are more likely to not refer to Clubmark until they have a health check or it is time for re-accreditation: football (44%), badminton (53%), and netball (43%) in particular.

### 5.2.7 Use of support resources on an on-going basis

Accredited Clubs use a number of support resources on an on-going basis to help in the maintenance of their Clubmark accreditation. Clubmark templates (77%) are the most common resource used, closely followed by risk assessments (76%), Clubmark criteria (74%) and development plans (71%). Somewhat surprisingly, marketing resources are only used by just over a third of Accredited Clubs, suggesting that the marketing element of Clubmark could be better emphasised to encourage clubs to use these kinds of resources more on an on-going basis.

Q20b: Making use of support resources on an ongoing basis



Base: Accredited Clubs (251).

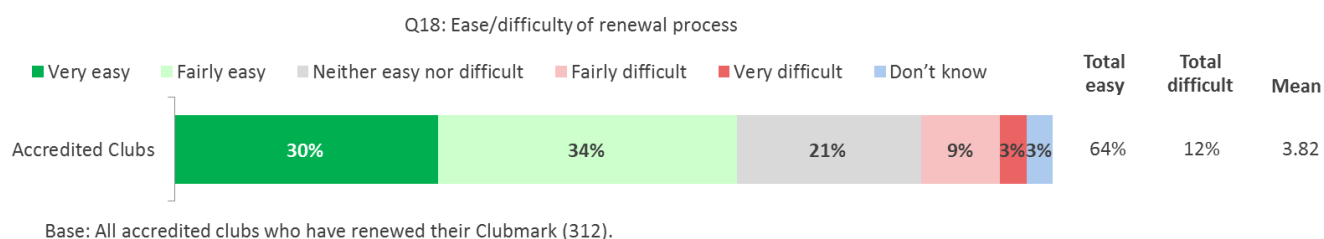
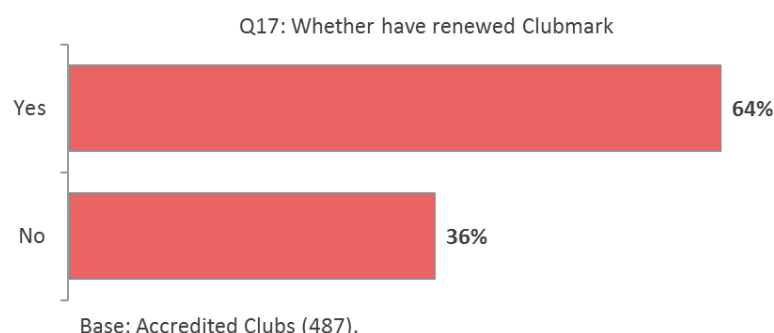
There are a few notable differences in how clubs use support materials on an on-going basis. On average, clubs use 4.9 different forms of support. However, football clubs use only 3.9 on average, whereas netball clubs use 5.25. Some types of club use risk assessments more often than Clubmark templates, golf clubs and netball clubs in particular.

### 5.2.8 Renewal of Clubmark accreditation

About two thirds of Accredited Clubs have renewed their Clubmark accreditation. Of the clubs that have renewed, over half (64%) report that the renewal process was easy, with nearly a third describing this as *'very easy'* (30%). However there are a small number of clubs (12%) who express that the renewal process was difficult to complete. These tend to be the larger clubs with more members.



Some types of club were much more likely to have renewed their Clubmark accreditation, badminton clubs (97%) and cricket (93%) clubs in particular. Badminton clubs found the renewal process easier than the overall sample of clubs (76% total easy). Conversely, rowing clubs and swimming clubs were less likely than the overall sample to find reaccreditation easy (33% and 40% total easy, respectively).



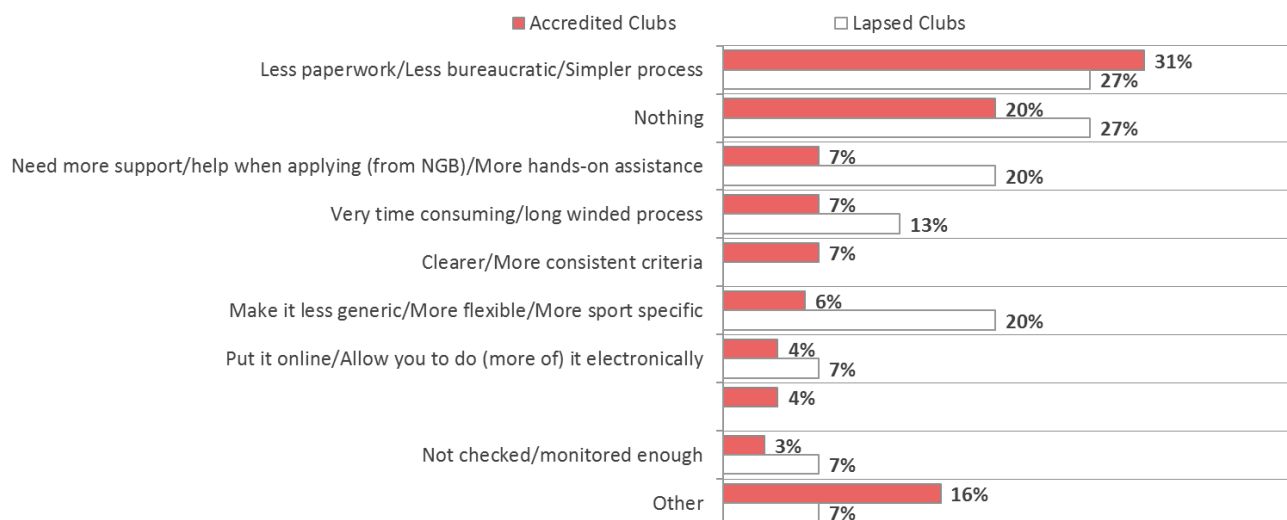
### 5.2.9 Ways in which to improve the assessment process

Accredited and Lapsed Clubs suggest a variety of ways in which to improve the assessment process. The improvement most likely to be stated by clubs is less paperwork/less bureaucratic/simpler process, which was expressed by 31% of Accredited Clubs and 27% of Lapsed Clubs.

Thereafter, Accredited and Lapsed Clubs seem to differ in terms of their suggestions for improvements. Accredited Clubs express the need for more support, making the process less time consuming, and creating clearer more consistent criteria, all receiving the support of 7% of Accredited Clubs. Lapsed Clubs also express the need for more support (20%), but also for making the Clubmark less generic, more flexible and sport specific (20%). 'Other' responses tend to follow this theme, with respondents commenting that Clubmark should be less prescriptive, with more tailoring to specific sports and, importantly, more centred on quality rather than quantity.



Q12b: How the assessment process could be improved



Base: Total all who have found one or more aspects of the accreditation process difficult (85), Accredited Clubs (70), Lapsed Clubs (15).

## 5.3 Qualitative insights from clubs

### 5.3.1 Application process and renewals

Clubs observe that the generic accreditation process can be very confusing. In particular, clubs can be asked to fulfil criteria that may not be relevant for them, such as child protection policies for adult only clubs. For example, one club had helped a 'disabled club' to work with their application process and notes that the 'disabled club' was unclear on why a club for disabled people would need an equality policy.

Clubs are particularly critical of the way Clubmark is sold to them. They find that it is 'full of jargon' and it fails to express why Sport England is asking them to achieve the accreditation. In particular, it is not obviously apparent what positive impact Clubmark will have upon clubs, meaning some clubs struggle to see how it would benefit them.

The experiences of clubs are also impacted by how their NGB implements Clubmark. This is noted by a multi-sports club, who have a relatively unique perspective in that they work with different NGBs. For them, some NGBs make the process easier than others. Some ask for less documentation or allow clubs to use their existing policies as evidence, such as first aid. When flexibility isn't present, it can often lead to a lot of 'duplication and frustration'. Also, clubs that are able to submit their application online generally find the application process to be easier.

Clubs can find the renewal process frustrating in that even though they have been keeping up with their paperwork through all of the yearly health checks, they still have to go through the entire process that they had to go through the first time around. They feel that there should be a condensed or simplified process when re-accrediting.

### 5.3.2 Maintaining and implementing the Clubmark effectively

Clubs feel that once achieved, Clubmark is often no longer top-of-mind for them, meaning that they do not make the most of it. For example, one club notes that it is not properly integrated within their club structure and so important benefits, such as business planning, are lost.



*“We really don’t make the most of it. We really should take it to our board meetings and make sure the key elements are a point of discussion, but we just don’t. I’m not sure why this is, but given how hard we worked to achieve it, it’s a shame.” (Club).*

For clubs, one of the main reasons they feel unable to implement the Clubmark effectively is due to what they perceive to be a lack of support from higher bodies. They criticise their NGBs for being ‘too busy to tell them how to use Clubmark effectively’.

Another reason that clubs often don’t make the most of Clubmark is that their initial expectations have not been met. Clubmark is commonly sold to clubs as something that will open doors in terms of funding and access to facilities but, due to a lack of support from authoritative bodies, clubs feel that such promises are not coming into fruition.

*“We heard through the club chairman, told it would unlock doors, access to funding, would achieve more. We’ve done all the courses which kept being cancelled, and everything else they told us to but we haven’t heard anything from it.” (Club).*

*“We’ve had no contact with the specific officer for the club, we try to contact them and they never get back to me. This is very frustrating. I think the representatives flick between roles, or have too many clubs to cover.” (Club).*

### 5.3.3 Improvements to the application process

For clubs, improvements that would have the biggest positive impact relate to the ease of completing application process: making it simpler and more tailored to individual clubs. If a specific criteria area does not apply to a club, they should be allowed to state their case and be exempt from this, yet still be eligible for the overall accreditation. For example, one requirement is having a toilet on site but for some sports, such as angling where participants are often out in the middle of nature, this can be too difficult or even impossible to implement.

It is also felt that the courses that club members must attend should not be so specific. Clubs criticise the fact that often Sport England specifies which courses to attend, when instead they should simply allow members to go on any recognised course.

Having more flexibility in the evidencing criteria is also identified as a desirable improvement. One club spoke of their child protection officer who had been qualified in swimming but was not eligible as a badminton child protection officer, even though the criteria for achieving the certificate in swimming is far stricter than in badminton. This club therefore feels that there needs to be more flexibility in how some of the criteria are achieved.

Given that they often need to be accredited for more than one sport, multi-sports clubs suggest having a tailored Clubmark for their specific needs. Instead of having to get each of their sports individually Clubmarked, they feel that the overall club should be accredited. For them, ensuring that the club has attained the Clubmark means that best practices from the accreditation will naturally filter through to each sport.



## 5.4 National Partners

The majority of National Partners are not involved in the accreditation process of Clubmark, in terms of supporting clubs collating and submitting their documentation for assessment. As discussed previously, the involvement of National Partners tends to only go as far as setting the original standard criteria and, at times, providing support to NGBs and clubs on their particular area of expertise.

However, there is one National Partner that has its own version of Clubmark, and as such, accredits some clubs. This National Partner indicates that the process can be time consuming for them and for the participating clubs, making it difficult in circumstances where resources are limited. The materials provided by Sport England are described as very useful, as they are easy for clubs to adapt for their own use. This particular National Partner places great importance on such materials and actively encouraging clubs to use them. The materials are seen as a way of helping clubs to gain recognition and publicity as a result of their accreditation.

*“Clubs get a banner to show that they have achieved the accreditation. This is great opportunity for clubs to get some publicity—get the local mayor in and have a picture with them, then publicise this on your website. Clubs get recognition and increase awareness of them.” (National Partner)*

Other National Partners suggest that the support materials provide an opportunity for Sport England to engage with them more, as they can seek National Partners’ assistance and expertise when creating and updating the templates and other documents. This dialog will enhance the materials and furthermore, will improve how clubs themselves understand and use the materials.

The accreditation criteria are generally seen as very good, as they cover appropriate areas for clubs to focus on. However, some National Partners highlight the need for the whole model of criteria to be more flexible. It was expressed that if the individual in a club who is responsible for Clubmark is replaced, it is very difficult for someone new to pick up the responsibilities, which poses a great challenge for the club. This is particularly the case for higher education institutions, where the club managers and volunteers change from year to year, creating a challenge in continuity of the scheme. Flexibility is therefore essential to allowing all audiences to make the most of Clubmark.

Although typically not involved in external verification visits for Clubmark clubs, National Partners express their positive views on these visits. National Partners felt that schemes such as Clubmark do require some form of supervision, to clarify and to provide proof that clubs are doing what they say they are. This represents a key concern for several National Partners; they are concerned that clubs will not adhere to the criteria once they have achieved the accreditation. If the high standards and criteria are not properly implemented and maintained, the benefits of Clubmark will be minimised or even eliminated. Some National Partners say while the external supervisory visits do put pressure on clubs, this pressure helps to ensure that standards are properly implemented in every element of how the club is operating. The visits can also help maintain on-going relationships with clubs, and offer clubs the chance to showcase the levels of standards they have achieved, something many of the clubs will be very proud of.



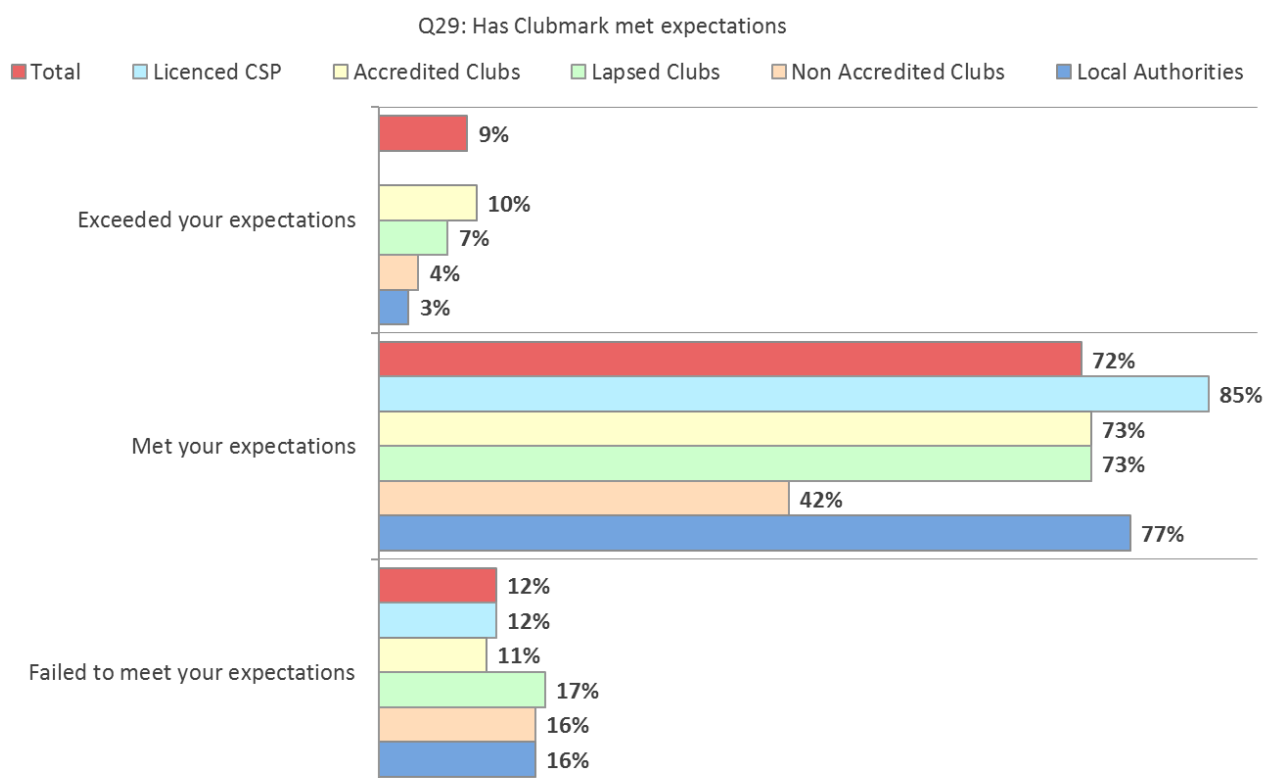


## 6. Impact of Clubmark

*This section looks at the actual impact of Clubmark from the perspective of those involved in the accreditation process (accrediting bodies, clubs and national partners).*

### 6.1 Has Clubmark met expectations and satisfaction with Clubmark

Participants were asked to assess whether the actual impact of Clubmark has met their expectations. Overall, the vast majority of all audiences (72%) feel that Clubmark has met their expectations. This is particularly the case for Licenced CSPs and Local Authorities (85% and 77% respectively).



Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).

Although Clubmark has generally met expectations, it has exceeded expectations in a much smaller number of cases (9% overall and, importantly, only 10% of Accredited Clubs). Furthermore a number of respondents express that Clubmark has failed to meet expectations. This is especially so for Lapsed Clubs (17%), Non-accredited Clubs (16%), and Local Authorities (16%); which perhaps shows why they choose not to be centrally involved in the Clubmark scheme.

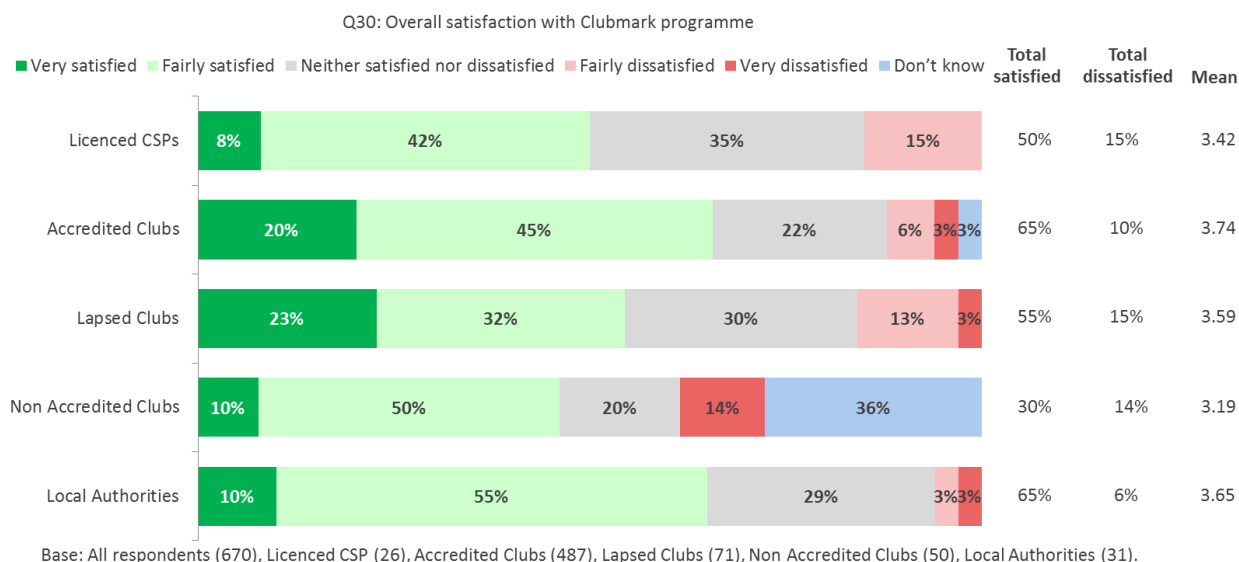
In terms of overall satisfaction with the Clubmark scheme, there are some clear differences between audience types. Overall, Accredited Clubs and Local Authorities express the highest satisfaction, with 65% of each audience satisfied overall. Satisfaction is particularly strong amongst Accredited Clubs with 20% expressing that they are 'very satisfied' with the Clubmark programme.





Perhaps surprisingly, over half of Lapsed Clubs are also satisfied with Clubmark (55%) and nearly a quarter (23%) report that they are 'very satisfied' with the programme, suggesting that other reasons are affecting whether clubs choose to renew their Clubmark rather than dissatisfaction with the scheme itself.

Since Non Accredited Clubs are not involved in the Clubmark programme, it is unsurprising that a large proportion of these clubs report that they are unable rate their satisfaction (36%). However amongst those able to offer a rating, overall satisfaction is much lower amongst this audience (and is noticeably lower than the Lapsed Clubs).



## 6.2 Perspective NGBs (qualitative insights)

The qualitative research looked in detail at what NGBs identify as the key impacts of the Clubmark, relative to its key objectives.

NGBs discuss the impact of Clubmark both in regards to themselves and specifically for their clubs. On the whole, NGBs do not identify any clear or immediate benefits for themselves, for example Clubmark leading to the generation of more professional athletes. For NGBs Clubmark is more a way of ensuring that their clubs function well. This gives them a sense of security that they are developing well-run clubs, thus providing members with a positive experience.

*"We don't really see Clubmark as helping us to develop professional athletes or anything. For us it's more the peace of mind that our clubs are working in a similar way and are efficient." (Large NGB)*

The impact that Clubmark has on their clubs is covered in more detail below but, in general, NGBs feel that Clubmark needs to be enhanced and/ or publicised better or else clubs will lose interest. Without this, for them, Clubmark becomes just a 'box ticking exercise,' with clubs failing to follow the criteria in a way that will actually lead to positive outcomes.



- **Impact 1: Improve sustainability, marketing, profile and general health of the club and operating to a high standard in terms of health, safety and welfare of all participants**

This is viewed by NGBs as a key impact of Clubmark. NGBs feel that Clubmark supports the development of clubs with strong functioning structures and makes them more professional. A few NGBs even promote the criteria around club running to all clubs, regardless of whether they decide to apply for Clubmark or not. For such NGBs, these are important guidelines that enhance clubs, so should be followed as widely as possible.

Clubmark's impact on the profile and marketing of clubs varies and is largely down to the way in which clubs implement it. NGBs feel that clubs which promote it more, such as on their website or at the venue (e.g. a banner or poster) gain more and are more satisfied. Some NGBs support clubs in this by suggesting ways to promote the Clubmark. Moreover it is generally felt that a more proactive approach to promotion, perhaps through Sport England, would benefit clubs.

*"Our clubs take a lot of pride in achieving the Clubmark and display the banner they get with their accreditation. It's a great way of showing everyone how hard they've worked." (Large NGB)*

*"Our clubs don't necessary promote Clubmark as we have our own accreditation scheme. They therefore do promote our accreditation, for example on their website, but not Clubmark itself." (Large NGB)*

- **Impact 2: Access funding and facilities and gain support from their NGB/CSP**

NGBs commonly cite the lack of tangible benefits such as funding and access to facilities as the biggest fault of Clubmark. Some NGBs, such as England Basketball, offer an incentive to newly Clubmarked clubs, but most feel that the reason many clubs are not satisfied with Clubmark is because of the lack of such tangible benefits.

Problematically, as mentioned in earlier parts of this report, NGBs are concerned about disadvantaging clubs that cannot achieve the Clubmark. They can therefore be reluctant to make the funding or facilities that they provide contingent on having the Clubmark. This in turn can leave clubs feeling that Clubmark offers no tangible benefits.

NGBs do however feel that a more coordinated approach towards support, involving Sport England and other bodies, would be beneficial. For example, some NGBs commented that the approach of Local Authorities can be quite inconsistent, with some offering useful incentives to Clubmarked clubs and others not. In general, NGBs feel that more could be done by Sport England to work with other bodies to try to achieve a more uniform approach in terms of additional benefits for clubs. For many, this would be an important 'pull' factor in increasing 'buy-in' from clubs.

*"I'm not quite sure what sort of support Accredited Clubs get from Local Authorities. I think they used to give them discounted access to facilities, but I'm not sure if they do anymore." (Large NGB)*

*"We know that some clubs can't achieve Clubmark and so worry that if we give preferential treatment to those with the accreditation, it will unfairly disadvantage others." (Large NGB)*



- **Impact 3: Number and quality of coaches and the number and skills of volunteers**

The impact of Clubmark on the quality of coaches is difficult to judge. Whilst NGBs do not necessarily think that it directly impacts quality, since many of them have coaching standards already in place, it does allow them to ensure that their clubs work towards these. For example, NGBs that have a coaching tier structure within their sport can build this into their Clubmark (e.g. clubs must have two Level 2 coaches etc.).

Moreover for NGBs that do not have such structures, Clubmark can be a useful way of getting their clubs to think more about the importance of having and developing good coaches. NGBs do not feel that the number and skills of volunteers are directly impacted by Clubmark.

- **Impact 4: Create and improve links with schools and the local community**

Creating links with the local community is an area where NGBs identify little impact from Clubmark. Encouraging clubs to actively engage with this part of Clubmark appears to be less of a priority for NGBs, as well as for clubs themselves.

A rare example of an NGB that encourages its clubs to improve their links with local communities is the NGB for baseball and softball. As a relatively new sport in the UK, it recognises the important knock-on effect that this has. The NGB feels that asking clubs to promote the sport within their community helps to spread the word of what is currently a relatively unknown sport.

There is also a sense amongst NGBs that this particular impact area is made difficult by the lack of engagement amongst schools. Many NGBs feel that schools do not actively promote Clubmark to parents or Clubmarked clubs. If they were to do so, NGBs feel that this would also be an important 'pull' factor to increase clubs 'buy-in' to Clubmark.

- **Impact 5: Participation**

NGBs find assessing Clubmark's impact on membership levels and increased participation difficult to quantify. NGBs note a correlation between club size and likelihood to have Clubmark but they are cautious about attributing credit to Clubmark for increasing membership, as this may well be due to natural growth within the club.

Some NGBs identify increased membership as being an indirect benefit of Clubmark, as clubs run more efficiently and have a better offering, thus attracting members. However, generally NGBs don't feel that Clubmark currently has a direct impact on increasing participation levels.

NGBs also identify factors that influence Clubmark's ability to impact participation levels. For example the ability of clubs to increase participation may be limited by their facilities. In other words, if a club has limited facilities they may be reluctant to increase membership levels as it may mean existing members get fewer opportunities to play.

*"We realised this when developing our Clubmark. We can't judge smaller clubs by the same standards. If a club only has four courts they won't want to increase memberships by much as it will mean that existing members will get less court time." (Large NGB)*

*"For some clubs the aim is to get a better men's first team for example. It's not about having lot of people playing, it's about attracting the right people." (Medium NGB)*



NGBs don't necessarily see Clubmark as a way of increasing participation within their sport. For many it does help to improve quality, but their approach to increasing participation is far more centralised.

*"For us Clubmark is really just about improving the quality of our clubs not necessarily our participation targets overall. We have more centralised ways of encouraging people to participate in our sport. But this accreditation is to help our clubs achieve their best. (Large NGB)"*

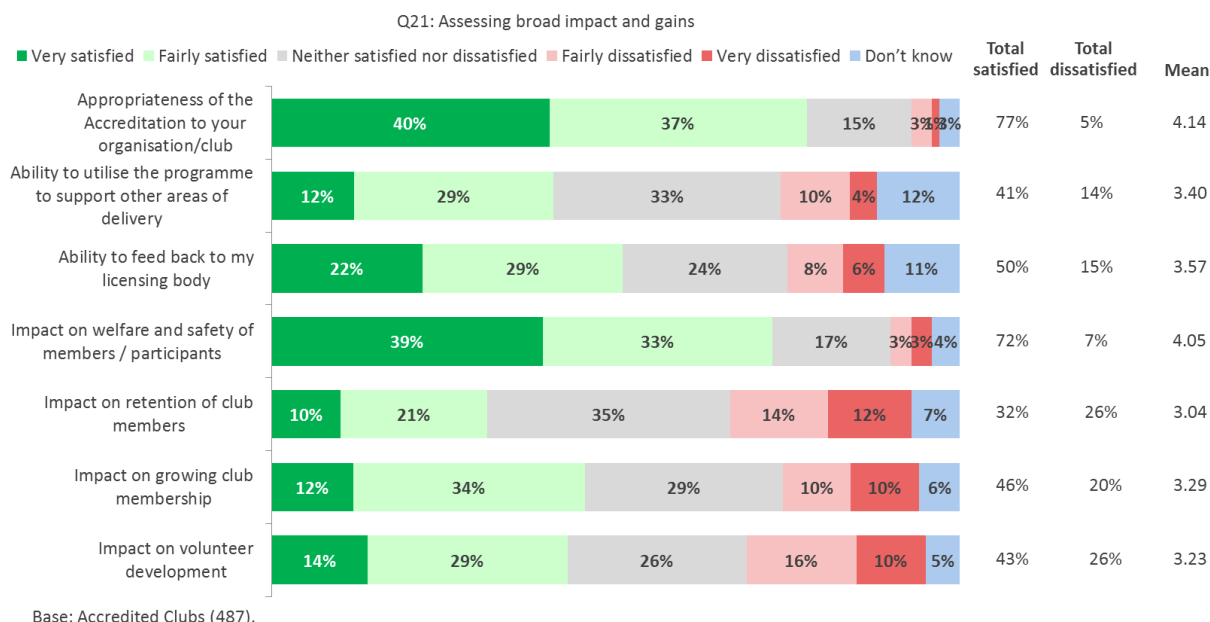
Finally, although clubs may have the intention of using Clubmark to attract new members, they are not always able to convert this into action. This is largely due to the lack of awareness of the scheme amongst the general public. Therefore, although it could be used as a key way to influence which clubs parents pick for their children, Clubmark currently factors into the decision-making process of very few people which undermines its potential.

## 6.3 Clubs (Accredited and Lapsed):

### 6.3.1 Quantitative results

When considering the broad impact and gains of Clubmark, the highest proportion of Accredited Clubs are satisfied with the 'appropriateness of the accreditation to your organisation/club.' Over three quarters (77%) are satisfied overall, with nearly half (40%) 'very satisfied'. Such strong satisfaction indicates that Clubmark is a valued accreditation by clubs. This is supported by high satisfaction for 'impact on welfare and safety of members/participants', for which 72% are satisfied overall and 39% are 'very satisfied.'

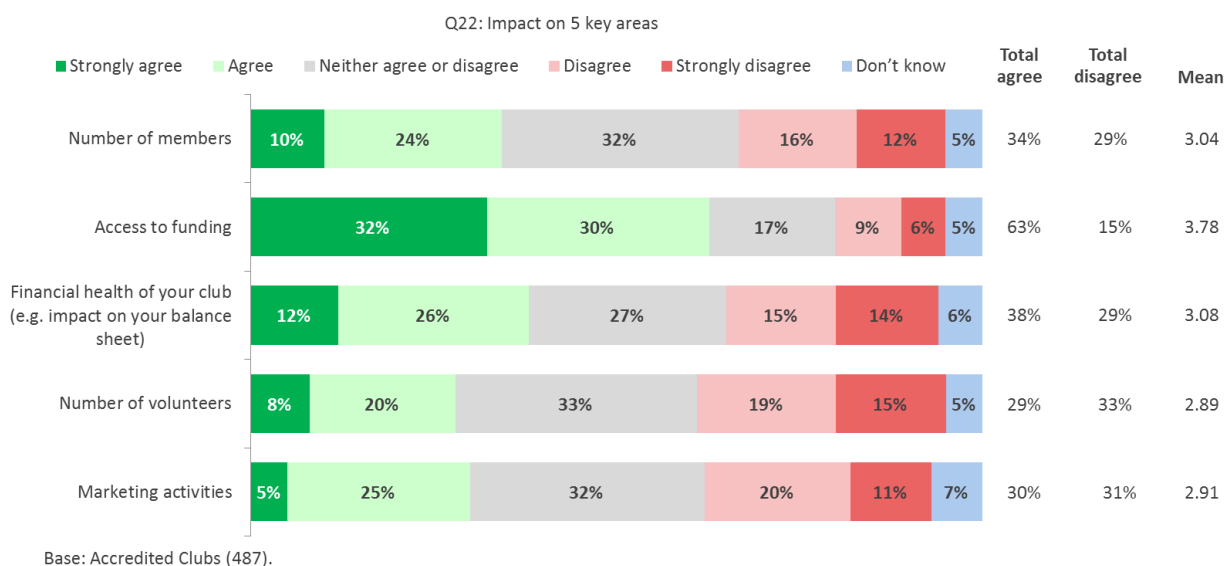
Beyond these two broad impacts, satisfaction with Clubmark's impact is much lower amongst clubs. Half of Accredited Clubs are satisfied with the 'ability to feed back to my licencing body', and less than half (46%) are satisfied with the 'impact on growing membership'. The number of Accredited Clubs that are very satisfied with these two elements also decreases, achieving 22% and 12% respectively. Accredited Clubs express least satisfaction with the 'impact on retention of club members', with which only 32% are satisfied, and over a quarter are dissatisfied (26%).





When focusing on Clubmark's five key impact areas, 'access to funding' has the largest positive impact. Overall, 63% of clubs agree that they have witnessed a positive impact of access to funding, with one third (32%) strongly agreeing. The level of agreement is greater amongst clubs that have been involved with Clubmark for over 6 years. This suggests that clubs' access to funding may increase with time, perhaps due to more opportunities or a more active approach to seeking them out.

The level of impact of the remaining four areas appears to be less, with no more than approximately one third of clubs agreeing that there has been an impact. Importantly, similar proportions of clubs state that they disagree that there has been an impact in all these areas.



### 6.3.2 Qualitative insights

Where clubs identify an impact of the Clubmark on access to funding and facilities it often tends to be indirect and highly dependent on the particular circumstances. Two examples below serve to illustrate this.

A badminton club spoke of a time when they were evicted from their normal training courts at a school. They went on to send a number of letters of complaints to the school, all of which had the Clubmark logo on them. The club was eventually given access to the facilities again and, for them, the Clubmark logo was a key factor in the matter being taken seriously. Specifically, their association with Clubmark and Sport England demonstrated that they were a high quality establishment. Another club spoke of some funding they received from their local mayor, which they were eligible for as a result of having Clubmark.

*"We use a school's facilities to train. The school then said we can't use them anymore. We sent letters with the Clubmark logo on them and also got help from Sport England. We were able to get this support because we had achieved Clubmark, and they really put weight behind our argument to the school." (Club)*

Although not all clubs have seen an increase in membership, one club has been particularly pleased with Clubmark's impact in this area. The club has developed strong ties with local schools, using Clubmark as a way of demonstrating its quality. They now find themselves being approached by more and more people who have been signposted to them by the school.



## 6.4 National Partners (qualitative insights)

When discussing the impact of Clubmark, national partners typically highlight the assurance it offers that clubs are operating at a reasonable standard. It provides this assurance to both the participants of the club and also to parents who may be deciding upon club for their children. Importantly, national partners feel that Clubmark encourages clubs to actively think about and address aspects that they may not have otherwise paid attention to (in particular in relation to the environment and their internal management structures).

Furthermore, national partners report that Clubmark has helped to increase awareness of a number of social issues such as of gender, disability and race equality, thus enhancing the whole sector. This increase in awareness is evidenced by one national partner, who describes how Clubmark has made them think more about the types of coaches they need to make sure the sports sessions they offer are of good quality. Clubmark therefore encourages clubs to ensure that they are catering, as best as possible, to all segments of society.

National partners also express how Clubmark impacts by giving clubs a greater standing in a business sense, making them more attractive and fundable to grant giving bodies as they have evidenced that they are operating correctly. Clubmark may therefore offer a key distinction between clubs who are accredited and clubs who are not. However some national partners do express concerns that Clubmark might become a grant giving exercise, with clubs completing the accreditation for this reason only, rather than considering and understanding its principal purpose to raise standards and provide assurance.

Although national partners do describe these various impacts of Clubmark, some feel that they are simply not tangible enough, and so the overall value of the accreditation scheme is difficult to prove. It is expressed that the benefits and impact of Clubmark are difficult to measure and 'see', with uncertainty around whether clubs with Clubmark are actually at an advantage to Non-accredited Clubs. Clubmark therefore needs to have a stronger visible impact, for clubs to realise its value and have the real desire to achieve it, as it is currently a challenge to get clubs to see the benefits.

*"The focus has changed to action planning and softer skills so you lose the tangibility and measurability." (Club)*

This lack of tangibility is voiced by national partners as a factor which prevents clubs from making the most of Clubmark. They also report a number of other barriers to its impact: national partners feel that Clubmark does not determine the quality of the product, and clubs may, despite completing the accreditation, have limited understanding of the importance of all the different factors and why they are necessary. Clubs may also fail to embed the procedures and criteria into their day-to-day running structures, and it is difficult to see whether this is the case and how well it is being implemented. This is also a worry as national partners recognise that clubs can lose momentum after the initial stages and get fatigued, and therefore a risk is created to maintaining the standards exhibited at the documentation stage.

Finally national partners see a communication issue with Clubmark in translating the message across to the public. They question whether the public know what Clubmark means, and this lack of understanding clearly minimises its potential benefits. As mentioned previously, promotion of the national partners of Sport England is needed, which may help both clubs and the public to realise Clubmark's value not only to Sport England, but also to other significant organisations and charities. This is also driven by the fact that some national partners view Clubmark as useful to the specific work of their organisations, for example protecting children in sport and supporting the equality and inclusion agenda.





## 7 Optimising Clubmark

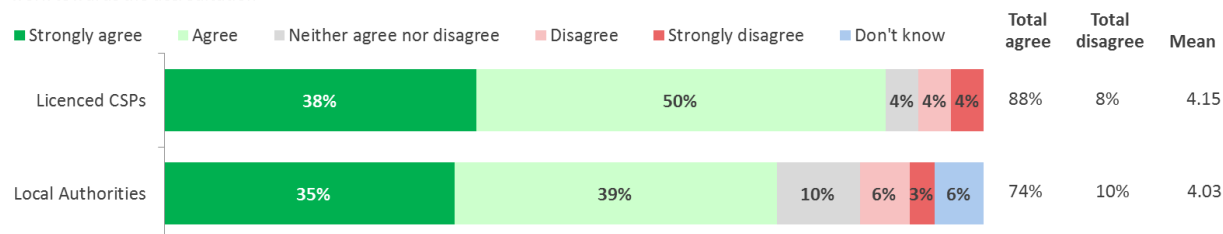
***This section reports on how participants think Clubmark could be improved. It looks specifically at improvements to Clubmark criteria, the accreditation processes and the marketing and promotion of Clubmark.***

### 7.1 Does Clubmark fit with partners' objectives

Organisations other than clubs were asked how Clubmark fits within their organisational objectives; to assess this, they were asked to state their level of agreement with eight statements.

Licensed CSPs express most agreement with the statement *'it is important to us that our clubs work towards the accreditation'*, with the vast majority (88%) agreeing with this statement. Furthermore, over one quarter (28%) report that they strongly agree with this, indicating the importance that licensed CSPs place upon Clubmark. Local Authorities also display high levels of agreement with three quarters (74%) agreeing in total and 35% strongly agree.

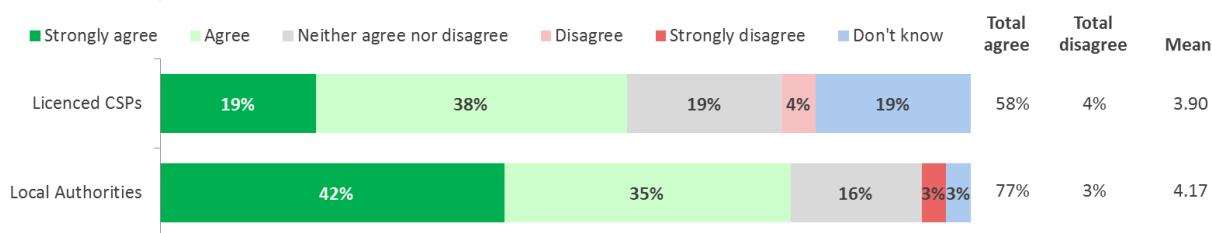
Q31: How Clubmark currently fits within organisations' aims and objectives (1) – *"It is important to us that our clubs work towards the accreditation"*



Base: Total non clubs (62), Licensed CSPs (26), Non Licensed but Participating NGBs (2), Non Licensed CSPs (3), Local Authorities (31).

Local Authorities are most likely to agree with the statements: *'we ensure that clubs within our sport/area (CSPs and LAs) are aware of the importance of the accreditation'*, *'we offer additional benefits to those who achieve Clubmark'* and *Clubmark is central to improving the quality of clubs within our sport/area'* (all 77% respectively). Licensed CSPs also have high levels of agreement with the first two of these statements, with three quarters agreeing with each. However Licensed CSPs are less likely to agree that Clubmark improves the quality of clubs (58%).

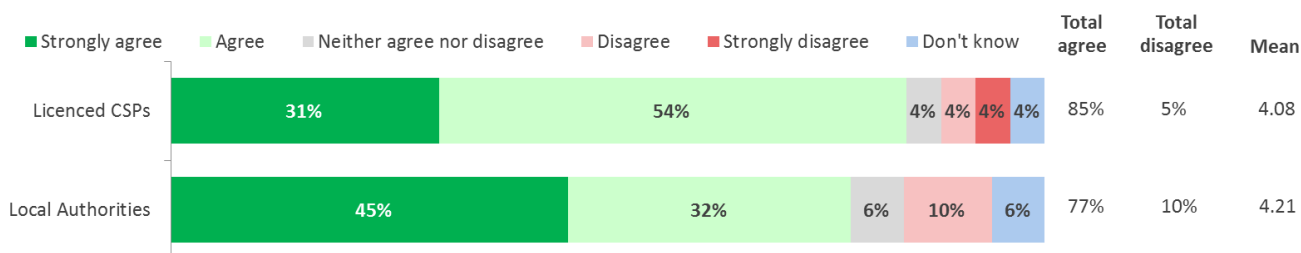
Q31: How Clubmark currently fits within organisations' aims and objectives (2) – *"Clubmark is central to improving the quality of clubs within our sport/area"*



Base: Total all non clubs (62), Licensed CSPs (26), Non Licensed but Participating NGBs (2), Non Licensed CSPs (3), Local Authorities (31).

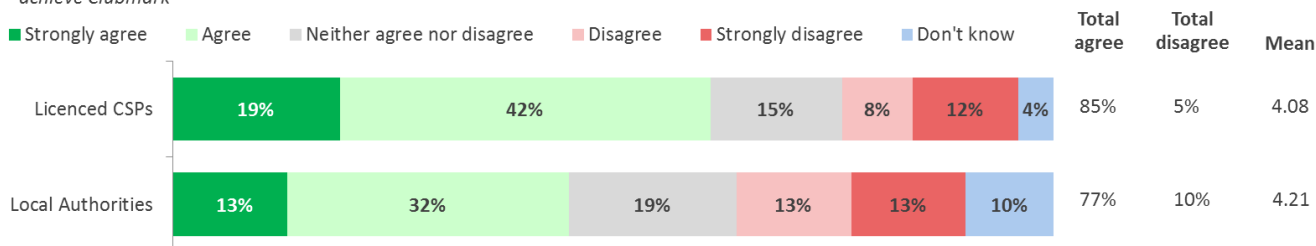


Q31: How Clubmark currently fits within organisations' aims and objectives (3) – "We ensure that clubs within our sport / area (CSPs and LAs) are aware of the importance of the accreditation"



Base: Total all non clubs (62), Licenced CSPs (26), Non Licenced but Participating NGBs (2), Non Licenced CSPs (3), Local Authorities (31).

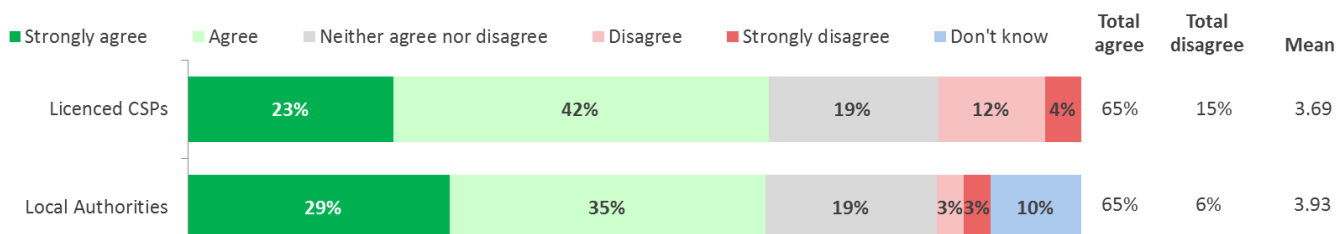
Q31: How Clubmark currently fits within organisations' aims and objectives (4) – "We offer additional benefits to those who achieve Clubmark"



Base: Total all non clubs (62), Licenced CSPs (26), Non Licenced but Participating NGBs (2), Non Licenced CSPs (3), Local Authorities (31).

Importantly, both licenced CSPs and Local Authorities report high levels of agreement with the statement 'We heavily promote Clubmark to our clubs,' with just under three quarters doing so (65% for both respectively). As these audiences were not part the qualitative phase of the research, we are unable to comment on exactly how they go about promoting Clubmark to clubs. However, given that clubs mention that they do not feel particularly supported by authoritative bodies such as CSPs and Local Authorities, it is likely that approaches vary based on the objectives of individual CSPs and Local Authorities.

Q31: How Clubmark currently fits within organisations' aims and objectives (5) – "We heavily promote Clubmark to our clubs"

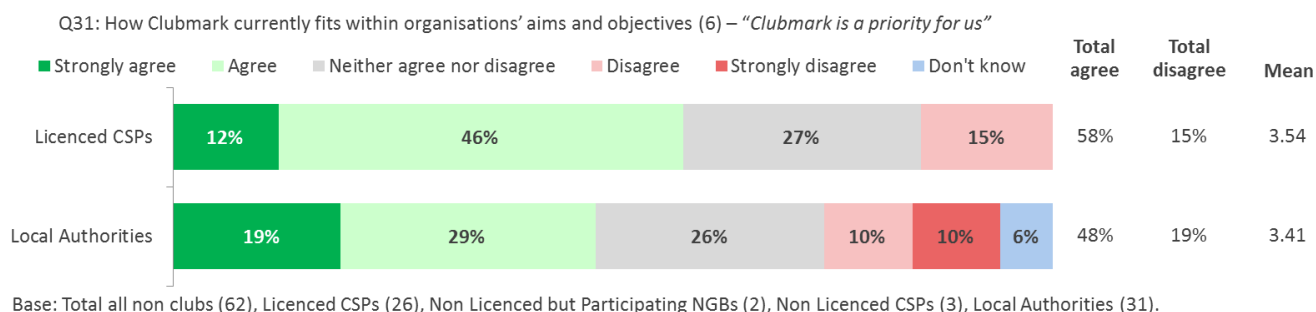


Base: Total all non clubs (62), Licenced CSPs (26), Non Licenced but Participating NGBs (2), Non Licenced CSPs (3), Local Authorities (31).





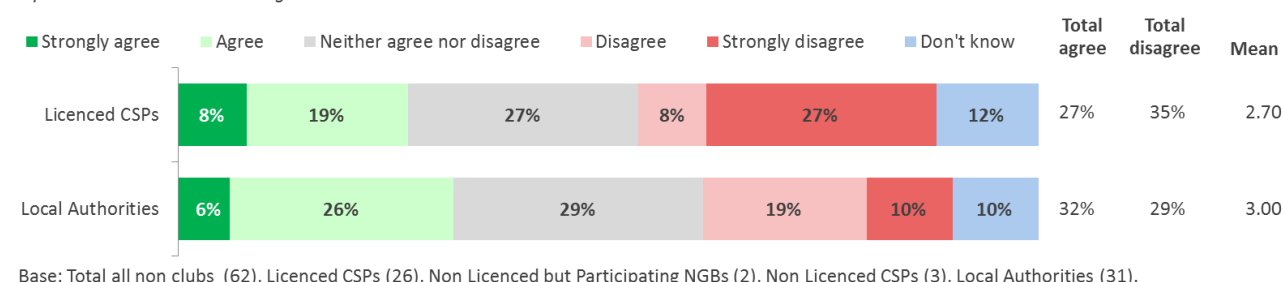
Interestingly, both licenced CSPs and Local Authorities report less agreement with the statement *'Clubmark is a priority for us'* (57% and 48% respectively). This suggests that although these organisations do see the value of Clubmark and promote it, it is not necessarily a key priority for them specifically.



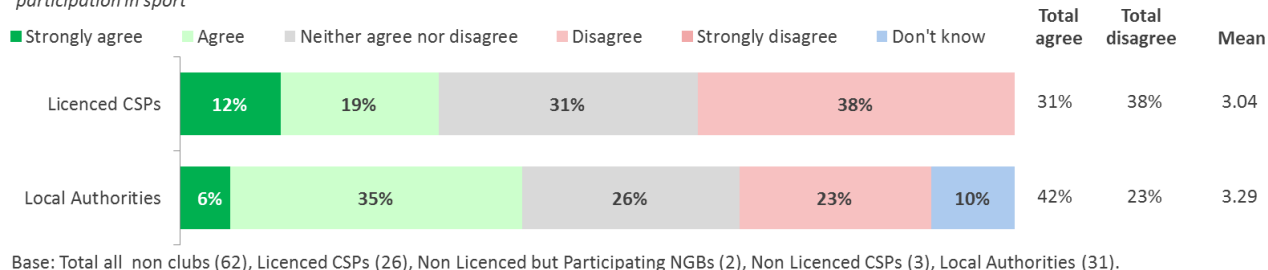
Licenced CSPs and Local Authorities typically display the least agreement with two statements. Firstly, only 27% of licenced CSPs and 32% of Local Authorities agree that *'we set additional criteria above the minimum requirements to ensure that a higher standard is achieved.'* Importantly, around a third of both audiences actually disagree with this statement, including 27% of licenced CSPs and 10% of Local Authorities that strongly disagree. These organisations are therefore more likely to use the Clubmark as it currently stands, allowing the scheme to set the standard which they then adhere to.

Secondly, results also indicate the Clubmark's use for increasing participation in sport is questionable, with 38% of licenced CSPs disagreeing that *'Clubmark is a tool for increasing participation in sport.'* Nearly a quarter (23%) of Local Authorities also disagrees with this statement.

Q31: How Clubmark currently fits within organisations' aims and objectives (7) – *"We set additional criteria above the minimum requirements to ensure that a higher standard is achieved"*



Q31: How Clubmark currently fits within organisations' aims and objectives (8) – *"Clubmark is a tool for increasing participation in sport"*





## 7.2 How, if at all, can Clubmark be improved?

When asked ‘How, if at all, can Clubmark be improved?’ a number of suggestions are made. However no single suggestion is made by more than one fifth of the overall sample which of course creates a challenge in making a manageable number of improvements which satisfy the majority of requests.

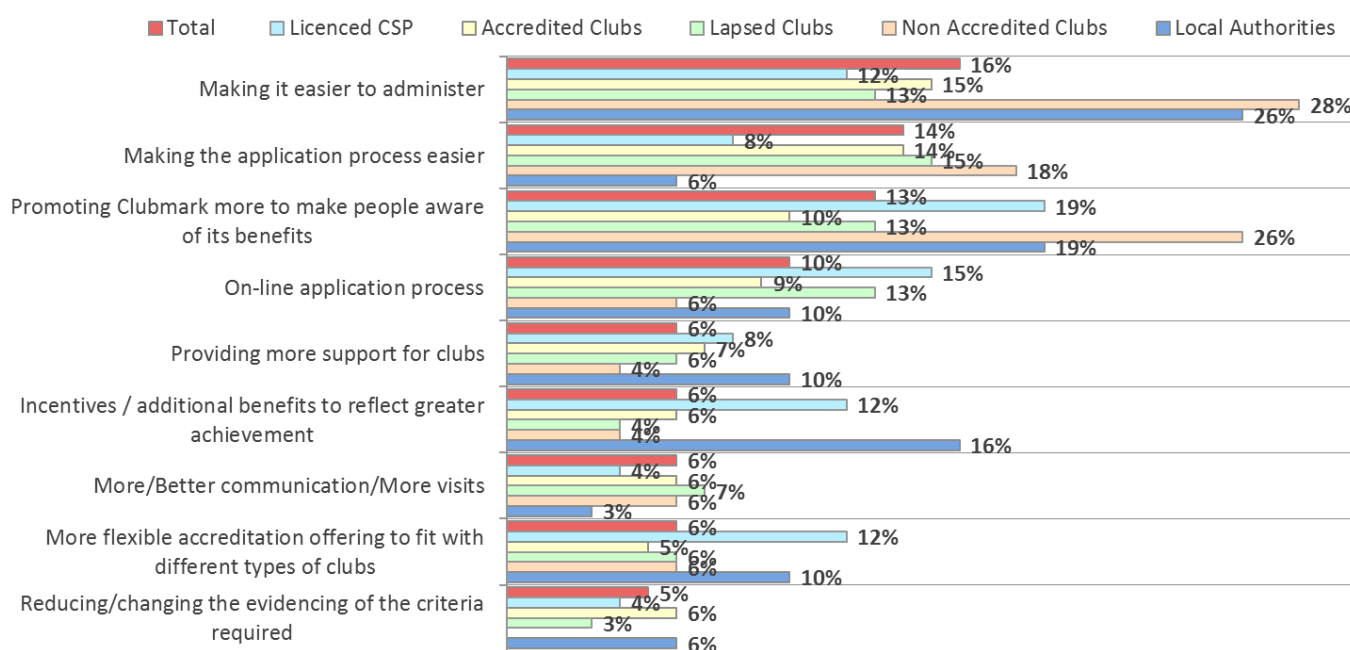
The most popular improvement, across all organisations, is that Clubmark should be easier to administer (16%). This indicates that the administrative burden is of considerable concern to many organisations. Some organisations were much more likely to indicate that this is a concern, specifically:

- Non-accredited Clubs (28%)
- Local Authorities (26%)
- Cricket clubs (36%)
- Golf clubs (45%)
- Hockey clubs (32%)
- Netball clubs (30%)

This indicates that there may be opportunities for Clubmark to encourage these types of organisations to get involved by simplifying its application process. Conversely, some organisations were less likely to provide this type of response.

- Organisations that joined in the last 12 months (8%)
- Children only clubs (9%)
- Adult only clubs (8%)
- Angling (4%)
- Boxing/martial arts (5%)
- Canoeing (3%)
- Clubs in the East of England (7%)

Q32: Key aspects to improve



Base: All respondents (670), Licensed CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).



The second most popular response relates to the Clubmark application process (as do the fourth and eighth). Organisations were able to provide multiple responses to this question so it is likely that there is some overlap between these groups, but it is still clear that the Clubmark application process is of significant concern to considerable numbers of organisations.

Organisations most concerned about this issue are Tennis (27%), cricket clubs (23%) and netball (23%) clubs. Organisations that are less likely to indicate any concerns about the application process are:

- Local Authorities (6%)
- Clubs with 1-20 members (7%)
- Children only clubs (6%)
- Adult only clubs (4%)
- Badminton (5%)
- Canoeing (3%)

The third most popular choice was *'Promoting Clubmark more to make people aware of its benefits'* (13%). Non-accredited Clubs, clubs with 1-20 members and swimming clubs are particularly likely to feel this was important 26%, 20% and 21% respectively). Conversely, organisations less likely to suggest this are children only clubs, football clubs and cycling clubs (6%, 6% and 4% respectively).

### 7.3 Awareness of the Active Kids scheme

Overall, just under half (49%) of participating organisations are aware of the Active Kids scheme and all organisation types, other than Non-accredited Clubs, indicated reasonably high levels of awareness. Licensed CSPs, in particular, demonstrate higher levels of awareness (65%) along with:

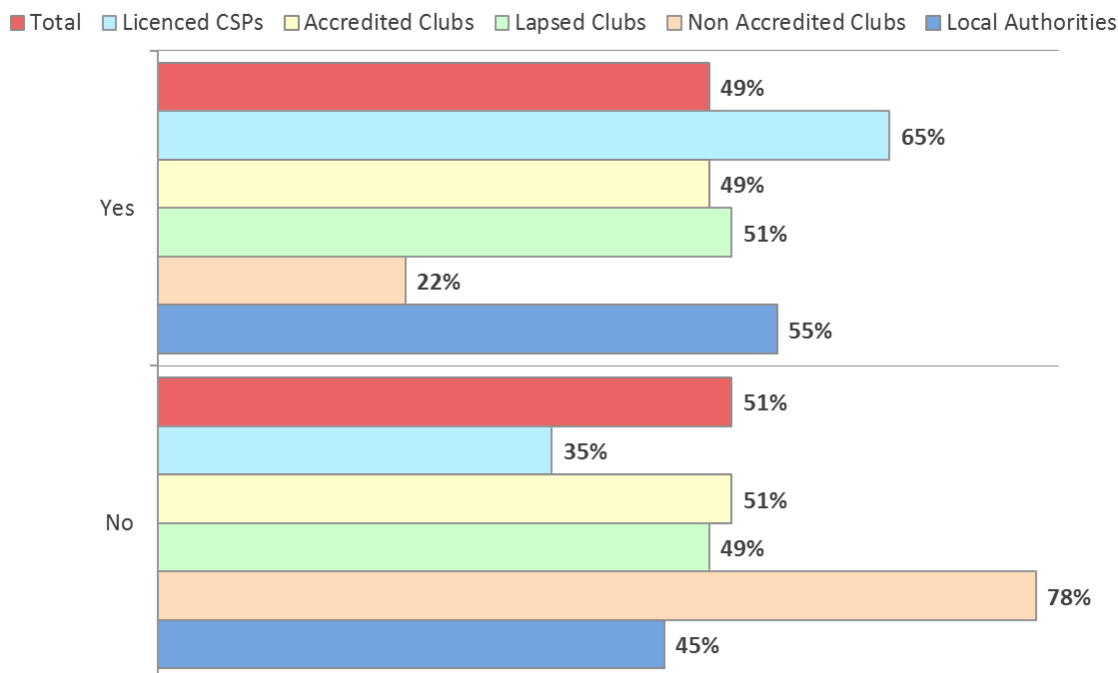
- Organisations that became involved 10 years ago or longer (68%)
- Organisations with 51-75 members (60%)
- Gymnastics clubs (73%)
- Netball clubs (70%)

Non-accredited Clubs are considerably less likely to indicate awareness of this scheme, with only 22% of them doing so. Other types of organisation are much less likely to indicate awareness of the scheme.

- Clubs with 1-20 members (13%)
- Cricket Clubs (23%)



Q33: Active Kids awareness



Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).

## 7.4 Benefits of reward schemes

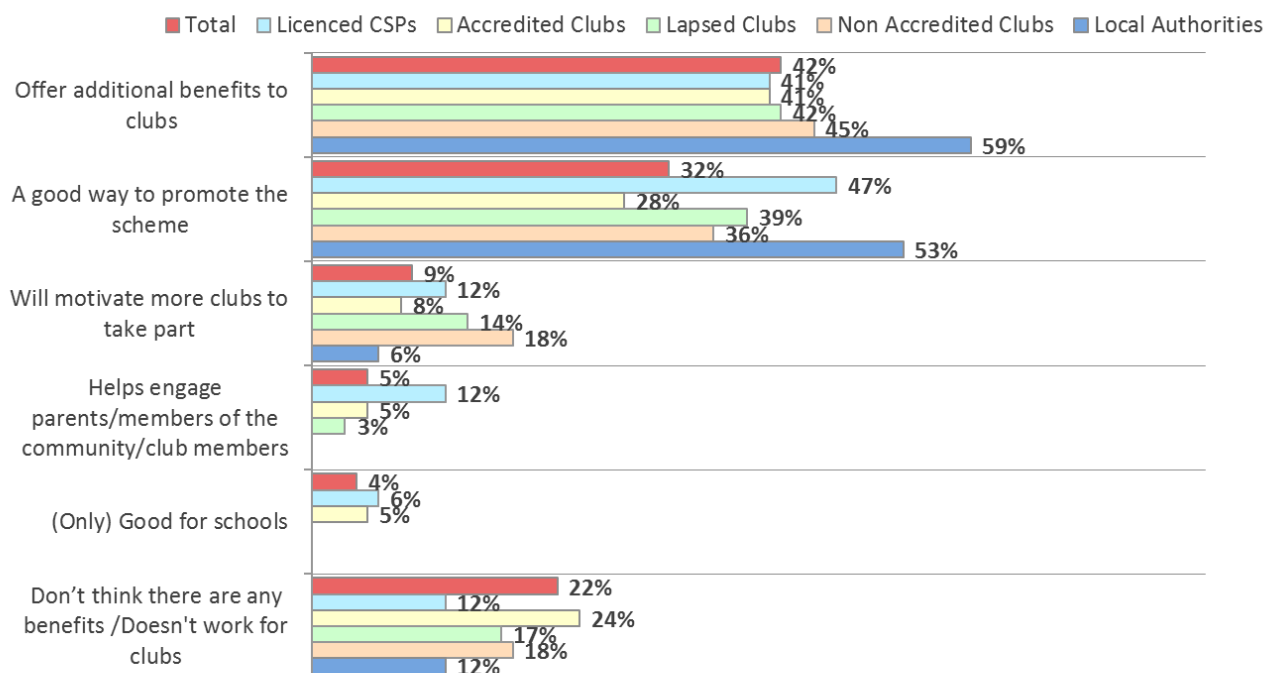
Overall, participants indicate that the main benefit of reward schemes such as Active Kids vouchers is that they offer additional benefit to clubs. Overall, 42% of the participating organisations gave this as a response. Local Authorities (59%) are more likely to give this as a response, as are football clubs (52%), netball clubs (53%), and clubs in the North East (58%).

The next most popular choice is 'A good way to promote the scheme' (32%). Again, Local Authorities (53%) are disproportionately likely to provide this kind of response and Licensed CSPs (47%) are also more likely to suggest that such schemes are a good promotion for Clubmark. Other organisations that are also more likely than the average to provide this type of response include: football clubs (52%), clubs in the East Midlands (46%).

The third most popular response to this question is for organisations to say that they do not think that the reward schemes have any benefits for clubs. Overall, one fifth (22%) gave this response. Perhaps unsurprisingly, organisations that are more likely to give this response are those that disagree that Clubmark has a positive impact on participation (34%), and those that are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied overall with Clubmark (34% and 36% respectively).



Q34a: Existing benefits of reward schemes



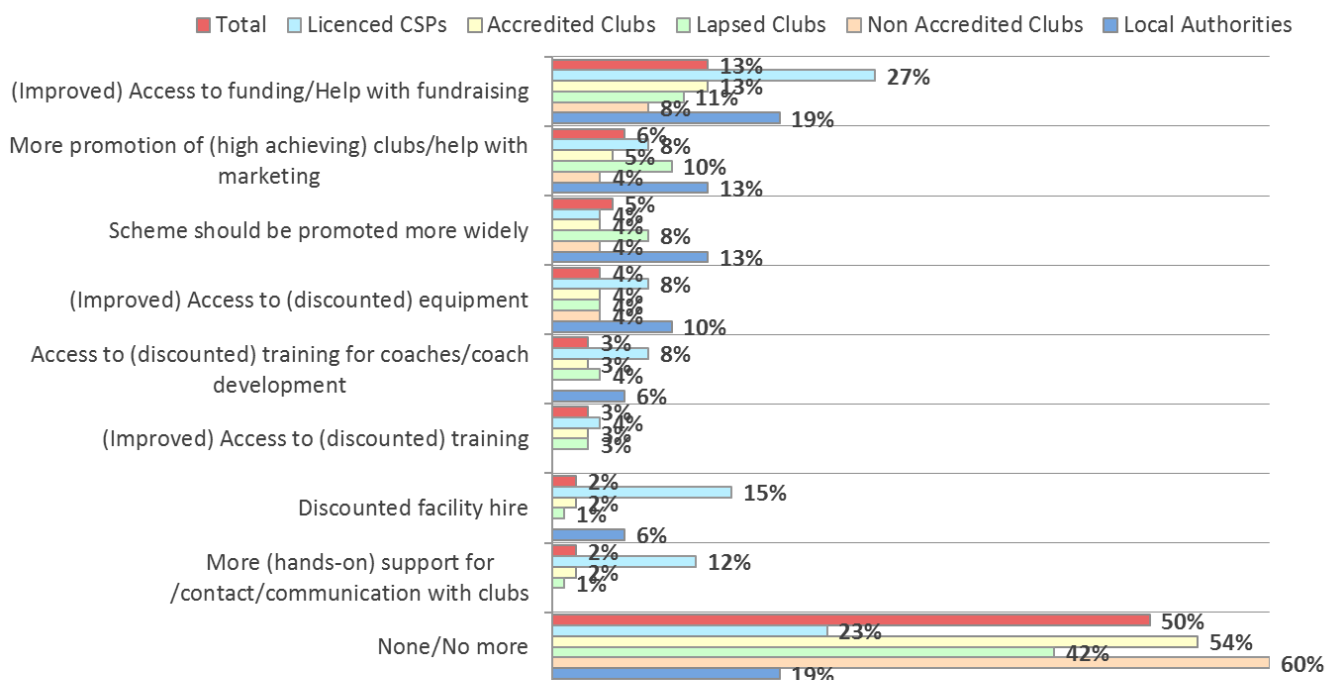
Base: Total all those who were aware of the Active Kids initiative (325), Licenced CSP (17), Accredited Clubs (241), Lapsed Clubs (36), Non Accredited Clubs (11), Local Authorities (17).

When asked 'Are there any other benefits that are realistic, that would you like to see associated with the achievement of Clubmark?' no clear improvements emerged. By far the most popular response overall is that there are no other benefits that organisations would like to see associated with the achievement of Clubmark. More than three times as many (50%) give this response as the next most popular one, which is 'Improved access to funding/Help with fundraising' (13%).

However, some organisations are considerably less likely to state that additional benefits are not needed; in particular Licenced CSPs (23%) and Local Authorities (19%). These organisations are both more likely to indicate that they would like to see more access to and help with fundraising associated with the achievement of Clubmark than the average (27% and 19% respectively). Those in Yorkshire and Humberside (27%) are also more likely to want improved support with finances (27%).



Q34b: Additional benefits



Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).

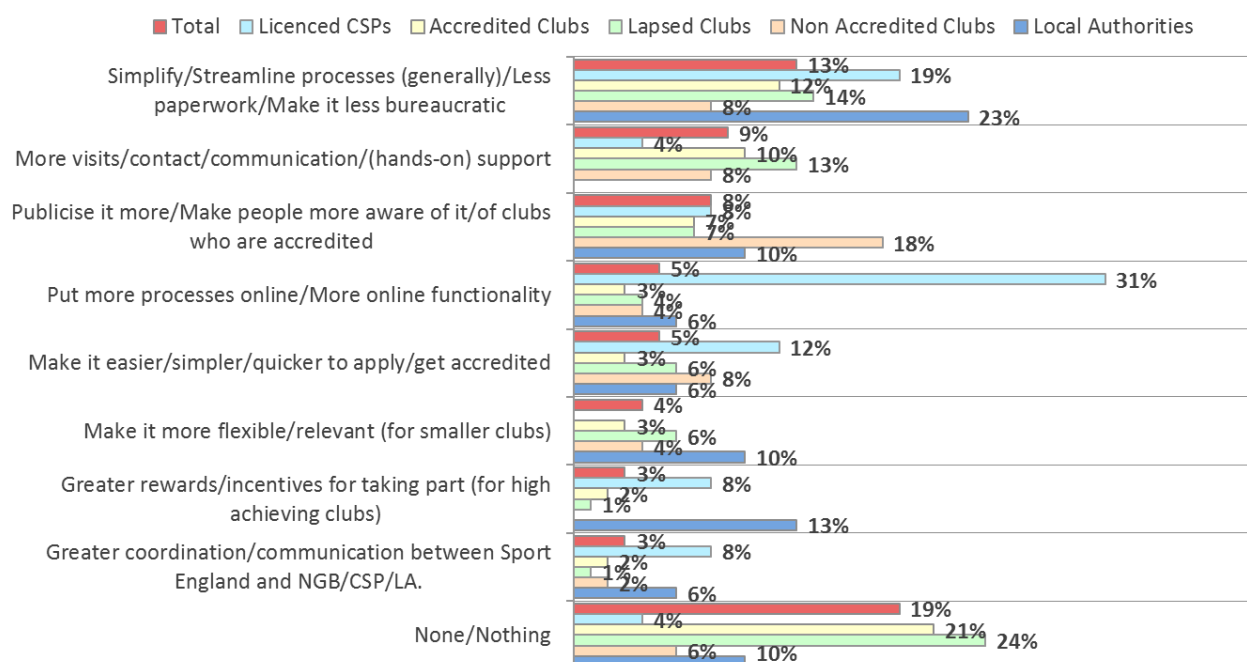
In contrast to the question on additional benefits, only 19% of organisations indicated that they could not think of anything that would make Clubmark better. The next most popular response was *'Simplify/Streamline processes (generally)/Less paperwork/Make it less bureaucratic'* (13%).

The second most popular choice was *'More visits/contact/communication/ (hands-on) support'* (9%). Organisations that have been involved for 1-2 years (28%) and badminton clubs (38%) are more likely to give this response.

Within the 8% of organisations that gave the response *'Publicise it more/Make people more aware of it/of clubs who are accredited,'* Lapsed Clubs (10%), Local Authorities (13%), as well as badminton (13%), rugby (14%) and cycling (15%) clubs were more likely to suggest this.



Q35: Key changes



Base: All respondents (670), Licenced CSP (26), Accredited Clubs (487), Lapsed Clubs (71), Non Accredited Clubs (50), Local Authorities (31).

## 7.5 NGBs (qualitative insights)

Clubmark is received well by the NGBs, highlighted by the fact that nearly all NGBs state that they intend to use Clubmark in the future, whether as the Clubmark brand or as part of their own broad accreditation. NGBs do however identify a number of ways to make the accreditation better in future.

### • Improvements to the Clubmark criteria

NGBs are generally happy with the areas covered within Clubmark's criteria; however feel that the scheme would benefit from greater flexibility. As discussed in previous section of this report, NGBs feel that tailoring the criteria to be more sport and club specific would have a positive impact on both clubs and NGBs.

More specifically, some NGBs would like the criteria to have more emphasis on the financial aspects of club management. Clubs are increasingly running more like businesses and many are keen to be seen as such.

Although NGBs are in support of tailoring the Clubmark, Sport England's current attempts at doing this are met with mixed reviews (for example Sport England's Clubmark for adult only and higher education establishments). Some NGBs welcome these changes as a way of having a more tailored Clubmark in future, whilst others criticise them for diluting the Clubmark ethos, which for many is centred on welfare and children safety.

### • Improvements to the accreditation process

The most widely cited improvement to the accreditation process is to move it online. All documents should be available online as opposed to being paper-based, so that clubs can download and complete them easily. Clubs should then be able to upload completed documents to a secure centralised portal, for example on their NGB's website. Overall, moving the application online will make the process more efficient for both clubs and licencing bodies.





Given that the application process can often be quite onerous in terms of the time it takes, improvements to this process are likely to have a positive impact on overall levels of satisfaction with Clubmark.

Greater flexibility in assessing clubs against evidencing criteria is suggested by some NGBs. They feel that allowing licencing bodies to take a more holistic view about certain criteria areas will mean that Clubmark is less of a 'box ticking exercise'. A few NGBs feel that they should have greater power in the award process, such as by being able to award the Clubmark to clubs that they feel are eligible, even if some criteria points have not been achieved.

- **Improvements to the marketing and promotion of Clubmark**

For practically all NGBs, and clubs, the most important improvement in relation to Clubmark is better promotion and they suggest a number of ways to achieve this. Overall awareness of the Clubmark brand needs to increase. Specifically, awareness of what the brand stands for, the standards it enforces and its logo.

NGBs are aware that this could be difficult given that some include Clubmark within their own accreditation, meaning that the Clubmark brand is less prominent. Nonetheless, it is felt that having a stronger Clubmark brand as a whole will help to combat this since NGBs may be more inclined to highlight to their clubs the accreditation incorporates Clubmark.

This is likely to be the case as most NGBs do see the value in having a national accreditation such as Clubmark. Knowing that they have been recognised by the main sports body in England adds to clubs' sense of status and pride. As such, NGBs feel that Sport England should be actively involved in the promotion of Clubmark, to make their relationship with the accreditation clear.

*"I think Sport England needs to do a complete re-launch of Clubmark. They need some sort of national campaign to explain to people what Clubmark is. This is a great time to do it, as we've just had the World Cup and so lot of people are thinking about sports." (Small NGB)*

*"Clubmark needs to be promoted more—it's no use to clubs if no one knows what it is. It needs brand ambassadors. Imagine if Sport England got someone like David Beckham to promote it. Before you know it, everyone would be aware of Clubmark." (Small NGB)*

*"We are of course happy to actively promote Clubmark too, but Sport England needs to take the lead on this. It needs to be clear what their involvement with Clubmark is and what it aims to achieve. If clubs buy into the product based on such promotions, they will come to us asking to apply for Clubmark rather than us going to them first." (Large NGB)*

- **Giving tangible benefits to clubs**

GBs feel that more tangible benefits need to be given to Accredited Clubs, particularly in the form of rewards and recognition. Some NGBs already offer these, but feel that Sport England should take the lead on such initiatives. This is partly due to resource constraints amongst NGBs, but also because they feel that exposure to Sport England is an important motivating factor for clubs. Suggestions include training schemes, seminars held by Sport England and certificates.



A coordinated approach to the promotion of Clubmark led by Sport England is paramount. NGBs feel that if Sport England is able to mobilise them, Local Authorities, CSPs and clubs then Clubmark's effectiveness will be increased substantially. Local Authorities play an important role in gaining 'buy in' from organisations within their area, such as schools. Once clubs have achieved the Clubmark, they can then go on to communicate its value to their current and potential members more easily if the scheme is being better promoted at the overall level.

*"They need to make the wider world aware of Clubmark! It doesn't matter how good your scheme is, if people don't know what it is or what the benefits are."*  
(Small NGB)

Initiatives such as Active Kids are seen as both an effective way to publicise Clubmark and also as beneficial to clubs because they provides tangible benefits. Such initiatives go some way to fulfilling the promise that clubs are often given before becoming Clubmarked, that they will receive access to funding and facilities. Initiatives are also a good opportunity for Sport England to publicise its involvement with Clubmark.

However, the actual take up of Active Kids varies. Some NGBs like Active Kids and are using it, whilst others have low awareness but feel they would use it if they knew more. Some say that while they think Active Kids works in theory, they have seen little evidence of it actually working in practice. Others feel that initiatives like this only benefit larger clubs and so unknowingly exclude smaller clubs.

*"Anything more we can give CM clubs is good - it leads to the clubs doing the right thing."* (Medium NGB)

*"They're only beneficial if people are aware of them. That's my problem—no one knows about these initiatives. Sport England should tell all NGBs about it so that we can tell our clubs, but currently there is just no communication. Sport England could use the NGBs to do it, we're happy to do the work if we know about it."*  
(Small NGB)

## 7.6 National Partners

Overall national partners are positive about the Clubmark accreditation, but stress that it needs to be adapted and improved to realise its potential and produce real benefits. In terms of the criteria, national partners express very strongly that Sport England should use their expertise to keep all standards up to date. It is expressed that some guidelines such as child safeguarding and coaching need to be reviewed and this should involve all parties joining together and taking a fresh look to ensure that they comply with current standards. Furthermore, this needs to occur on a fairly regular basis, to keep the guidelines updated in relation to newly published laws and legislations.

National partners feel that Clubmark criteria needs to show more distinct attention to equality, with direct focus given to women, girls, minority and disabled groups. This could involve adding criteria with the specific aim of helping these groups. However these criteria must also reflect the target population and its particular demographic tendencies since without paying attention to these, demands on clubs will be unrealistic and will most likely not be fulfilled.

*"There is no point going somewhere like Newcastle and saying clubs should have 10% BAME groups if that's just not the population there. Clubs should however be asked to reflect their local area and I don't think many do."* (National Partner)



Assessment of the criteria needs to be more innovative and dynamic. It should represent more of a conversation between clubs and licencing bodies to make sure clubs really understand what they are doing and why it is important, helping to instil values which are more likely to be continued in the long-term.

When discussing the level of promotion of Clubmark to National Partners, respondents have very little to say, as generally they do not feel that Clubmark is promoted to them at all. National Partners feel a little 'out of the loop' with Clubmark. Increasing the promotion of Clubmark to them, as well as to the general public is felt to be essential.

Increasing public awareness through better marketing is highly stressed by National Partners. For them, the general public and certainly parents must know what it means for clubs to be accredited in order for any benefits of Clubmark be realised. It should be clearly communicated that Clubmark is a sign of quality. Doing so will drive demand for the accreditation amongst clubs, as the public may seek Accredited Clubs above non accredited ones. National Partners suggest that such the promotion of Clubmark should primarily be the responsibility of Sport England.

*"An average parent doesn't know what Clubmark means. They therefore don't actively seek it, meaning that it may not be seen as a priority for clubs." (National Partner)*

*"Right now if you have Clubmark that's great, but what does that actually mean? For me, there isn't enough promotion of the value of Clubmark to the general public. Doing so will increase the overall value of it to clubs and make them want it more." (National Partner)*

In regard to the types of clubs that Clubmark targets, National Partners typically feel that all clubs should be able to be involved in the scheme; there should not be any clubs that are exempt. Reducing criteria for certain types of clubs may lower the impact and quality of the accreditation. For example, it is felt that the adult Clubmark, currently lacking in safeguarding aspects, should include guidelines in this area to ensure the welfare of adults in sport.

Furthermore, additional criteria should be included to enhance certain types of clubs even more. Due to Clubmark's link with funding, National Partners feel that the age range of 14 and upwards should have a more specific focus within Clubmark, as this is where the sports industry tends to focus its funding resources. National Partners also feel that higher education settings need particular focus, as colleges and universities are increasingly becoming a focal point for developing participation. While in some universities sport is more of a social pursuit, in others it can take a professional role where values are learnt and skills are realised. Structures therefore need to be in place to push engagement in sport as well as the welfare of its participants.

Participation is an interesting element for the Clubmark scheme and many National Partners do not feel that Clubmark actually increases this. The scheme is not generally considered as a driver for participation, but rather as a driver for quality. There is a sense that this is also the case for NGBs, as Clubmark is pushed for its safety and coaching aspects etc. rather than for increased participation.



To increase participation national partners feel that understanding communities is essential, to create better links with local organisations such as schools and colleges and therefore suitably target these groups with tailored programmes. This could help clubs build strong foundations within communities and encourage local people to attend. Such understanding would require dedicated people, perhaps suggesting a new criteria point for Clubmark to cover.

*“We need to figure out what the actual aim of the Clubmark is—it’s about being honest with ourselves and others. If it’s about increasing the quality of clubs then yes, Clubmark is having a positive impact. But if it’s about increasing participation then I don’t think it is. If participation is the main aim then we need to re-think the criteria.” (National Partner)*

In terms of future use of the Clubmark scheme, national partners typically express that there should be better engagement with them as stakeholders since they would like to have a more active involvement in the scheme. National partners would like their relationship with Sport England to develop, bringing together expertise from each group to form an up-to-date, quality scheme that truly helps the sporting world. There is therefore a place for Sport England to start conversations with National Partners on their own relevant areas, for example on the equality of women and girls, of which national partners will be happy to take responsibility and provide support. They are also willing to provide advice on the evidencing of criteria and how this can be done in the most effective way for reflective assessment. However it must be noted that this involvement should be sensitive to issues of resource, as some national partners feel that formalised support would not be possible due to a lack of capacity. Where this is possible though, they would like to offer it.

*“We have a lot to offer and think that Sport England should make better use of us when it comes to Clubmark. Our ability to support individual clubs is limited because of our capacity, but we can be more involved with Sport England and NGBs. We have the expertise they need make sure the criteria points are optimal.” (National Partner)*

*“We do want to be involved, but more people need to be made aware that they can approach us.” (National Partner)*



## 8 Conclusions and recommendations

This section will look at the research findings within the context of Sport England's objectives for Clubmark.

- **What are the main perceived benefits of Clubmark for key stakeholders?**

Overall, stakeholders identify a range of benefits in relation to Clubmark, with some valued more than others. The most valued benefits tend to be ones where stakeholders see Clubmark as adding value and helping them to achieve or consider things they would otherwise not have, or where rewards are tangible, such as funding or equipment.

All key stakeholders perceive the principal benefit of Clubmark to be the assurance it offers in terms of safeguarding: it ensures that clubs are operating to a high standard in regard to the health, safety and welfare of all participants.

Stakeholders also value Clubmark for making clubs more efficient and business minded. It sets specific standards in terms of planning and organisation and encourages clubs to function more like business, which NGBs and National Partners feel clubs increasingly want to be seen as.

Benefits in terms of access to funding are valued highly, but there is some debate about how effective these currently are. Whilst some clubs believe that Clubmark places them in a better position to access funding (as it increases their standing and appeal to grant giving bodies), other clubs and licenced/non-licenced bodies question whether this is actually the case. Some stakeholders express that funding and grants should principally go to Clubmark clubs, however grant-giving bodies tend to vary in their approach to this policy. Consequently, Clubmark may not place accredited clubs ahead of non-accredited clubs in relation to funding opportunities.

Nevertheless, there are some anxieties around closely tying access to funding to Clubmark. NGBs in particular are concerned that, as some clubs do not have the internal resources to be able to achieve Clubmark, they will be unfairly disadvantaged. As such, they often do not make their funding contingent on being accredited.

**As access to funding is an attractive benefit, Clubmark should develop a clearer strategy around its approach to this. Practices are currently too variable, giving mixed signals to clubs, NGBs and grant giving bodies. Working with licencing bodies and other grant-giving bodies to better understand their perspectives on funding, including the pros and cons of tying this to Clubmark, is advisable.**

Stakeholders on both the administrative and application side of Clubmark believe that Clubmark facilitates better working relationships between its stakeholders. Amongst those on the administrative side (i.e. Sport England, NGBs, CSPs and National Partners), the main benefit is being able to work closely together to develop the accreditation. National Partners particularly appreciate that Sport England asks them to contribute, as this means that their organisational objectives become a key part of a wider reaching scheme, something that they may not otherwise be able to achieve. However, National Partners do feel that their on-going involvement to Clubmark is limited, with many having little contact with Sport England post the initial development phase of the accreditation. Furthermore, they generally have little or no on-going contact with NGBs and clubs in relation to Clubmark specifically. National Partners would like to be more involved with Clubmark, although are weary of being over-stretched.

**National Partners therefore suggest working with Sport England to establish and promote an advisory role for them, so that NGBs know that they can and should come to them for advice, as and when needed.**



NGBs and clubs value the increased interaction between each other, which Clubmark facilitates. It develops closer working relationships and ongoing communication, including praise and also constructive criticism. However, where NGBs have internal resourcing constraints, they are unable to make the most of this interaction, which can be frustrating for both themselves and for clubs.

**Where possible, Clubmark should seek to facilitate interaction between NGBs and clubs which is more effective. For example, by assessing NGB's capacity to administer Clubmark by looking at their internal resources in relation to the number of clubs they have. Helping NGBs to increase their capacity, such as by offering them additional help, will help NGBs reach out to more of their clubs and increase the number that are accredited.**

Although there are clear benefits of Clubmark, as outlined above, the main issue is that these are not sold or delivered well enough. Some accredited clubs suggest that Clubmark is not enough of a differentiating factor for them from non-accredited clubs, suggesting that benefits are not having the desired effect. Additionally parents, a key customer for clubs are largely unaware of Clubmark which limits the benefits it can have. In general, there is a lack tangible benefits, such as funding or other rewards. This is particularly disappointing when clubs may expect these: for example when they are heavily promoted by NGBs or in marketing materials.

**Increasing the type and quality of tangible benefits will help to get 'buy-in' from clubs. This could be in the form of initiatives such as Active Kids vouchers for example, which are currently relatively well received. However such initiatives must ensure that they do not exclude certain clubs so should have suitable and desirable options for different types of sports.**

Importantly, stakeholders also value less tangible benefits, such as safeguarding and better organisation. However, they are not always convinced of their relevance, meaning that they are undervalued.

**Clubmark should sell the importance of less tangible benefits and make it clear to clubs why they are being asked to achieve certain standards. Rewarding clubs that meet a certain standard in these, such as by inviting them to an event to speak to other clubs or Sport England about their experiences, will help to make these less obvious benefits more tangible.**

**Overall, the Clubmark scheme needs to demonstrate that being an accredited club will actively better clubs; setting them apart in terms of their appeal to both funding bodies and the public. Clubs would subsequently receive many more benefits in having the accreditation, increasing 'buy-in' and thus raising the whole profile of the Clubmark scheme.**

- **What are clubs views on the process involved in attaining and retaining Clubmark accreditation?**

Clubs have both positive and negative views on the accreditation process. In terms of the criteria, clubs generally feel that they cover the appropriate areas, although some aspects of 'knowing your club and its community' are questioned in relation to their practical relevance to the club environment. Clubs therefore feel that there should be greater flexibility in the criteria to allow them to be adapted to what is important for their club. Importantly, some stakeholders, in particular, National Partners, feel that a better understanding of their community will help clubs developed a more tailored offering for the local population. As such, this may help to increase participation levels.





**Clubmark should therefore highlight the benefits of knowing your community better, demonstrating how and why this can enhance clubs' marketing and programme development strategies.**

The evidencing of the Clubmark criteria can also be problematic. Clubs make great use of Clubmark templates when applying for the scheme, and indeed express satisfaction with these as they can easily be altered for their own purposes. However the paper-based nature of the accreditation process creates issues in that it becomes onerous, time consuming, difficult to collate the documentation, and difficult to reflect upon a completed application as files are so large and often illogically organised. Additionally, NGBs express concerns that data could get lost, stolen or disappear (should the Clubmark lead leave a club). However once the documentation has been submitted, clubs are generally positive about the time taken to receive their Clubmark accreditation.

Overall, some argue that the paper-based nature of certain evidencing is not appropriate to demonstrate some specific qualities, risking views that Clubmark is a 'paper exercise' and is therefore not suitable for the sports sector.

**Evidencing could therefore become more dynamic and based around active demonstration of certain qualities (rather than a written report).**

Around half of clubs within the research had received a visit from a Clubmark licencing body. These visits are generally viewed as very helpful, giving clubs some useful advice and suggestions for improvement. Clubs sometimes even relish the visits as a chance to showcase their organisation and the work they are doing. Very few clubs have had an external verification visit from Clubmark, but where they have, fewer positives are reported from this experience. Although visits, from a Clubmark licencing body or Clubmark itself are valued, these types of visit place pressure on the club and create anxiety.

**It is therefore recommended that visits from Clubmark licencing bodies continue, with a focus upon providing feedback for clubs and praising them for their hard work. In terms of external verification visits, some type of itinerary or document detailing what the visit will involve and why it is important may be useful, to help clubs to see the value in having the visit and how it can actually help them to improve and to be recognised.**

Generally yearly health checks are considered to be a relatively simple and easy process. However some clubs view the re-accreditation process negatively, as they struggle to understand the value in submitting the same application again.

**We suggest improving the re-accreditation process in the following ways:**

- 1. Condensing the process, so that clubs do not have to complete the whole procedure again. As mentioned above, it is time consuming and onerous, which can act as a barrier to re-accreditation.**
- 2. Re-accreditation should be something that clubs are motivated to work towards. This could be achieved by requiring them to go slightly further to achieve a scaled up version of Clubmark. This would work much like a tiered version of Clubmark, by awarding clubs with a higher standard or 'mark' when they re-accredit and reach the next level.**





- **What are licenced and non-licenced stakeholders' views (positive and negative) on the process involved in promoting, managing and administering Clubmark?**

In terms of promoting Clubmark to clubs, licenced and non-licenced stakeholders typically do not actively promote the scheme, with the majority claiming that it is not a priority for them. In many cases this is due to a lack of capacity in the NGB, as there are few people who are able to invest their time in pushing Clubmark; they simply do not have the resources to do it. However in other cases, particularly in higher-risk sports (e.g. water sports), other licences and accreditations must be the priority as these are mandatory for the club to operate at all. Conversely, clubs can still run without Clubmark, and this makes it difficult to promote to clubs and encourage them to invest their time and efforts into the accreditation. This lack of promotion affects 'buy-in' from clubs, as clubs do not understand why they should work towards the accreditation. Importantly, Sport England's ownership of the Clubmark accreditation is seen as a real strength and differentiating factor from other accreditations. For them, clubs like being part of something bigger, and will therefore be more motivated to gain Clubmark than if it were just another accreditation that their NGB asked them to achieve.

**Sport England should therefore promote Clubmark more heavily as its national, sport-wide accreditation. Specifically, it should sell the benefits of being national scheme. If Sport England leads on this, it will provide more leverage for other bodies as they go on to promote it to clubs. Further promotion will also lead to greater recognition among the public.**

Generally speaking National Partners also do not promote Clubmark in their organisation's work. Although it is viewed positively, partners question how widely their relationship with Sport England is known, especially in regards to the Clubmark scheme.

**Sport England should widely promote National Partners as key stakeholders who are involved in Clubmark. This will increase the access that NGBs and clubs have to National Partner's specialist knowledge, thus allowing them to meet the Clubmark criteria in a more effective way.**

Licenced bodies vary in the way they manage Clubmark. Many NGBs have tailored Clubmark to make it more relevant to their sport by renaming the scheme, adapting the criteria, creating a tiered system, or moving the process online. Other NGBs however have kept the Clubmark as a generic template, following it as standardised by Sport England. How NGBs manage Clubmark is very much dependent on their particular sports and how the Clubmark scheme fits with their organisational objectives, as well the capacity they have to invest in Clubmark. Although NGBs value the flexibility that the current Clubmark scheme provides, this can lead to variable levels of effectiveness in its implementation across sports. Some NGBs feel that they are currently not making the most of Clubmark, whilst others feel they set the bar too high and are now needing to reassess their approach.

**NGBs would therefore benefit from more advice and guidance on how to implement and maximise the value of Clubmark for their particular sport. Some direct involvement from Sport England is needed, such as having relatively regular contact with NGBs to review their scheme. This could include a mandatory meeting, perhaps twice a year, as well as more on-going contact via phone or email. Knowledge sharing with other NGBs will also be helpful. A scheduled meeting once a year to facilitate this, or having an on-going online portal will help.**

Most NGBs process paper-based applications to administer Clubmark. This can be onerous for both themselves and on clubs, with both experiencing a lack of time to put into Clubmark.



**It is therefore recommended that the accreditation process is moved online, making it more efficient and organised. This type of system could involve alerts to NGBs to tell them when a club has uploaded a file and completed their application, as well as easily showing what stage each club is at and how they are progressing. Furthermore, this would make it easier for clubs to reflect back on their accreditation as everything is easy to locate and read through at a central, secure, location.**

Licensed and non-licensed stakeholders are positive about external verification visits and visits from licensing bodies. These types of visits are considered as essential to ensuring that standards are properly implemented in the club environment, and to provide an accurate indicator of how the club is actually doing. They recognise the pressure these visits place on clubs, but consider this to be positive as it encourages clubs to perform well.

**Such visits should therefore continue, placing emphasis upon helping clubs rectify any issues.**

Administering re-accreditations of Clubmark is viewed similarly to the original accreditation process—as rather time consuming for both the NGB and the club. However NGBs typically struggle to encourage clubs to renew Clubmark, especially if they have seen a lack of benefits (especially tangible ones) since being accredited.

- **What are the wider impacts of gaining Clubmark for accredited clubs and key stakeholders?**

Clubmark has generally met most organisations' expectations in relation to the impact they expected it to have. Although there are very few who view it as exceeding their expectations. Furthermore, a reasonable proportion feel that it has actually failed to meet expectations. Clubmark therefore needs some level of reviewing and refining for all audiences to truly see its positive impacts.

The principal impact viewed by both accredited clubs and other key stakeholders is the assurance that Clubmark offers that clubs are operating to high standards in terms of the welfare and safety of their members. This therefore reflects the main perceived benefit of Clubmark although all audiences stress the lack of tangible benefits involved with Clubmark. Accredited clubs value the appropriateness of the accreditation to their club, indicating that a scheme such as Clubmark is relevant and necessary. Stakeholders also see Clubmark as improving the general profile of a club, giving it a greater standing in the wider sport sector.

**Clubmark banners and other events and materials that help clubs promote clubs' achievements are valued, and should be encouraged. Sport England could look to have a centralised way of doing this, such as by having a yearly awards dinners or events to celebrate the best Clubmark clubs.**

Stakeholders do not regard an increase in participation to be an impact of Clubmark. Accredited clubs express least satisfaction with Clubmark's impact on retention of club members and on growing club membership, and similarly NGBs and other stakeholders do not consider it to be a driver of participation levels. Clubmark is instead thought to be a driver of quality, and only possibly affecting participation levels once people have decided to take part in the sport—they may continue because the club provides a high quality environment to engage in sport. Importantly, increasing participation may not be a key priority or even possible for clubs, particularly if they are small or their facilities are limited.

**If a key aim of Clubmark is to increase participation, Sport England needs to embed this into the current accreditation in a more effective way. However, to ensure that smaller clubs are not disproportionately disadvantaged, barriers to increasing participation amongst clubs and specific sports should be explored further.**



As referred to earlier, the lack of perceived benefits means that Clubmark's impact is generally seen to be limited. As such, clubs don't necessarily make the most of it, allowing it to be largely forgotten beyond the initial accreditation process. This means that benefits which may occur in the long-term are not fulfilled.

**Along with increasing the impact of benefits that clubs receive, Clubmark needs to ensure that it remains top of mind and becomes embedded in clubs day-to-day running structures. Regular engagement with clubs will help this: for example by inviting them to more Sport England events where they can share knowledge and experiences. Clubmark should also formalise on-going engagement where possible, by adding it as requirement in the Clubmark criteria (e.g. ensuring that development plans are taken to board meetings).**

Importantly, the vast majority of all audiences feel that Clubmark's impact is limited due to a lack of promotion of what it means. All stakeholders question whether the public, and in particular parents, know and understand what Clubmark stands for.

**Sport England is therefore encouraged to consider the desired effect of Clubmark on the end user: i.e. people selecting and attending clubs. Thus promotion is needed from Sport England to engage not only its stakeholders, but also the general public.**

- **What are key stakeholders' views on any changes/enhancements they would like to see made to Clubmark?**

All stakeholders assert that the principles of Clubmark are highly positive, and that the scheme does not need to be drastically re-developed or changed. Rather, the current Clubmark needs to be enhanced to make it more efficient and effective in its purpose. Stakeholders emphasise that the ethos around safeguarding must not be lost, as this is the main perceived benefit and positive impact of Clubmark as it currently stands.

Arguably the most important enhancement is that Clubmark needs to be promoted to both the inner (i.e. practitioners) and outer (i.e. decision-makers) sports world to increase overall understanding of what it means. This would be helped by strengthening the Clubmark brand so it is instantly recognised and associated with its positive elements. Clubs would therefore be able to use Clubmark as an effective marketing strategy, boosting participation in their club. Greater awareness and understanding of Clubmark among the general public will in turn increase 'buy-in' from clubs.

**It is recommended that such promotion is administered in a co-ordinated way between NGBs, CSP's, National Partners and local authorities, to generate maximum understanding and recognition.**

Clubmark can also be enhanced with tangible benefits. The scheme needs to have more of a selling point to increase 'buy-in' from clubs and increase their desire to achieve the accreditation. Importantly, these benefits must not exclude certain clubs and must have relevance for all in order to fulfil their purpose of adding greater appeal to Clubmark. Benefits should set accredited clubs apart from non-accredited clubs so the value in having Clubmark can be seen easily.

**It is recommended that more clear-cut paths to funding are offered as a result of achieving Clubmark.**

Both clubs and licenced bodies indicate that Clubmark needs to be easier to apply for and to administer.

**Moving the process online represents an effective way to do this, allowing documentation to be submitted quickly and to be kept in an organised way. This would also make it easier for licenced bodies to keep track of each club's progress; helping to keep clubs motivated and move forward.**



The criteria of Clubmark also need to be enhanced. It is very apparent that different sports have different needs, and any accreditation scheme will always have to be adapted as a result.

**The criteria therefore need to be more flexible to allow for these differences and enable clubs to alter what is relevant for them. Furthermore the evidencing of criteria should be more innovative, with assessment of some qualities in the form of demonstrations - for example videos and photographs rather than written documentation.**

Sport England should use the expertise of specialist organisations to assist with the criteria, as they possess the knowledge to keep Clubmark up-to-date and in line with current standards. In particular, this should include National Partners and NGBs who have developed innovative and more bespoke approaches to Clubmark.

**Finally, Clubmark re-accreditation either needs to be simplified or used to encourage clubs to achieve something new, such as by implementing a tiered system. Such changes will reduce ambivalence towards renewing, as well as encouraging clubs to strive to be better and keep Clubmark top of mind.**