

# Irish Clubs in Britain

## A Needs Analysis, 2014

### REPORT SUMMARY

Over the last number of years, the number of Irish Clubs in Britain has dropped considerably and many Irish Clubs face an uncertain future. This needs analysis aims to understand Clubs' current operations and the issues Clubs face in order to offer the best possible support, now and in the future.

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DATE

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AUTHOR

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As the only national representative and membership body for Irish organisations and clubs, Irish in Britain continually strives to offer the best possible support and representation to all our members despite limited resources and financial challenges. We recognise the increasingly difficult environment in which Irish clubs in Britain operate and the support we offer must be responsive to the complex and changing needs of clubs.

Over recent years, the number of Irish clubs in Britain has dropped considerably and many Irish clubs face an uncertain future. We believe the issues they face are extremely varied and in order to offer the best possible support, it is necessary for us to understand more about clubs and where they might need assistance now and in the future.

This report details the results of the needs analysis carried out by Irish in Britain in June and July of 2014 to build a picture of the operation of Irish Clubs in Britain in 2014. This will inform Irish in Britain's lobbying and campaigning on behalf of the clubs and in obtaining funding in order to support clubs to continue to offer their services, improve them or provide new ones. Please note that, due to rounding, not all percentages in charts will total exactly 100%.

## Executive Summary

20 Irish Clubs (Irish in Britain members) from across the country participated in the survey. Clubs were visited by members of Irish in Britain staff and a comprehensive questionnaire was completed, for subsequent analysis. Several respondents commented that the needs assessment approach of the interviews was in itself useful and helped Clubs to take stock of their current modes of operation.

The Clubs serve an average of 600 individual members, although the membership size varies enormously, from around 200 members at the smallest Club, up to 2,800 members. The Clubs offer social, cultural, sporting and welfare services to the community, often in partnership with other community organisations. All the Clubs offer music and most have some sport or arts on offer. Most Clubs (17) offer lunch clubs or tea dances. Most Clubs (16) target over half of their services at the Irish community, and only one of these Clubs targets the Irish community exclusively.

## Current Operations

### **KEY STRENGTHS:**

- Most are in a good location and the majority own their own premises
- Well-run and popular lunch club services and tea dances
- Existing collaboration with community and statutory partners
- The majority who have commercial kitchens have a 5 star rating from the Local Authority
- Most Clubs successfully recruit and retain staff
- Good awareness of occupancy limits for public rooms
- Most have IT systems, websites and Facebook accounts in place (although expertise in using these varies)
- Just over half of Clubs reported having a strong understanding of roles and responsibilities among their committee members

**EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS:**

- Regular training for all committee members in governance, charity obligations and trustee commitments
- Recruiting board members with successful commercial experience who delivered an effective marketing campaign
- Securing funding for refurbishment
- Upgrade of football pitch to professional standard via partnership with the Football Foundation
- Working with an Irish dance school to attract new members
- Using social media for younger users (usually dancers and sports teams)
- One Club was having success in attracting newer Irish immigrants
- Asking sports teams who use the facilities to hold 2 events per year at the centre
- Diversification of communities served and attracting associated funding to act as a community hub
- Capitalising on footfall from local football matches by having a temporary membership category
- Strong creative commercial awareness, e.g. weekly auction to boost revenue
- Letting accommodation above the Club to generate revenue
- Plans to pay off brewery tie to enable purchasing of drinks at more competitive prices
- Working with a Local Development Agency to hold a volunteer recruitment day and develop volunteer policies

While the situation of each Club varied, areas for capacity building that were common to more than one Club were identified as follows:

## NEEDS

- Policies and procedures (including dealing with connected staff)
- Securing and diversifying funding for services (e.g. to run a lunch club, to offer transport)
- Need for grants for substantial refurbishment
- Connected to the above, an overall fundraising strategy was only in place at two Clubs
- Need to attract additional members / users. Only two Clubs have a marketing strategy
- Business planning and development. Only six Clubs have business plans and only three have a strategic plan in place
- Improved use of facilities in some venues – e.g. developing catering service, or room hire, or improving access to upper floors
- Low or inconsistent use of IT - predominantly this is about the IT proficiency of core staff / trustees. Only half of Clubs have an electronic database. Also one Club is trying to get a new website launched but there are issues around cost. Several Clubs mentioned that databases, web maintenance and/or online communication were the domain of general volunteers rather than officers of the Club, and there was some lack of knowledge about what systems were in place and how to use them.
- Understanding of roles and responsibilities of Trustees
- Clarity of tenancy agreements and clear contracts when staff stay in accommodation
- Clarity of ownership where two organisational entities / Clubs are working alongside each other.
- Some instances of problems with staff / volunteer recruitment, including problems with trustworthiness of employees and the consequent need for careful stock checking.
- Planning for staff transitions / skills-based recruitment for roles

## **Future Operations**

While most respondents are fairly positive about the future of their clubs, particularly in terms of the services and resources they offer to the community, the interview process identified some common areas of concern. Funding and user levels are the key areas underpinning most Clubs' concerns about the long-term future.

An ageing Irish population was a concern for many Clubs when considering the future viability of their organisations. The ageing membership of Irish Clubs has a twofold effect on the operation – and potential survival – of the Clubs. On the one hand many clubs are active in delivering lunch club services to the elderly in their communities but, on the other hand, overall membership and revenue levels appear to be suffering as the numbers of first generation Irish decline. One Club commented that they are actively looking for ways to cater to the younger generations as they tend to go elsewhere at the moment. (e.g. tribute bands of more recent artists). Another Club felt that they needed to attract more women and young people onto the committee to help to broaden the appeal of the club - and indeed the current age and gender profile of committee members across the board is very biased towards older males, typically aged 55 or over.

Concerns about funding particularly revolve around the need to ensure a planned, funded maintenance programme is in place. Maintenance is essential to the future viability of each property and it will be key to attracting new members in the future. If the buildings currently appear run down they will not attract new users and this will in turn affect viability and revenues; as one interviewee said, they are in a “catch 22 situation” in this respect. For most Clubs with renovation concerns, support in this area needs to focus on securing funding for significant renovation projects. In some cases (i.e. where premises are not owned by the Club) any major renovation will involve negotiations with landlords. One Club does not own the land it is on, which is in a prime site, and so feels vulnerable to competing development plans which may threaten it. Several Clubs were also interested in fundraising support for cultural and welfare activities.

The interview process identified multiple areas for operational development to support future sustainability of the Clubs. In summary, areas of focus identified for the development of Clubs were as follows:

- **Addressing membership / user levels** including
  - Attracting younger Irish migrants / second and third generation Irish (potentially including recruiting younger Committee members)
  - Sharing ideas with other Clubs about what to offer, particularly cultural offer / bands
  - Developing a communications plan and marketing strategy; including identifying suitable avenues of promotion for potential new members, e.g. developing online presence and promotion
  - as outlined above, some Clubs need to develop IT proficiency to support this
  - Identifying ways to attract usage of the Club throughout the year, and not just on St. Patrick's day
- **Premises:** Securing funding for renovations and ensuring a planned maintenance programme is in place.
- **Developing welfare and cultural services** offered, including
  - Securing funding and developing local partnerships to support lunch clubs / transport to lunch clubs
  - Interest in dementia support
  - Being informed about passport applications and renewals
- In addition to generating larger memberships, Clubs suggested the following avenues for **improving revenue**:
  - Better utilisation of kitchen facilities / developing catering offer
  - Installation of solar panels / double glazing to reduce energy costs
  - Improving quality of football pitch to attract sports users and revenue
  - Recovering costs of sports teams using changing rooms
  - Car boot sales



- Clubs interested in a retail shop to discuss viability and best practice with Clubs who currently operate shops
- **Business planning** to ensure financial viability (and to enable freedom from brewery ties - and in one case a members loan - where applicable). As noted above, the majority of Clubs do not have a business plan in place, nor do the majority have strategic or fundraising plans. It was mentioned several times that a forum for sharing business tips would be appreciated.
- Plan / negotiate for acquisition of land (x1)

### **Support Needed**

While long-term concerns about the future of the clubs revolve around income streams and membership / user numbers, immediate support needs most commonly concern the implementation of formal policies and procedures, and/or accessible updates on legislation related to these where they are already in place. Several Clubs felt that they were too stretched, particularly as volunteers, to set up additional formal procedures themselves. Some information relating to policies and procedures has already been sent out to Clubs by Irish in Britain.

Areas in which Clubs would specifically like to have support are:

- **Membership:** attracting new – particularly younger – members / users (approximately a sixth of Clubs requested support in this, although it was a significant area of concern for more)
  - Marketing support / training
  - Website / social media support – see IT section below
- **Policies and procedures** (half of Clubs requested this) including:
  - Staff Handbook

- Health and Safety Advice – including a request for regular updates in plain English
- Human Resources legislation updates
- Disciplinary procedures
- Operational procedures
- Induction
- Training records
- Volunteer policy
- Safeguarding
- **Business management**, monitoring and planning (approximately a third of Clubs requested this) including
  - Updating finance policy
  - Business Plan (only 5 clubs have one)
  - Writing tenders / tendering processes for services
  - Facilities management training
  - Facilitate bulk buying of energy between Clubs
  - Staff recruitment
- **Governance** (approximately a fifth of Clubs requested support in this area) including
  - A common document on governance shared among Clubs
  - Appointment of trustees / committee members
  - Reviewing constitution
  - Keeping abreast of changes in charity law
  - Advice regarding renewal of governance documents
- **Cultural support** (a sixth of Clubs requested cultural support) including
  - Securing funding for cultural events
  - Planning offer that meets diverse community needs
  - Irish in Britain creating a national database of artists
- **Welfare** (a sixth of Clubs) including
  - developing a lunch club

- securing or diversifying funding for welfare work
- Dementia / memory loss work
- **IT / Communications Training** (a sixth)
  - social media
  - website support
  - database management
- **Fundraising** (several Clubs) including:
  - Developing Club's planning, activities and expertise in this area
  - Information about potential funders in third sector
  - Letter of support from Irish in Britain for funding bids
  - Negotiating with Local Authority landlord re refurbishment
- **Networking**
  - Requests for more Irish in Britain events in the north (several Clubs)
  - Sharing ideas with other Clubs (a sixth of Clubs)

Four Clubs said that they were prepared to pay for additional support. These comments came mainly from clubs looking for business management and governance support. It should be noted that this is not the case for all Clubs though; one is not currently a paid-up member of Irish in Britain due to the cost.

The audit shows that there are many areas in which some Clubs are experiencing challenges, or considering new approaches, while other Clubs have already gained some experience in those areas. For example, one Club would like to know more about passport applications in order to support members, while another is already successfully delivering this service. Several Clubs are looking for ways to attract new members and newer immigrants and would like to discuss approaches with other Clubs, while one Club is already successfully attracting new immigrants in their area. There is great potential here, geography allowing, for sharing of good practice among Clubs themselves. With the information from this audit, Irish in Britain is in a position to broker these knowledge sharing exchanges between the relevant organisations. The list below summarises areas

that would be suitable for inter-Club knowledge sharing, based on an identified need from some venues, coupled with experience / success in that area having been identified at other Clubs:

- Attracting new migrants
- Attracting younger members
- Running a successful marketing campaign for new members
- Securing funds, particularly for refurbishment / lifts
- Utilisation of catering facilities
- Offering passport application support services
- Finance and business tips
- Running a retail operation

### **Delivery of Support**

Information sharing within Clubs is an aspect to consider when looking at the potential effectiveness and legacy of any support provided. Some Club interviewees were not previously aware of support available from Irish in Britain, or of previous information that had been sent out to Clubs. In these cases information had gone to one contact and then had not been circulated internally by the Club. Looking at the potential long-term impact of any support, the problem in this area is twofold:

- information / support needs to be shared with the correct range of current personnel in order to be effective
- information needs to be shared with the correct future personnel in order to maintain effectiveness and create a lasting legacy – this latter is a particularly key issue to consider regarding any skills-based support or training

While collecting multiple email contacts for each Club's key officers may help to address this somewhat email use does seem to be mixed among the Clubs and often includes the use of the personal email addresses of volunteers. Future support needs to take into

account the various contacts in Clubs and how information needs to be circulated in order to be effective. Establishing personal or telephone contact with multiple officers and noting when key positions change may be necessary for Irish in Britain's support services and communications to penetrate where they are needed. In some cases, personnel are likely to be in Board positions for a fixed time period only, and so continuity of contact can potentially be disrupted by changeovers. In addition to a robust planning and evaluation cycle to measure legacy of the support provided, it will be necessary to tailor support strategies to mitigate the effect of personnel changeovers. Considerations may include provision of supporting materials for any skills-based training which can then be handed on to future personnel or, if resources allow, regular long-term access to core skills training for club personnel. An 'off the shelf' guide to staff / trustee handover may also be helpful.

As several Clubs noted (5 Clubs), they are largely volunteer-led and therefore particularly time poor (as well as potentially resource poor) and this needs to be considered in the design of any support for those Clubs. Concern was also voiced about the difficulty for volunteers in attending functions during normal working hours, again a factor which needs to be considered when delivering future support.

Lastly, it was noted by northern Clubs that they are often unable to attend functions and networking days in London and the Midlands due to the travel costs associated with peak travel. One Club offered free room hire for such events to be held in the north in future. It could be beneficial for these clubs if a northern network could be established for peer-to-peer support and knowledge sharing.

### **Clubs Strategy**

Within its limited resources Irish in Britain should work with club members to develop a strategy to address the needs identified in the survey (by January 2015). In addition to direct support from staff this should include exploring potential support from local and national partner agencies, maximising peer support and mentoring opportunities,

identifying pro bono help and cost saving options, highlighting models and guidelines, providing or identifying training options, and supporting funding bids.

Recommendations for immediate action include

- Creating opportunities for clubs to share ideas and information
- Seeking common agreement on standards and best practice
- Improving communications by linking websites
- Identifying individuals responsible for IT support within clubs, and their training needs
- Starting delivery on options which don't require additional external resources
- Prioritising at risk clubs and core skills

## Findings in Detail

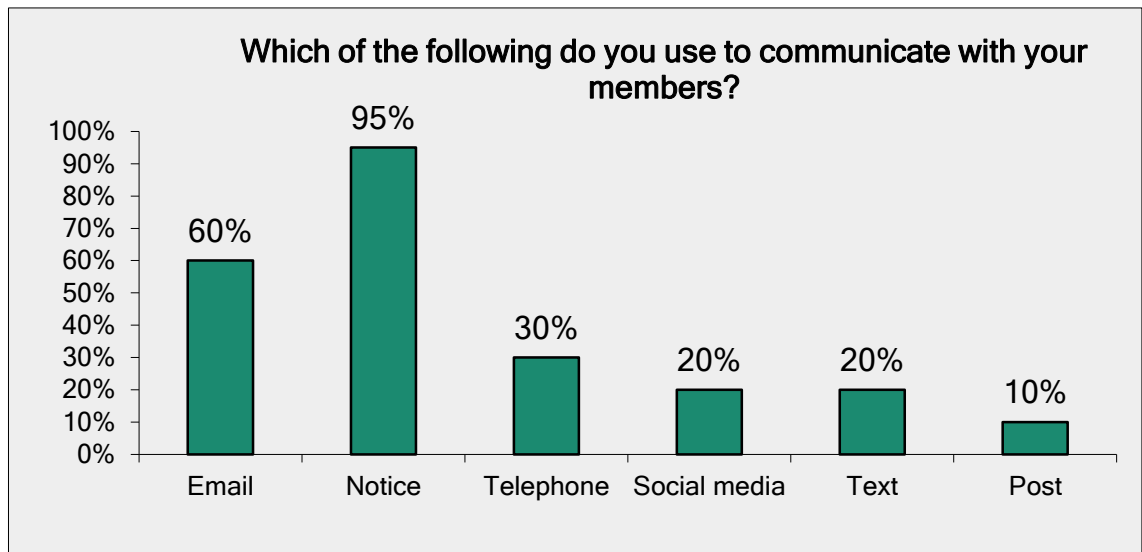
### Membership

All of the Irish Clubs interviewed are members Clubs. The average number of individual members is about 600, although the membership size varies enormously, from around 200 members at the smallest Club, up to 2,800 members.

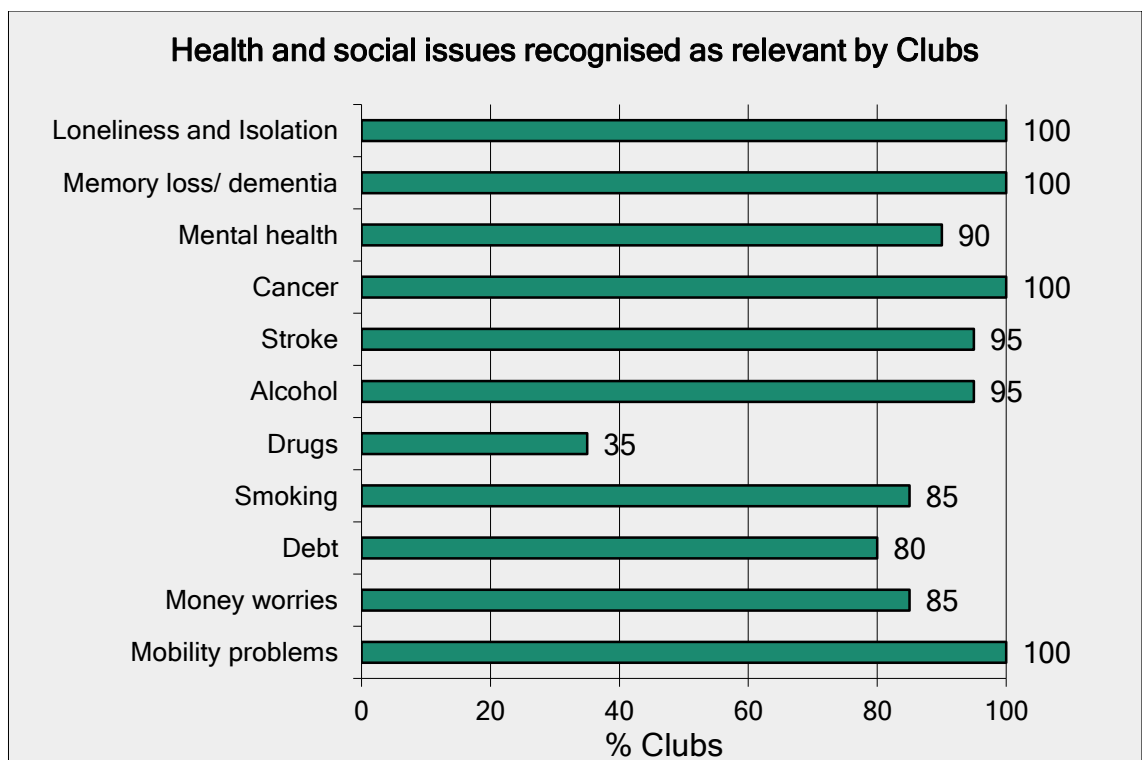
Number of Members	Number of Clubs
up to 250 members	3
251-500 members	10
501 – 1000 members	3
1,300 members	2
2,820	1

(One Club did not give a membership figure.)

All but one of the Clubs have a register of members, although some felt that their register may not have been updated for a while. Membership categories typically include 'full members'. Some also have 'life', 'associate' or 'honorary' members, and separate 'pensioner' membership categories. Less common categories were 'student', 'junior' and 'armed forces', which were used by just one Club each.

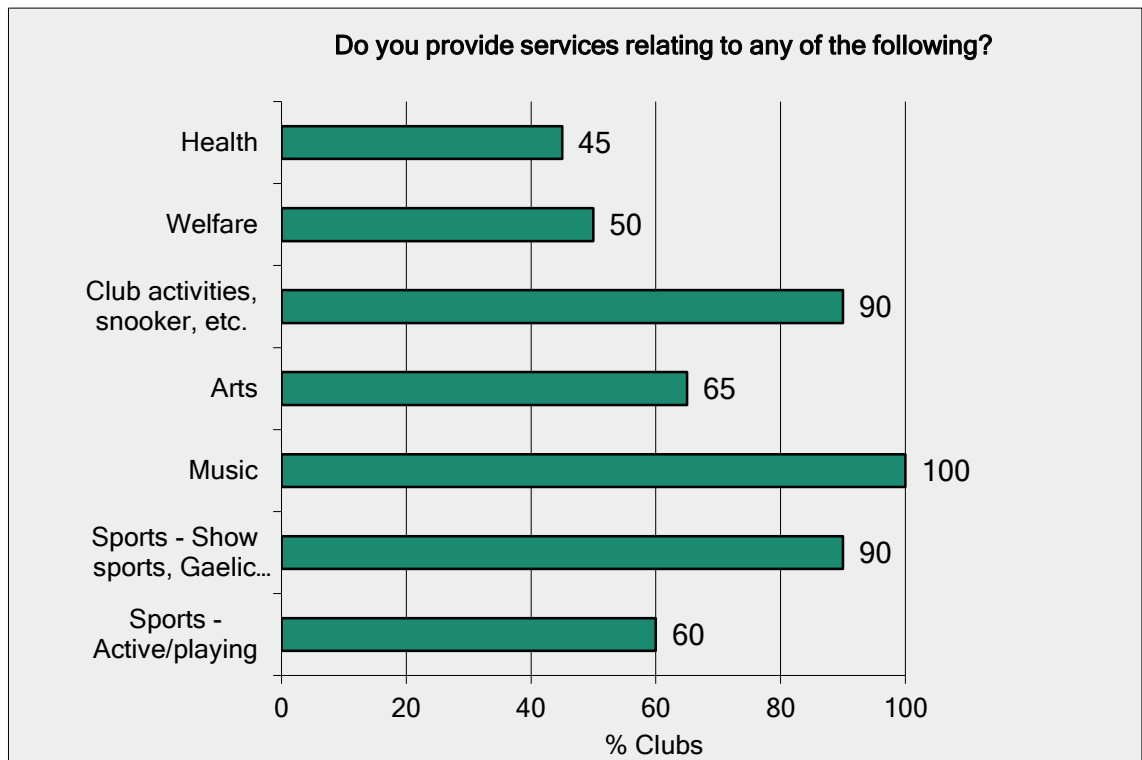


Almost all Clubs (19) communicate with their members via notices. Email is also fairly well used, by 12 Clubs. A third of Clubs (6) communicate with members via telephone. Four Clubs communicate via social media, four use texting, two use the post, and two make announcements at events. During discussion about membership and communications, it was noted that one Club would particularly benefit from support in developing a communications plan.

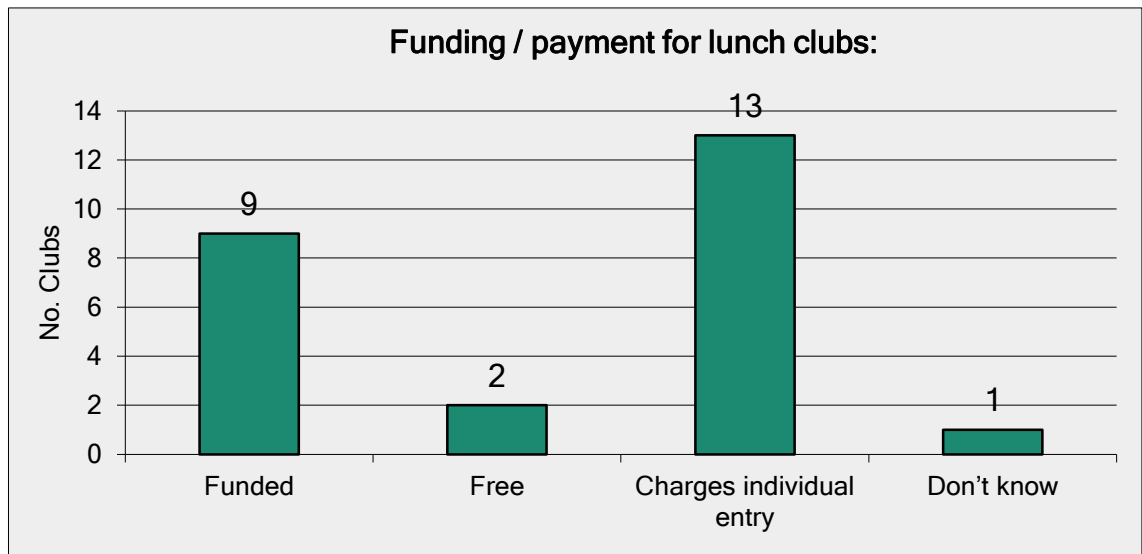




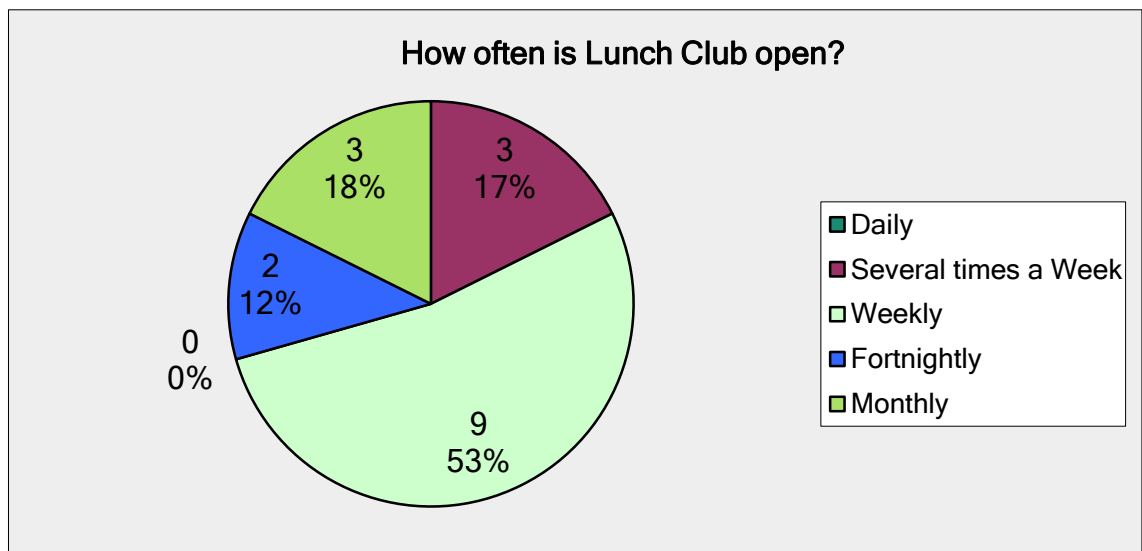
Services / Activities



All Clubs offer music and most (18) have other activities in the Club such as snooker and showing sports / Gaelic games. More than half (13) have an arts offer and a similar figure (12) are involved in playing sports. Half (10) of Clubs say they offer Welfare services (although 13 give general advice and 17 provide a lunch club or tea dance) and just under half (9) offer health-related services. Those running services such as lunch clubs and tea dances are doing so very successfully. One Club would like support to set up a lunch club in their area.



85% of Clubs offer a lunch club or tea dance and the majority of Clubs (13) charge entry. Two have free entry (1 did not know and 1 did not specify). 9 Clubs receive funding for this service.

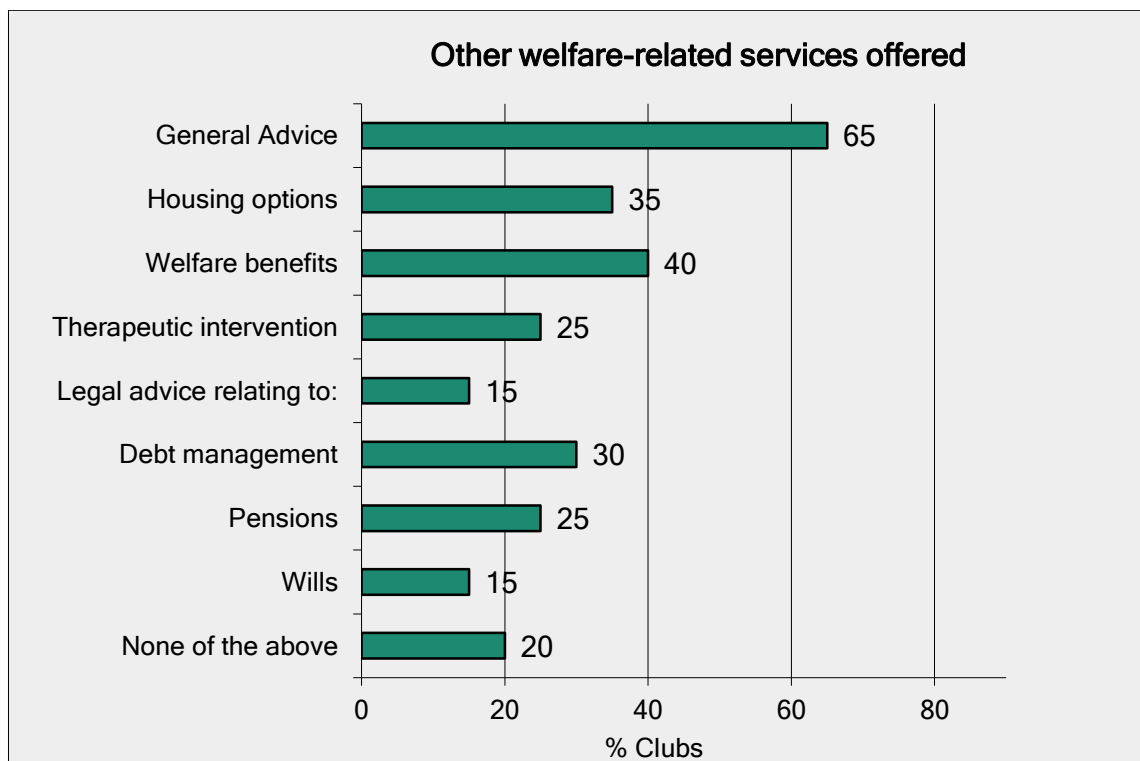


More than half of the lunch clubs (9) run on a weekly basis. Three operate several times a week, three are monthly and two are fortnightly. Two of the lunch clubs are seasonal (one operates in winter school terms only and one takes a break for July and August.)

More than half of lunch clubs (10) are open to the wider community, seven are open to members only. Most (14) keep a register of attendees (three do not).

Most Clubs (15) provide a hot meal for lunch club members. All the lunch clubs / tea dances (17) include bingo. Other common activities include music (15), dance (14); reminiscence (12); light exercise (11) and health information sessions (11). Less than half offer the following: arts and crafts (8 Clubs); day trips (4); raffles (3); bowling (1); health visitors (1); films (1); aerobics (1); and visits to other lunch clubs (1). Three Clubs provide transport – although one would like to raise funding to do this. One Club arranges a week’s holiday every year.

Two clubs had concerns about having enough volunteers to run lunch club services – one would like to but doesn’t have enough volunteers, another has scaled back their offer to soup and a sandwich because of insufficient volunteers. Three clubs run their lunch club service in partnership with other community groups, who link members to additional services.

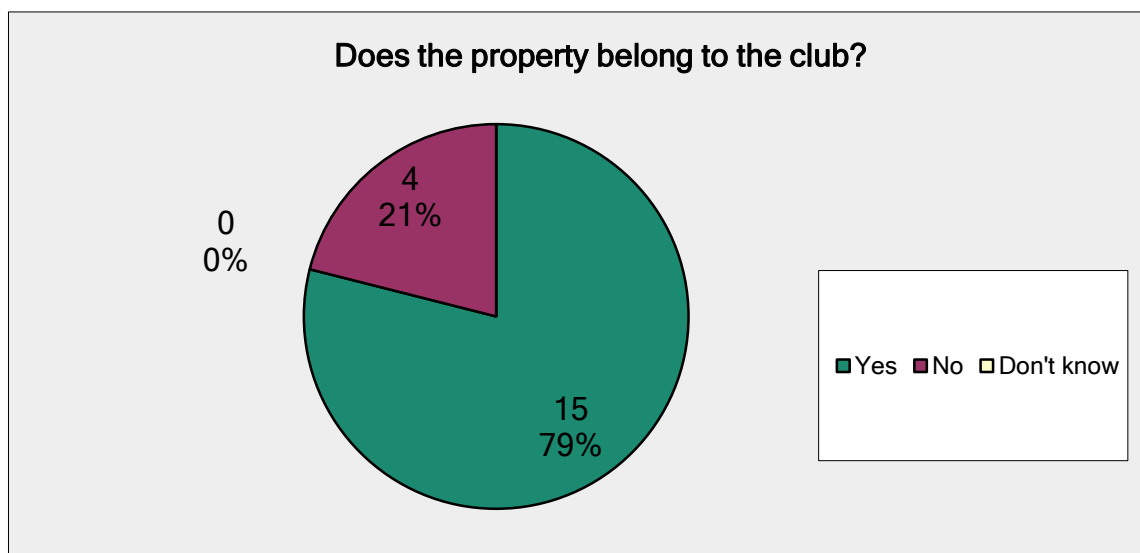


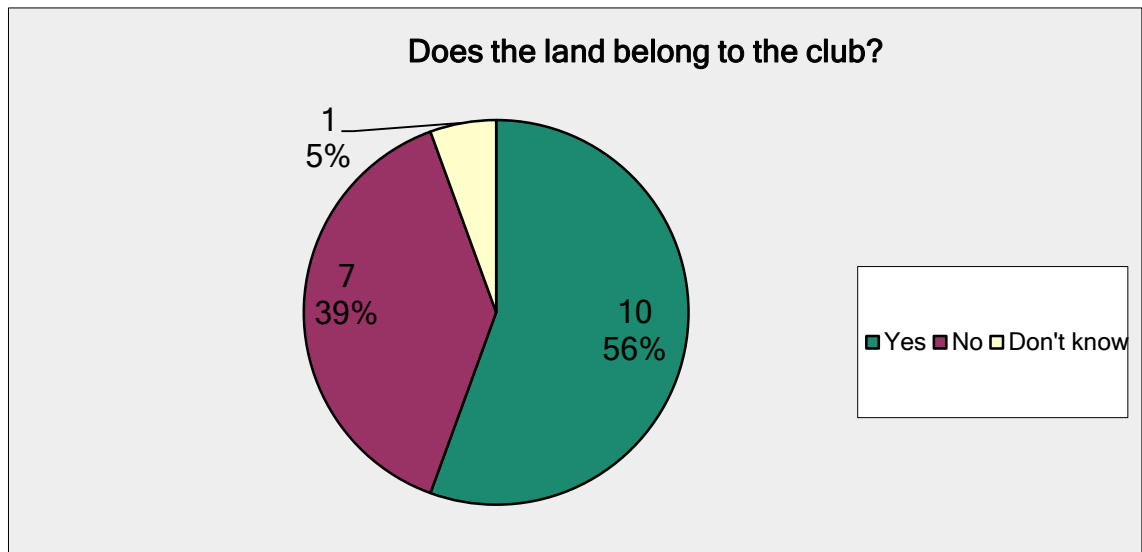
Other welfare areas covered by Clubs are as follows: benefits (8 Clubs); housing (7); debt (6); pensions (5); therapeutic intervention (5); legal advice (3); wills (3); and birth certificates / passports (2). Several Clubs have welfare services set up as a separate arm of the organisation. One Club explained how multiple Local Authority welfare services run out of their centre.

On average, two thirds of Clubs' activities are addressed to the Irish Community, although this varies widely from Club to Club, from 0% (at a Club which targets all local communities) to 100% of services targeted at the Irish community. Most Clubs (16) target over half of their services at the Irish community. Several Clubs described how they have a remit or funding from the council to work both with the wider community and with other specific groups, particularly Polish and Asian communities. One capitalises on footfall from local football matches by having a temporary membership category open to anyone.

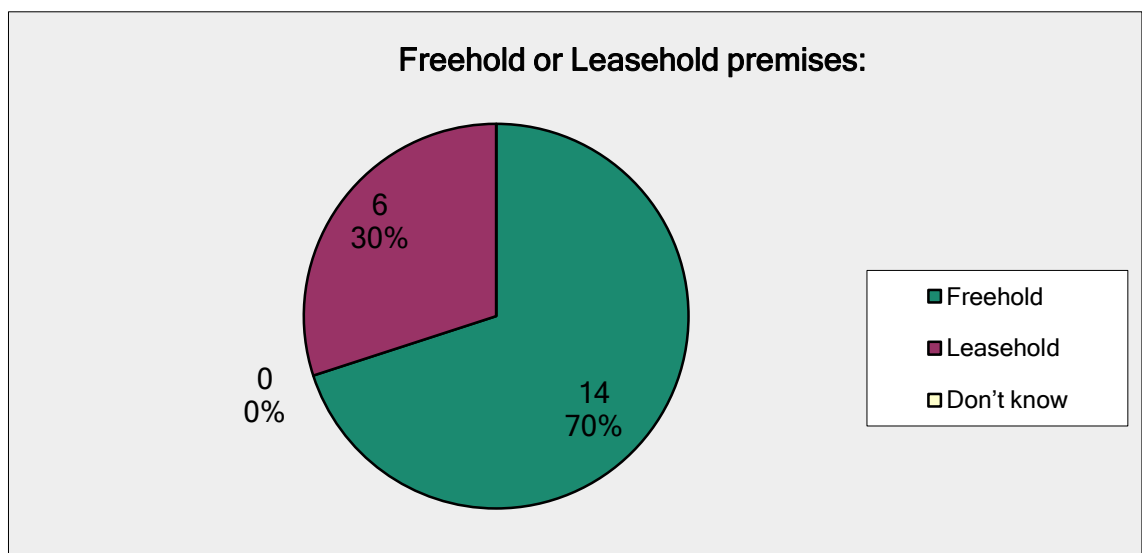
### Premises, Facilities and Locations

The majority of properties (15) are owned by the Club, although over a third (7) do not own the land.





Acquisition of the land was mentioned as an area that one of the Clubs was hoping to address in the future to ensure ongoing operations. None were aware of any covenants on the deeds (although 4 Clubs did not know about this.)



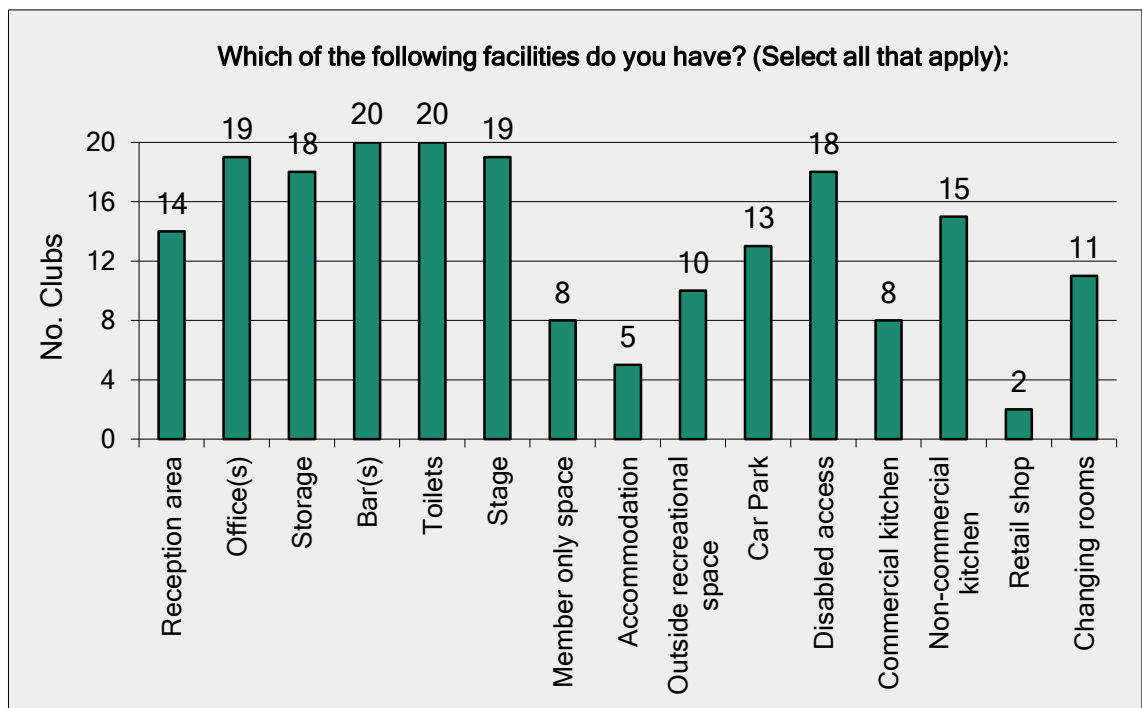
Just over two thirds of Club premises (14) are freehold and a third (6) are leasehold.

Two thirds (12) are detached buildings. All but one Club felt their buildings were fit for purpose (although some said 'yes' with caveats). One is in serious need of renovation in

multiple areas (windows, bar, electrical equipment, lift) and needs to secure funding for this. One Club felt that they had outgrown their premises in terms of capacity.

Although only one club felt their premises were not fit for purpose overall, several had significant areas of concern in terms of refurbishment, some of which involved health and safety concerns regarding the structure and operation of their premises. Seven Clubs do not have planned maintenance plans. Four do have plans, but two Clubs emphasised that the plans do not cover any large capital costs. One Club has a maintenance plan, but no funding in place at all. (Not all Clubs specified whether they had maintenance plans.) One Club would like help in negotiating with the Local Authority to be included in a local regeneration strategy as their building is leased from the Local Authority. Other Clubs who would like to upgrade but do not own the premises also face challenges in this area. One Club was refurbished in the last 4 years, including a lift that was funded by Dion / ESP.

Several Clubs would like to be more energy efficient – either by having new windows installed or adding solar panels to the building.



Club premises typically include between one and five bars (an average of two bars), a stage, toilets, office, and storage. All but two have disabled access to the building. Eight Clubs (over a third) have member-only spaces. Most (14) have a reception area. Just over two thirds (13) have a car park. The average number of rooms per Club is six, although the range varies enormously, from 2 rooms to 20 rooms at the larger venues. The room number of Club premises and total capacities (where known) breaks down as follows:

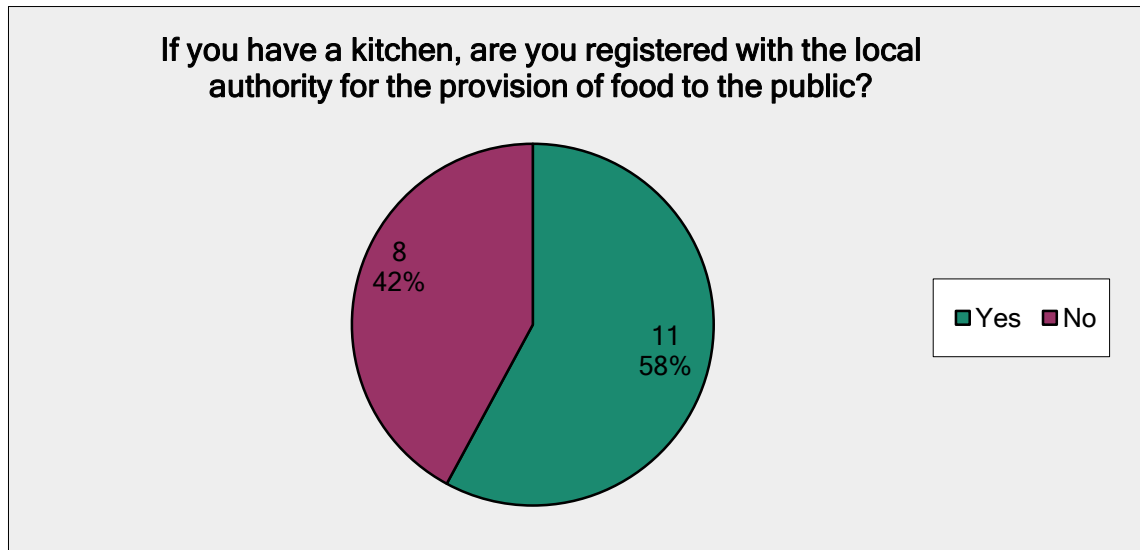
Number of Rooms	Number of Clubs
2-3	11
4	2
6	3
8-10	2
20	2

Total Capacity	Number of Clubs
200- 250	5
250-500	5
500-750	4
1140	1

Two Clubs did not specify capacities, and three said that they were not aware of them, suggesting a need for fire risk analysis – or broader awareness of this – in a few cases.

Just over half of the Clubs (11) have changing rooms, mostly used by either performing artists (7) or sports teams (3). One Club’s changing facility is not used due to problems with the pipes. For changing rooms used by external teams, one Club said that they pay for the facility but are well-funded by the Local Authority. Another gets revenue from hire of the pitches but covers the hot water costs itself.

Most (15, three quarters) have a non-commercial kitchen, while fewer (8, over a third) have commercial kitchens.



Eleven have registered with the local Authority for provision of food to the public. Nine specified that they had a Local Authority score of 5, while one had a score of 3. (One Club did not give a score.) Several Clubs with high quality kitchen facilities felt that they could make better use of them and develop catering opportunities.

Only two Clubs have a retail shop. Almost half of those who do not have a retail shop would like to have one (7 Clubs).





However, several Clubs commented that they used to sell Irish products and found it to be too expensive and time-consuming to be worthwhile. It would be useful for the Clubs interested in developing this facility to speak to those who are doing it successfully at the moment (or have tried it and ruled it out) to enable them to decide on their strategy.

Half of the Clubs have outside recreational space. Several Clubs host their local sports teams and/or fans, with mixed results. For example, one Club has a strong relationship with the Council and is well-supported by the arrangement, and has recently secured funding to upgrade the football pitch. Another club feels it is not supported at all by the football teams who use it. A third has its revenue buoyed by fans who use the bar on match days. One has a children's park which has fallen into disrepair so is not used due to lack of maintenance. One has a bowling green which is well used but in need of refurbishment and there are no funds in place for this currently.

Five Clubs have accommodation on site and for some there are issues here around clarity of contracts and finance (i.e. tenancy agreements) where accommodation is used by a member of staff. One uses their flat as a domestic let and it is now a good source of income for the Club.

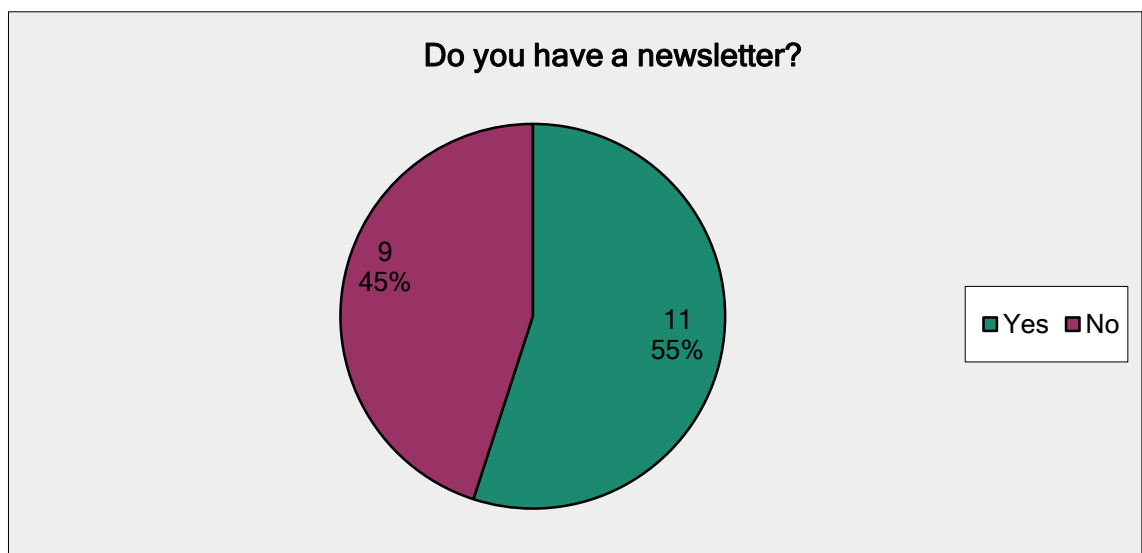
Most Clubs (16) feel that their premises are in a suitable location. One does not.

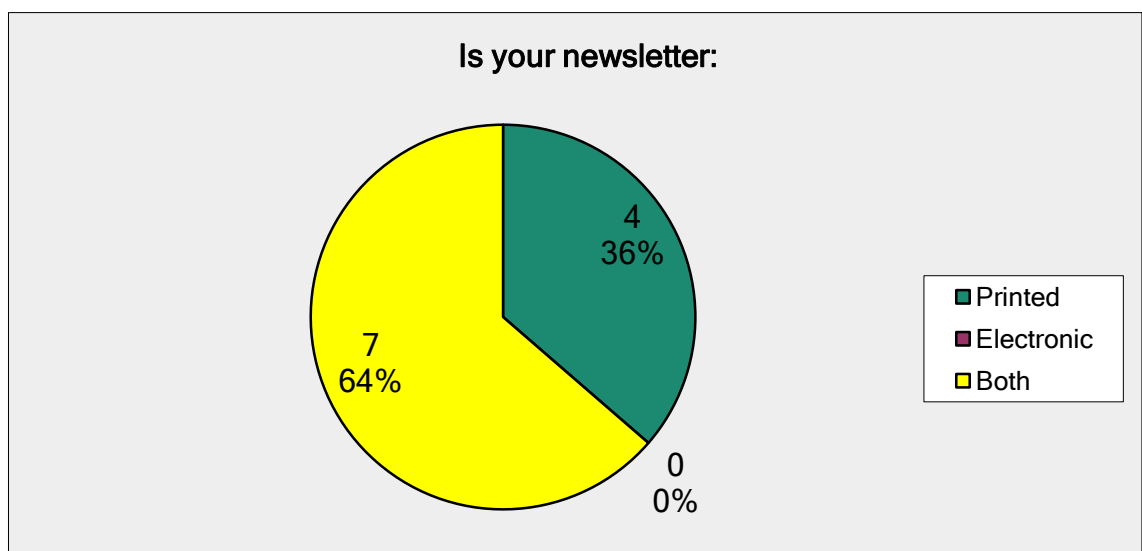
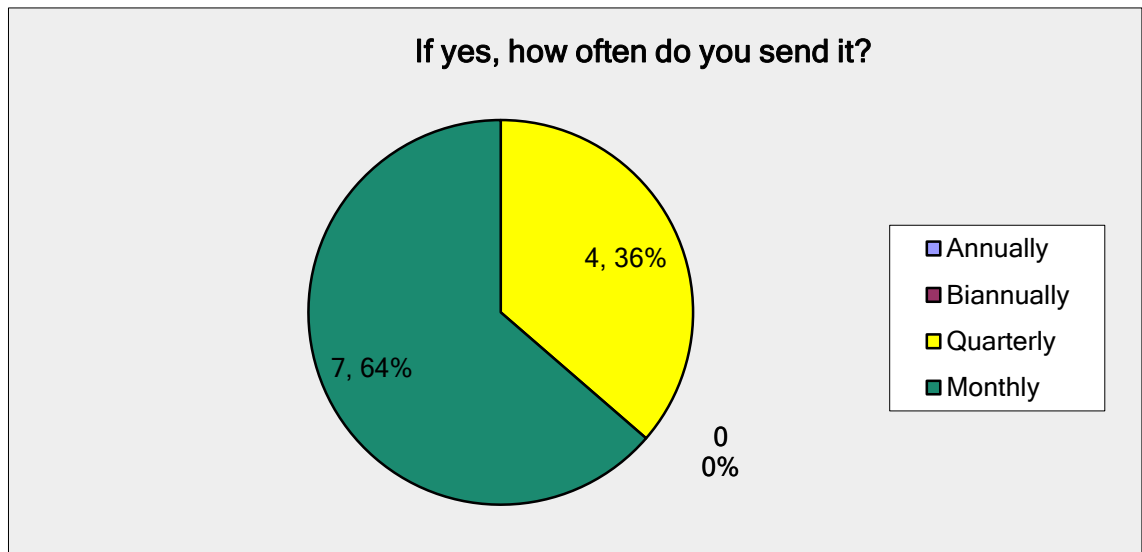
Many feel they are in a great location. One has excess land which it is considering selling off to create some capital. There were some misgivings about location though – one club does not get high footfall as it is in a residential area, and another of those who liked their location is not accessible by public transport. One did not have a loading bay or parking space, which may make it difficult for those with access issues to attend. One Club has suffered from re-routing of the local road system, which has severely restricted their passing trade and the effectiveness of advertising outside the building.

Most Clubs (17) are accessible by public transport but three are not. One Club is only accessible by taxi or car but this does not seem to be adversely affecting their operations at all.

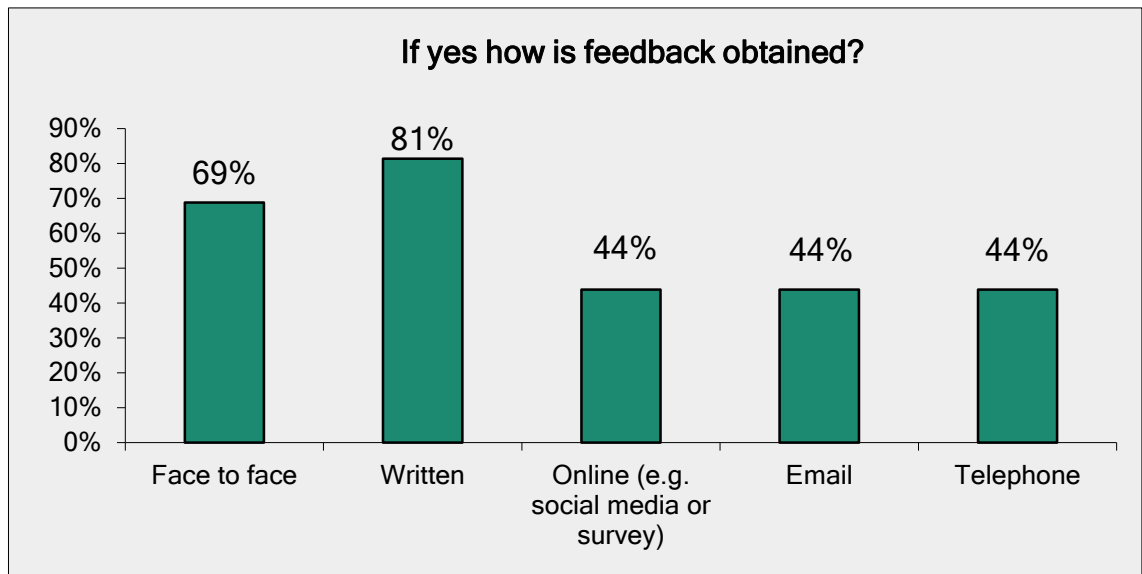
One Club further noted that they felt Dial-a-Ride was very unreliable and would like to secure funding for their own minibus service (a funder suggestion was made by Irish in Britain).

### IT and Communications



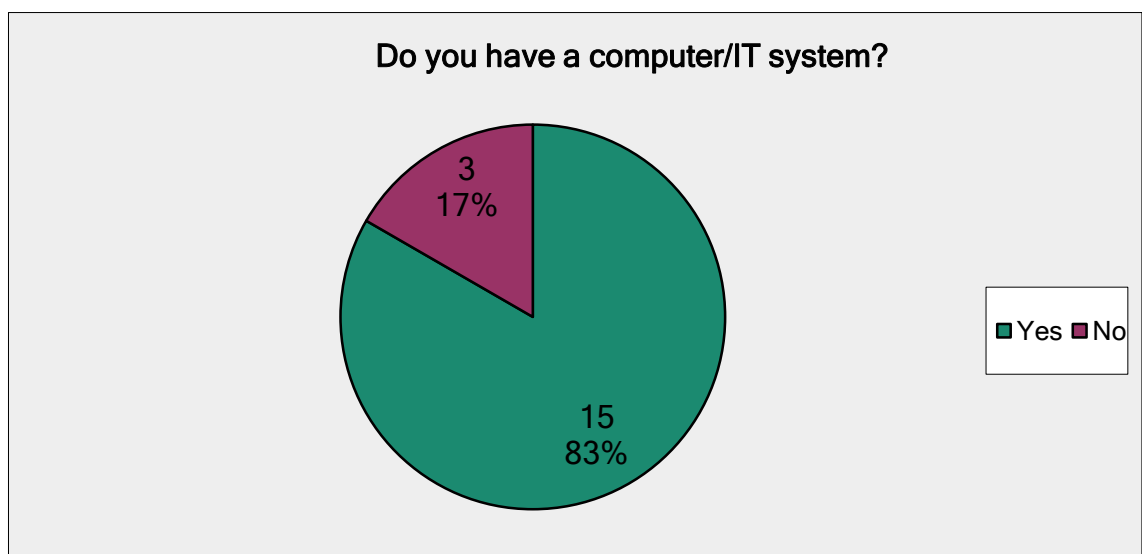


Just over half of Clubs (11) have a newsletter. Most send it out monthly (7), the remainder weekly (4). Most (7) make it available in both electronic and printed form, four only have printed versions. Two Clubs specified that they used Mailchimp to send out their e-newsletter. One Club noted that their users are generally retired and not very IT literate, but they do use social media with the younger generation of dancers and sports players.

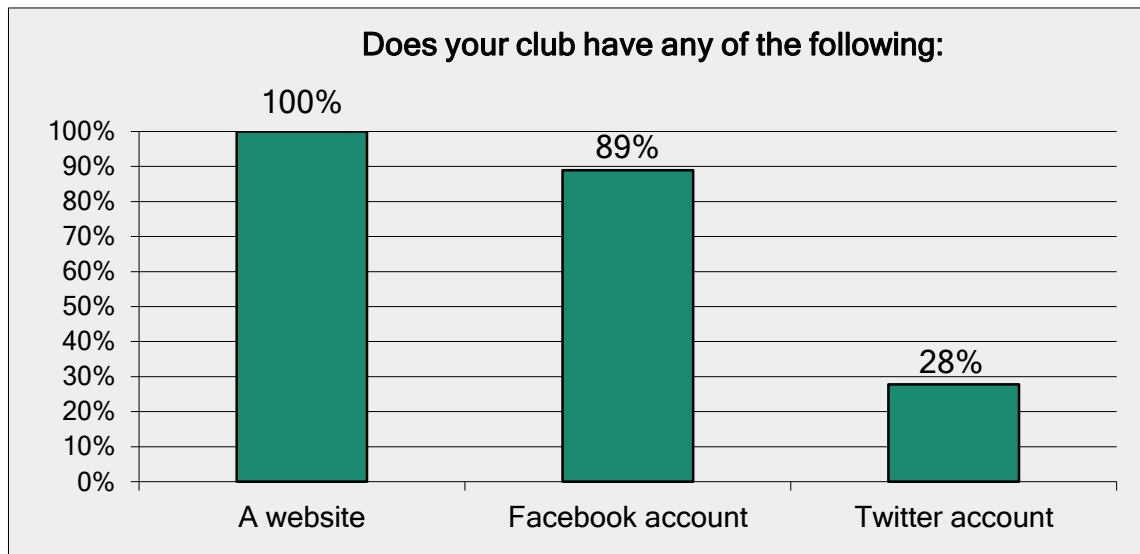


Most Clubs (15) obtain customer feedback, usually about events or lunch clubs. The majority of this intelligence is gathered either in writing (13 Clubs) or face-to-face (11 Clubs). A third (7) use online surveys, a third use email and a third use telephone.

Of those who obtain feedback, over half (9 Clubs) do so regularly, six do not. All except one (14) act on the feedback they collect. One has just completed a feedback project and the results are still to be analysed. Examples of acting on feedback include not re-booking unpopular acts, adding additional activities on request, or changing functions to a more suitable date.

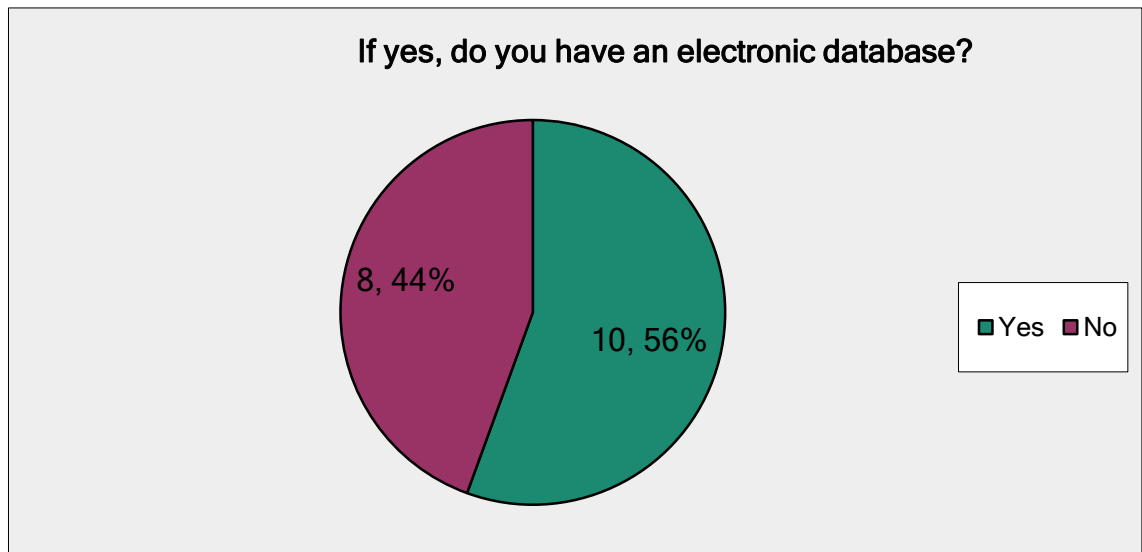


Most Clubs (15) have a computer / IT system, but three do not.



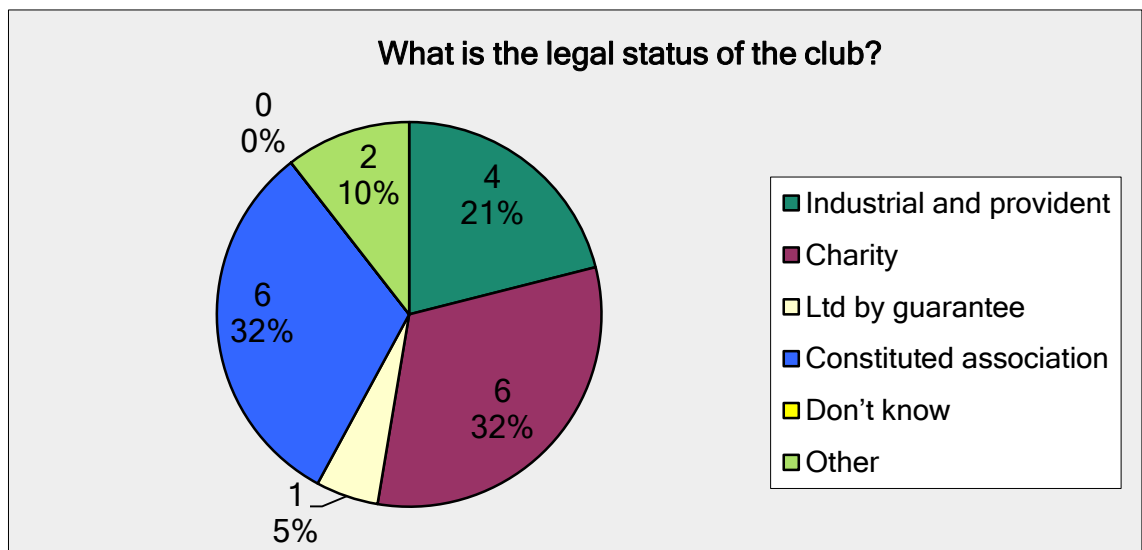
Nearly all have a website (18), most have a Facebook account (16) and five have a Twitter account. Most (15) of those who have a website host and maintain their own. (One does not.) Two specified that their website was maintained by an external manager. Another said they had just taken control back from an external manager they had had problems with. Two did not know who maintained it. Six named the person responsible. Two said the task was done by volunteers. Only three interviewees knew what system was used to host and maintain their website. Two used Wordpress and one used a custom CMS. Another said that they cannot access the backend of their site as none of them know the passwords. Three Clubs requested support in the area of IT.

Only three clubs have a link to the Irish in Britain website. Four said that the Irish in Britain website links to their site. Several said that they would like to be linked.



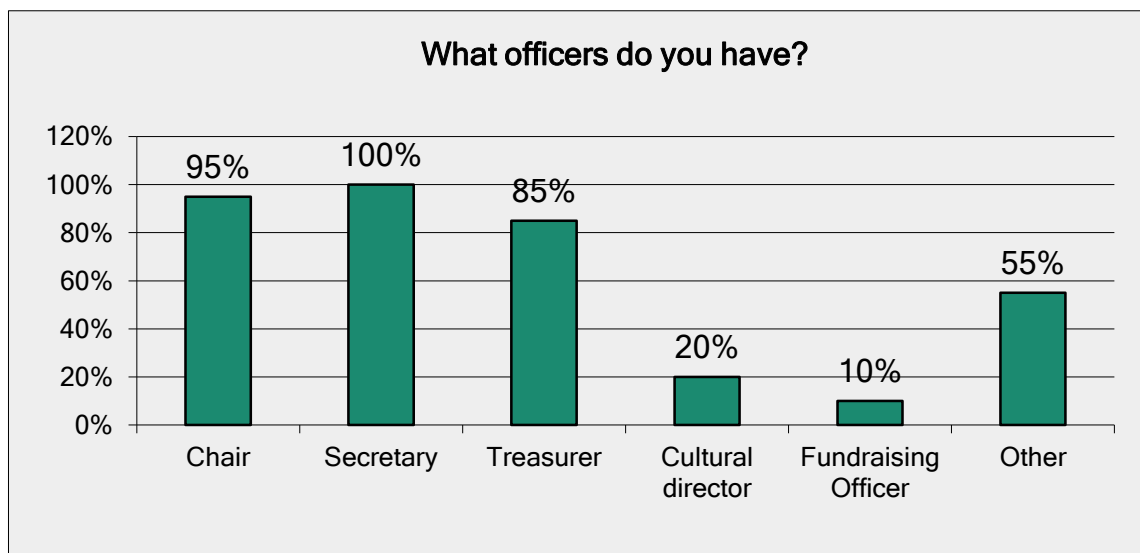
Almost three quarters of Clubs have a database (14 Clubs). Two do not have a database. (Not all Clubs answered this question) Half of Clubs (10) have an electronic database. Most of them use an Excel spread sheet, although two use MailChimp. One Club has a Membership officer who is not IT literate and so they found it difficult to say exactly how many members they have as there is no centralised list or up-to-date spread sheet.

### Governance and Committee



Clubs have various legal statuses. Six are primarily charities; six are constituted associations; four are industrial and provident; one is limited by guarantee. One is a private members club, one is a friendly society. Several have different statuses for different parts of their operation, which include additional companies limited by guarantee and one Club also has a social enterprise trading arm. Several Clubs have reviewed their constitutions recently: five have done so during 2013/2014 and three did so in 2010/2011. Three reviewed their constitutions between 2007 and 2009; two in 2005/2006; and three did so between 2000 and 2002. One was last reviewed in 1984 but is currently under review. Three did not know or did not specify when their constitution was last reviewed. Two Clubs are planning to review their constitutions this year, although one feels limited by time, money and expertise and would like some support in this area.

Clubs' approaches to trustee / committee selection are evenly split between formal and informal processes: 9 use a formal procedure, 9 do so informally. One does not have a selection process.



All Clubs have a secretary (20). Most have a chair (19) and a treasurer (17). Nine have vice-chairs; six have entertainment or social officers; four have a cultural director and only two have fundraising officers. The following roles were each noted by just one Club:

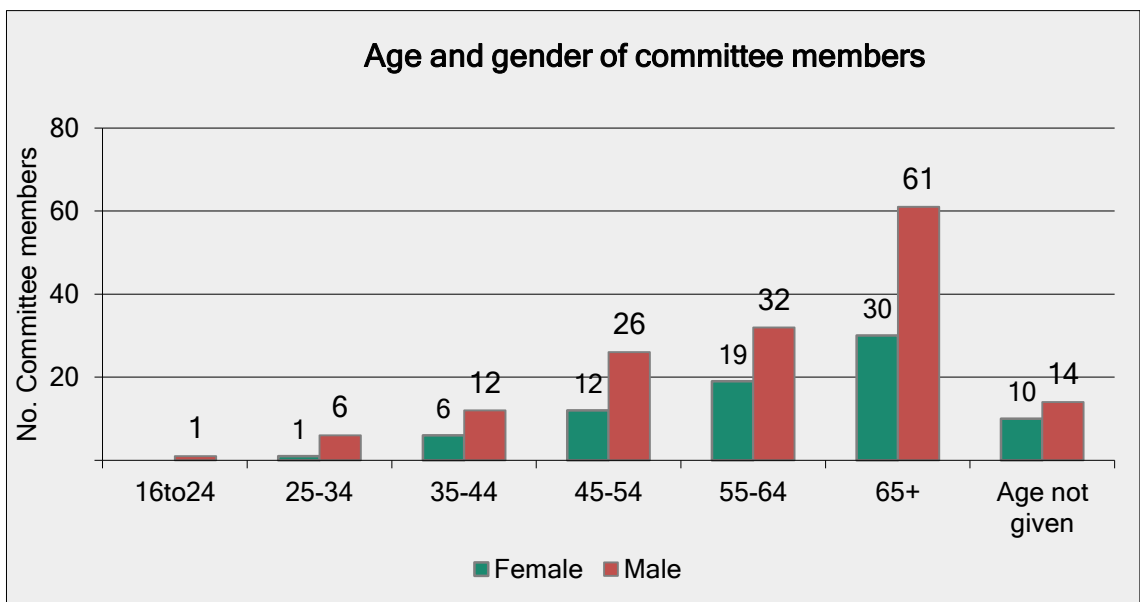
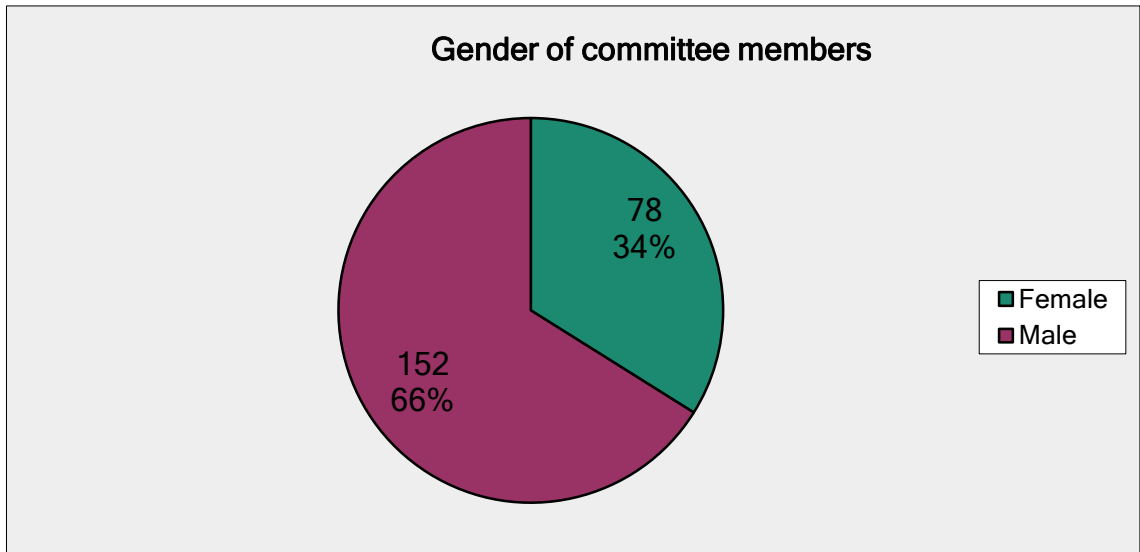
vice secretary, marketing, welfare, building and assets, membership secretary, ordinary officers, council reps, user group reps, and an Irish in Britain Officer.

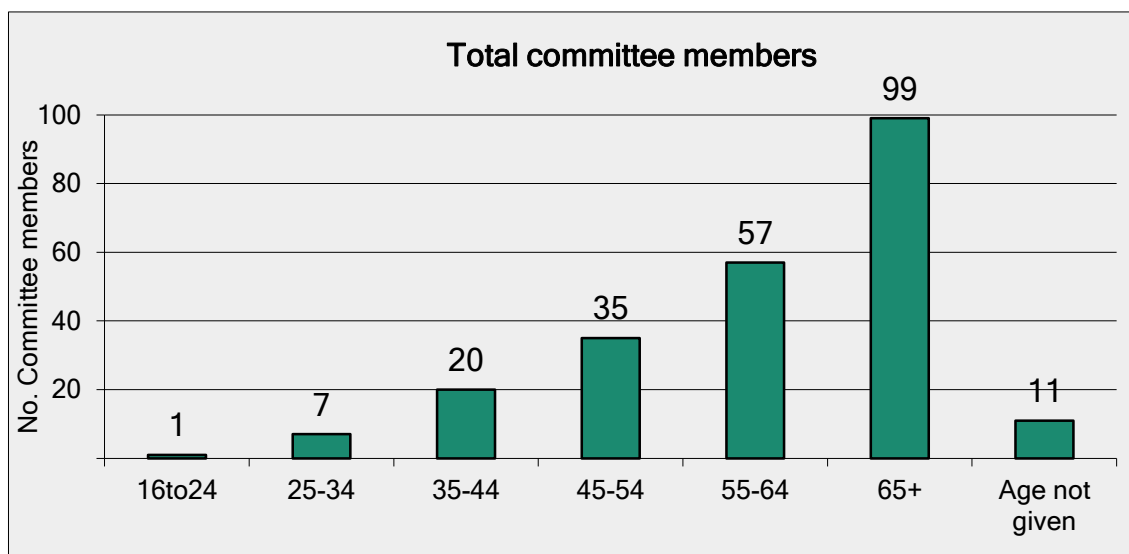
More than half of Clubs (12) have committee members who fully understand their roles and responsibilities. One Club felt that the majority, 80% of its committee understood their roles. However, this confidence does not extend across the board. Four Clubs said that between 60% and 70% of committee members understand their roles and responsibilities, one said just half (50%) did and one said that only a quarter (25%) did, which is clearly a cause for concern. (Not all Clubs answered this question.)

% of Committee who understand their roles	Number of Clubs	% of Clubs
100	12	63%
80	1	5%
60-70	4	21%
50	1	5%
25	1	5%

Committee members of Clubs are overwhelmingly male. Only a third are women.





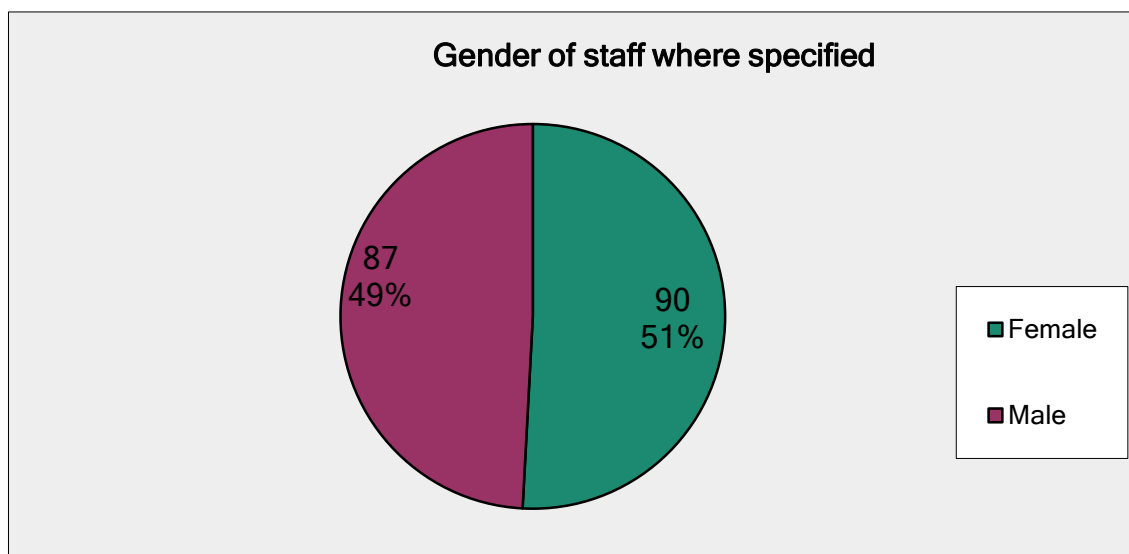


Committee members also tend to belong to the older age brackets. Almost half (45%) are aged 65 or over. A quarter are aged 55-64. Just over a sixth are aged 45-54, a tenth are aged 35-44. Only 3% of committee members are aged 25-34, and only one committee member was under 25. This older demographic may represent the current user groups of many of the Clubs, but could also be a factor underpinning difficulty in recruiting attendance from younger groups. One Club said that they felt that they needed to attract both more women and more young people onto the committee to help to broaden the appeal of the Club.

The average size of a committee is 12, and committee sizes vary from 4 to 18 committee members. The table below summarises the size of Clubs' committees (please note: ages were not given for all committee members so this does not tally with the table above):

Number of Committee Members	Number of Clubs
4-8	5
9 - 13	10
14 - 18	5

### Staffing (paid and unpaid)

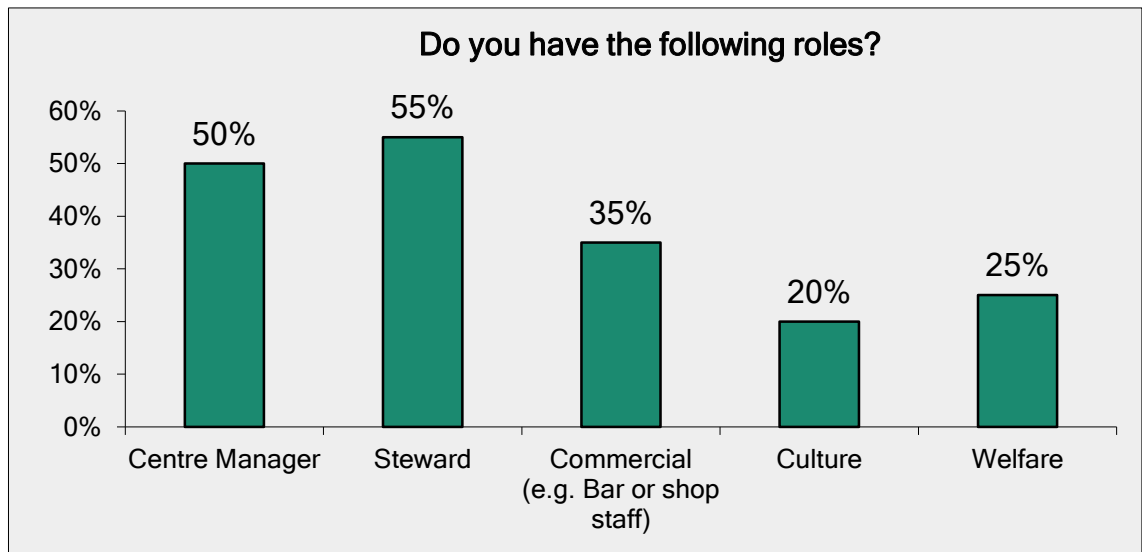


Note: Gender was not specified for 71 members of staff

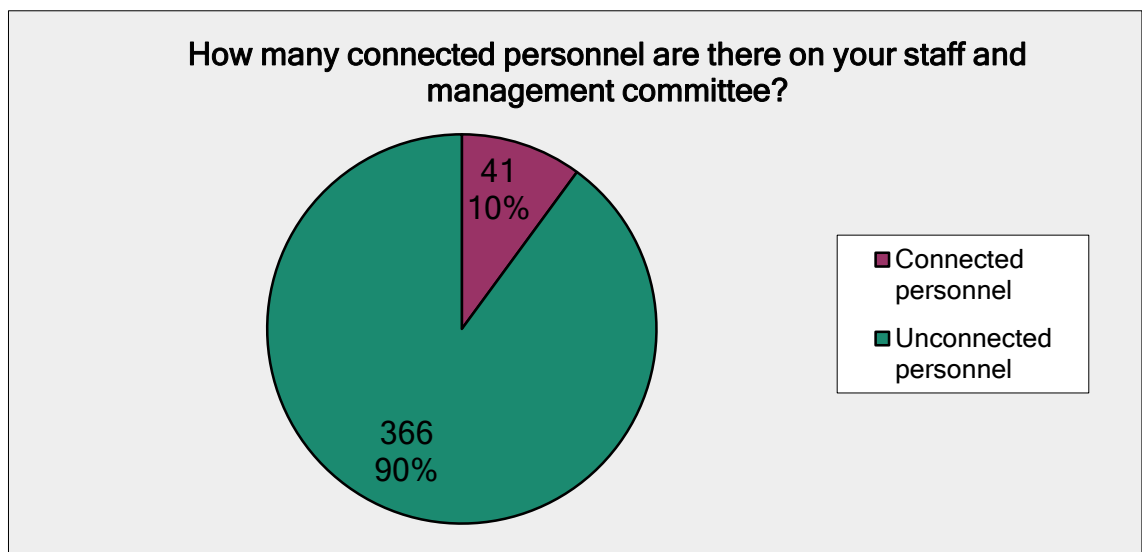
The gender balance among staff, where specified, is much more even. Among full time staff, 15 were female and 16 were male. Similarly, 75 of part-time staff employed by Clubs were female and 71 were male. The average number of staff was 12, and this varied from 2 members of staff up to 49.

The table below summarises the total number of staff employed by Clubs:

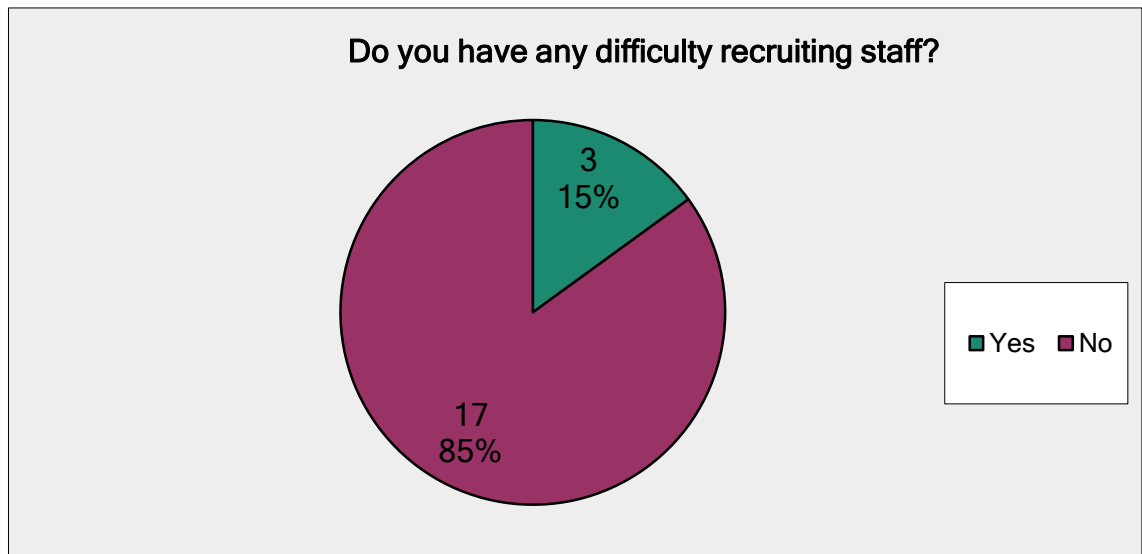
Number of Staff	Number of Clubs
2-5	6
6-10	6
11-15	3
16-20	1
20-24	3
49	1



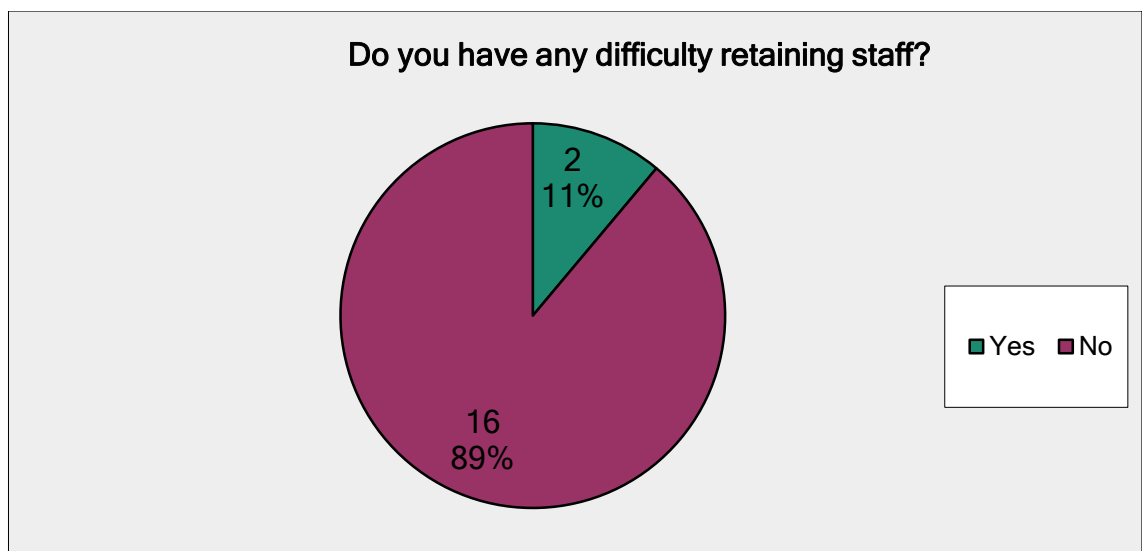
In terms of roles, just over half of Clubs (11 Clubs) have a Steward and half have a Centre Manager (10). Seven have commercial (usually bar) staff, five have welfare staff and four have culture staff. Other roles included Chef, Cleaner and Health and Safety Officer.



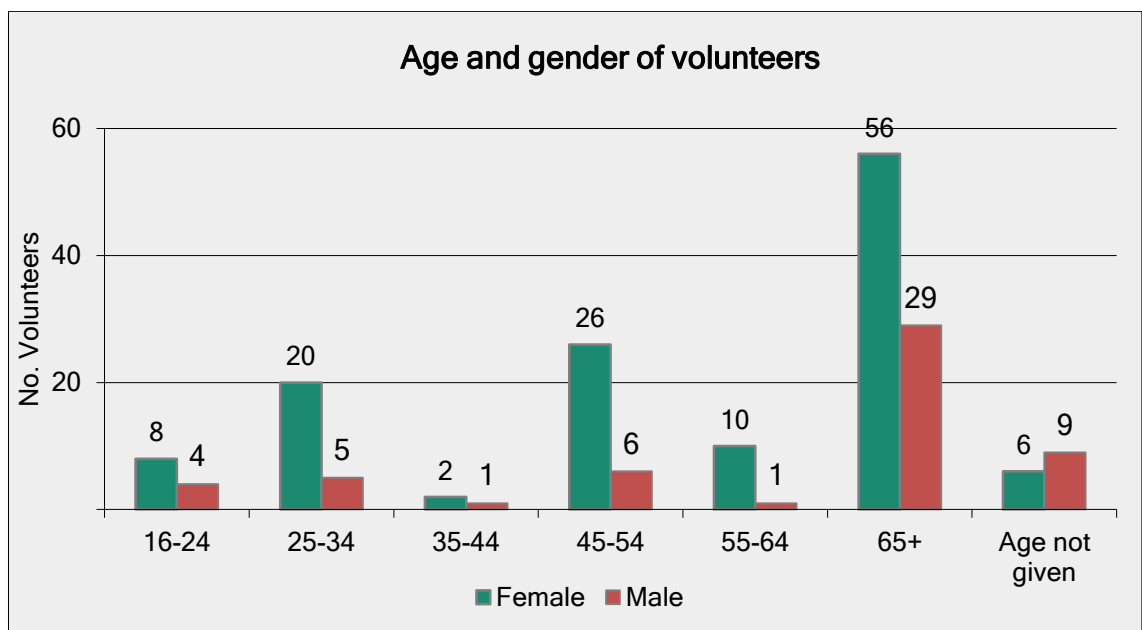
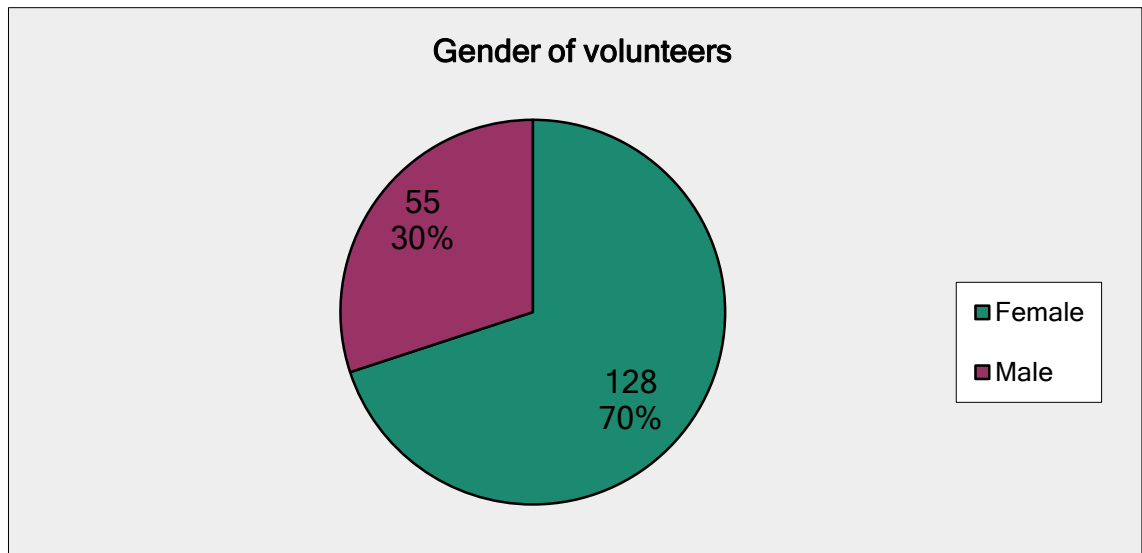
Approximately 10% of staff and committee members are connected. This was relevant to ten Clubs who had connected staff. Although not currently felt to be a problem for any of these Clubs, not all have policies and procedures in place to deal with this.



Three Clubs said they had difficulty recruiting staff. Some have had issues with stock and trustworthiness of staff in the past, and two said that inconsistent or inflexible trading patterns meant that it was difficult to recruit. Of those who do not have problems in this area, one Club said they did not have any problems because bar staff were usually the children of members. Another said that they have longstanding staff of over 20 years. One Club is, however, looking for ways to recruit volunteers – and wondered if Irish in Britain could help with this.



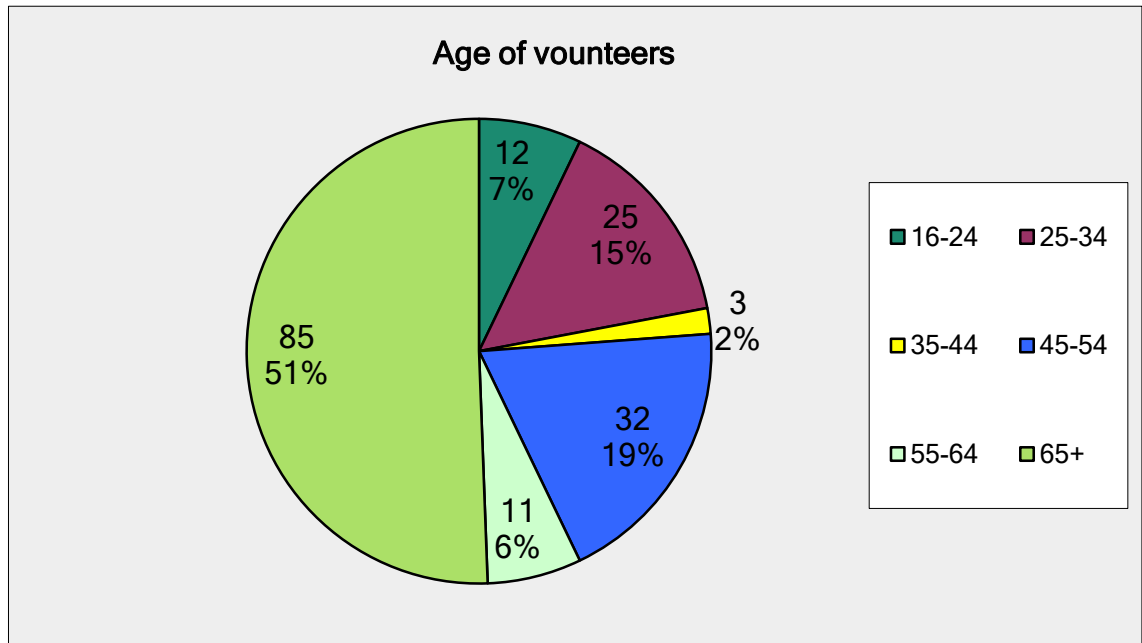
Two Clubs say they have difficulty retaining staff. Again, inconsistent trading patterns was cited as a reason. One Club hires students as bar staff and so they are never there on a very permanent basis. Another Club mentioned that, while they do not have problems with staff turnover, they are finding it difficult to maintain funding levels.



In contrast with committee members, volunteers are heavily weighted towards women: 70% are women. However, the age profile of volunteers is more diverse than that of committee members. While half of volunteers are aged 65+ and a just over a

38

fifth are in the middle age bracket of 45-54, in the younger age brackets under a fifth of volunteers are aged 25-34, and a twelfth are aged 16-24. This quota of young people is boosted by students on placement and by members of sports teams acting as volunteers.

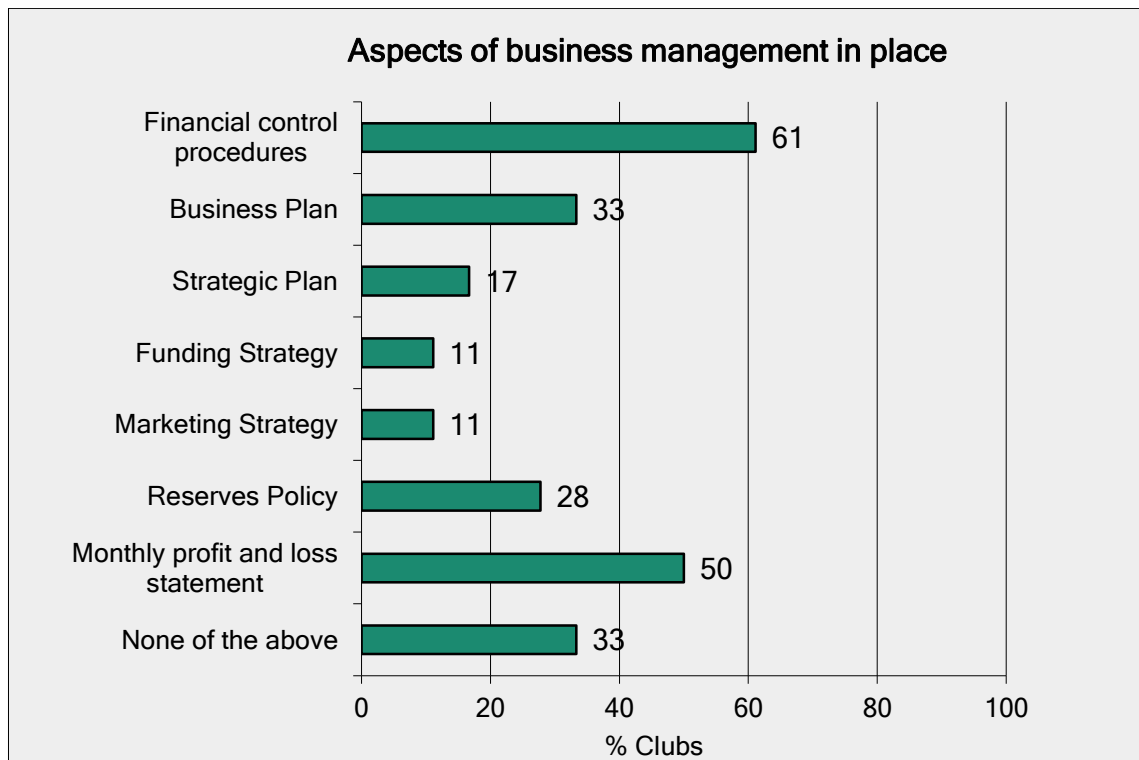


There are, on average, 15 volunteers per Club, although in fact the number of volunteers varies from 0 to 140. The table below summarises the numbers of volunteers engaged by Clubs (please note: ages were not given for all volunteers so this does not tally with the table above):

Number of Volunteers	Number of Clubs
0	6
3	2
8-9	4
12-15	3
18-20	2
24	1
40	1

Number of Volunteers	Number of Clubs
140	1

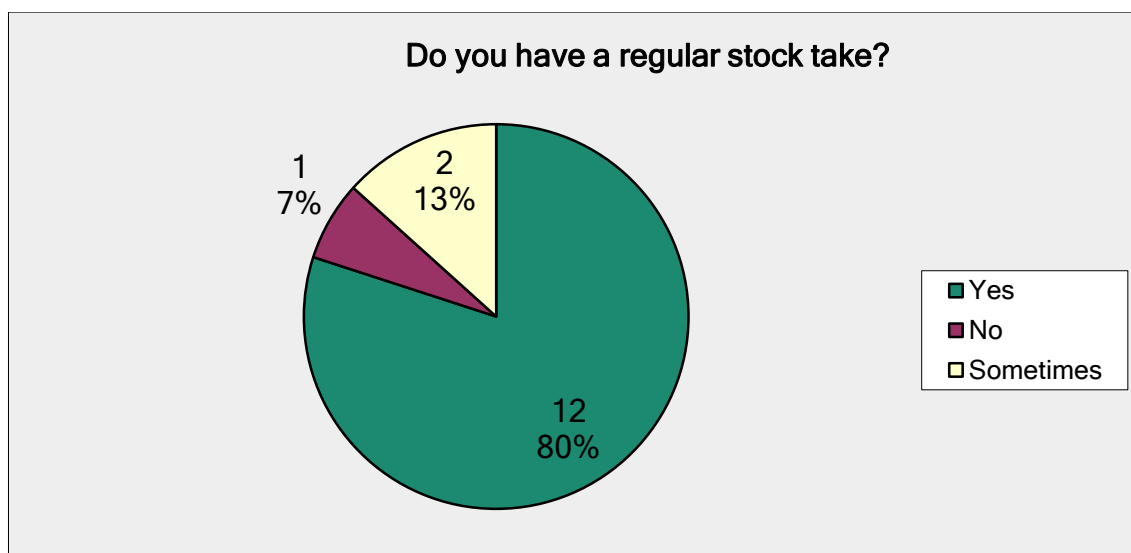
### Business Management



When asked what aspects of business management Clubs had in place, the response was varied. One club, a fully registered charity, and one that is church connected said that they do not take on a strong commercial focus but are instead more community led as their funding is in place. Of the remaining Clubs, only two have a funding strategy and only two have a marketing strategy. Three have a strategic plan. Five have a reserves policy, six have a business plan. The more common procedures were only in place at approximately half of Clubs: monthly profit and loss statement (9 Clubs) and financial control procedures (11 Clubs). Six Clubs have none of these procedures in place. It was noted by interviewers that several Clubs are well run despite not having the full gamut of formal processes in place at the moment. It was mentioned by interviewees several times that it would be good to share business tips in a forum.



Most Clubs (14) have an independent accountant; one does not. (The remainder were not asked this question.) The average cost of this service per annum is £4,714, varying from £1,500 to £14,000.



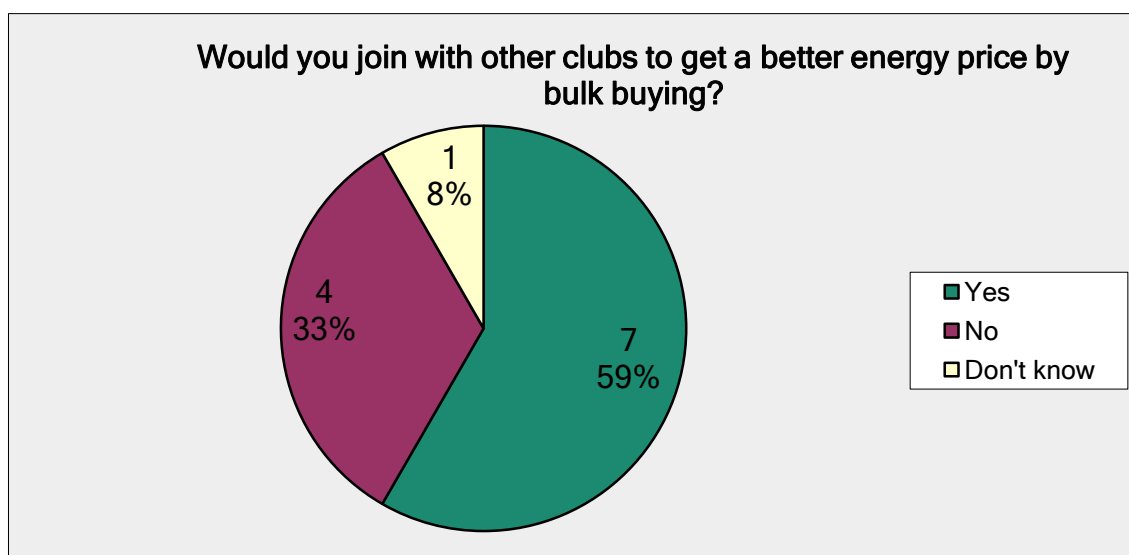
Over half of Clubs (12) do a regular stock take, two sometimes do, one does not. (The remainder did not answer this question.) The average cost per stock take among those who pay for the service (eight gave costs, at least one is free) was £109, although the price varies from £70 to £135.

Supplier contracts held by Clubs are as follows:

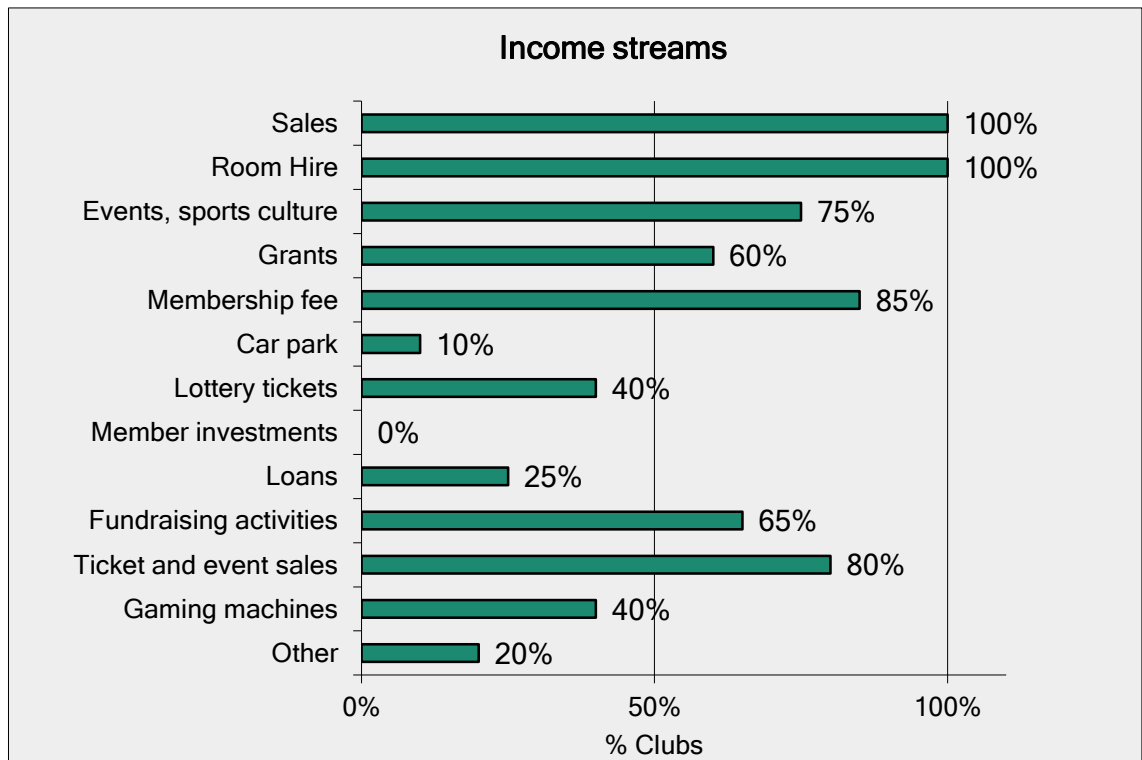
Supplier contract	Number of Clubs
Personal hygiene	15
Contract end dates for Electricity	10
Pest Control	9
Contract end dates for Gas	9
Telephone leasing	8
Brewery Tie	7
Gaming machine contracts	7
Coffee machine contracts	3

Air conditioning contracts	3
Health and safety	3
Catering equipment contracts	2
Personnel support	2
Contracted services (club management)	1
Alarm system	1

Most (12) are happy with their current suppliers, 7 are not. Several felt that BT are too expensive and are planning to switch. The constraints of a brewery tie were a common issue with several clubs saying they would prefer to be free to buy drinks at more competitive prices. Several noted that they have plans to achieve this as soon as possible in order to build more sustainable revenue in the future. Several Clubs also have deliberations over the cost of Sky versus the revenue potential of showing televised sports. (One noted that the cost is based on capacity of the building rather than actual attendance figures, which makes the cost disproportionate.) Several would like to have Sky for the sports coverage but cannot afford it. One Club would like assistance in writing contracts for suppliers.

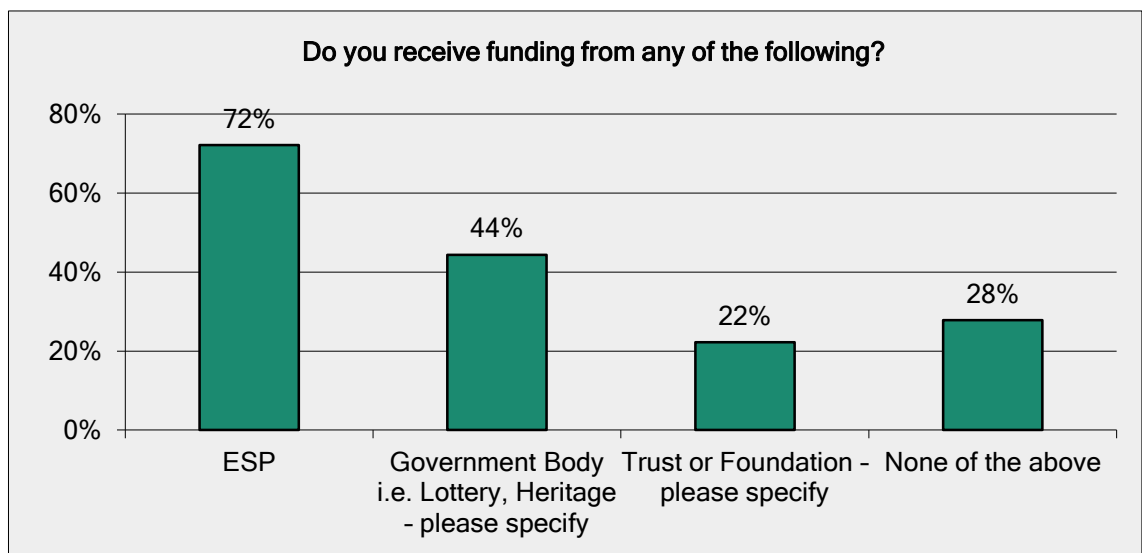


Seven Clubs were interested in bulk buying of energy to get better prices. (Four were not, one did not know and the remainder did not answer this question.)



In terms of income, all Clubs derive income from sales and from room hire. Details on the range of income streams (including 'other' where specified) are in the table below:

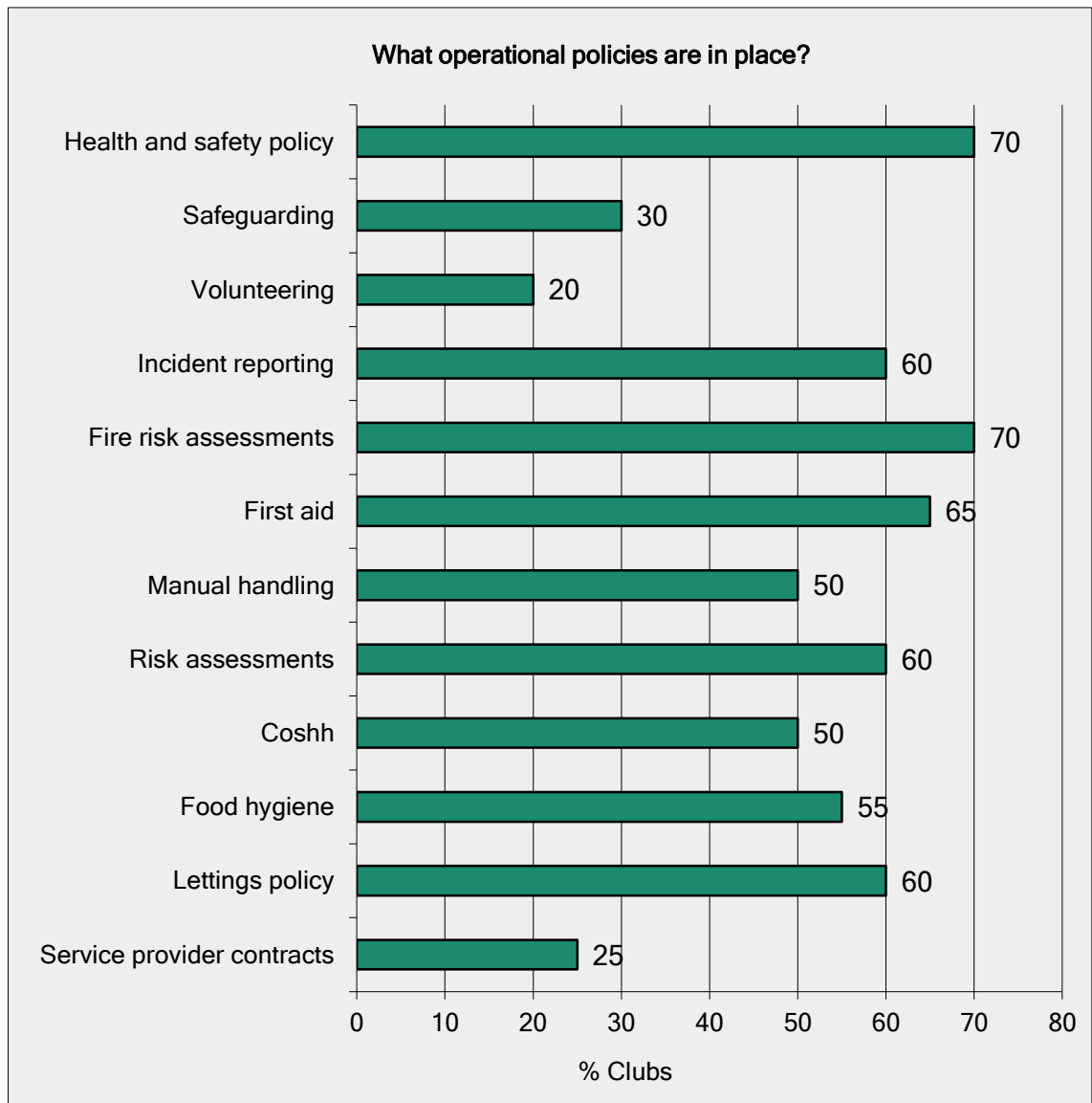
### Funding



ESP is the most common source of funding for Clubs (13 of them receive funding from ESP Eight receive funding from a government body (including Local Authorities (x3), the Football Foundation, Department of Health, and the Ireland Fund of Great Britain.) Previous funding for disability improvements has been sourced via the Lottery. Four Clubs receive funding from a trust or foundation (these include Margaret's Trust, Newby Trust, Irish Youth Foundation (x2)).

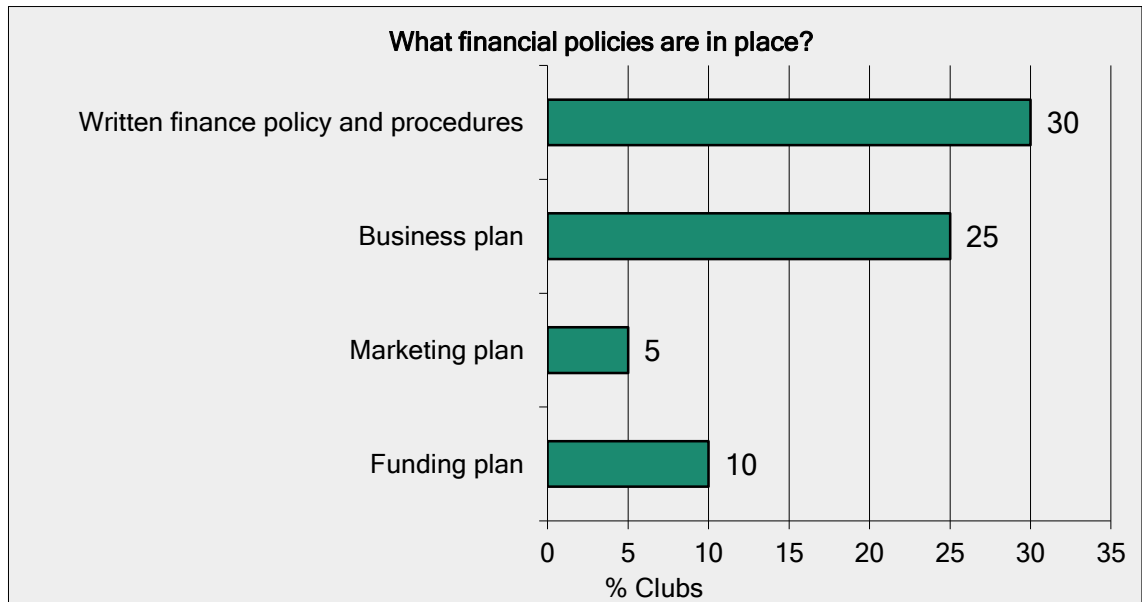
Approximately half of Clubs (9) work with statutory bodies. (Nine say they do not – not all Clubs answered this question.) In most cases this is the local council, for one it is the local Department of Health and one works with Local Authority schools.

## **Policies and Procedures**

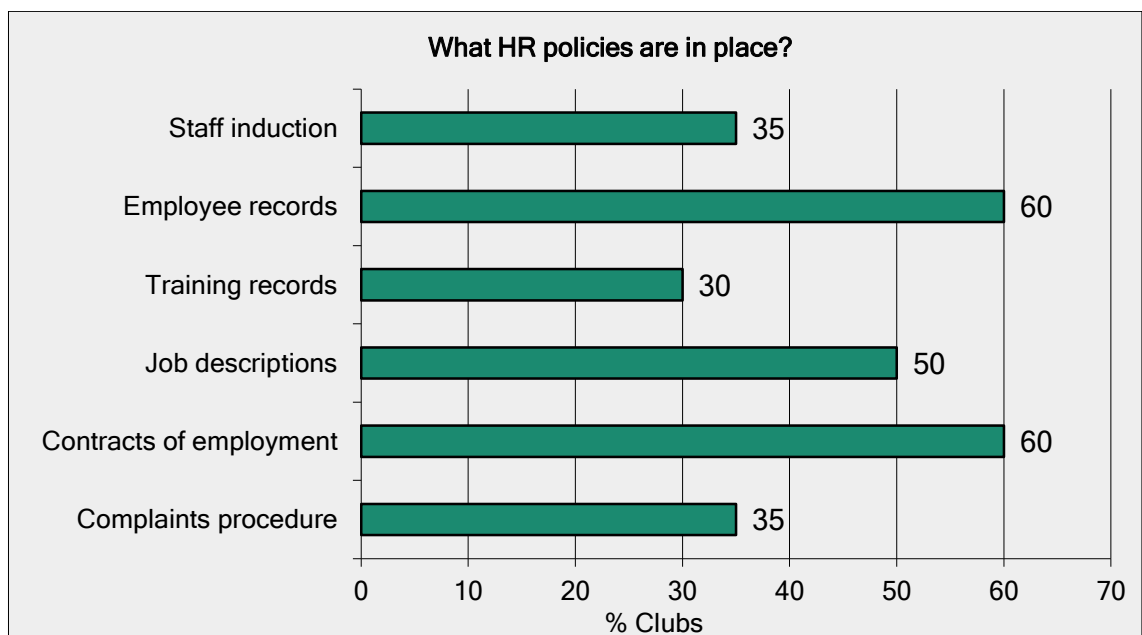


Most Clubs (14) have operational policies in place for health and safety and for fire risk assessment. 13 have first aid policies, 12 have incident reporting, 12 have risk assessments and 12 have a lettings policy. Fewer Clubs (half or less) have policies for other operational areas: manual handling (10 Clubs have policies for this); COSHH (10); and safeguarding (6). Safeguarding policies should be considered for any Clubs working with elderly or vulnerable clients – it is not clear from this survey exactly how many this should be applicable to, but 17 of the 20 are running lunch clubs which presumably serve elderly clients. One Club is currently working on this and another said that all of their staff, including bar staff, are DBS checked. Five Clubs have service provider contracts.

Only 4 Clubs have volunteering policies, despite there being 14 who currently use volunteers.



Less than a third of Clubs had financial policies and procedures in place. Six have written finance and policy procedures. Five have a business plan. Two have a funding plan and only one has a marketing plan.



Almost two thirds of Clubs (12) have HR procedures in place for employee records and contracts of employment (although one of these 12 specified that they only have contracts for full-time staff). Half of Clubs (10) have job descriptions for staff. Just over a third (7) have staff induction procedures and complaints procedures. Only six have training records. One also specified that they have an Equal Opportunities statement. One has a grievance procedure and appraisal process in place. Although no Club said that they had a problem with connected personnel, several did not have policies in place that would be beneficial in preventing future problems.

In summary, the types of policies and procedures which are most lacking among Clubs (and held by less than third) are:

- Marketing plan (only 1 Club has this)
- Funding plan (only 2 Clubs have this)
- Volunteer policy (only 4 Clubs have this)
- Business plan (5 Clubs have one)
- Written financial policy (6 Clubs have this)
- Training records (6 Clubs have these)
- Safeguarding policy (6 Clubs have one)

Several Clubs felt that they were too stretched, particularly as volunteers, to set up additional formal procedures themselves. Many would like support with this.

### **Network and Relationships**

Just under half of Clubs (8) work in partnership with other organisations, predominantly on a local or regional basis. Their partner organisations are detailed in the table below:

## Irish Clubs in Britain 2014

Partner	Number of Clubs
Irish in Britain	3
Irish Community Care Merseyside	2
Welfare orgs	2
Bluecoat	1
C.V.S. Burnley	1
Camden Council	1
Choltas	1
Culture Warrington	1
Diaspora Foundation	1
Eachtra	1
Food bank	1
ICAP	1
Institute of Irish studies	1
Irish Government	1
Leicester Irish Forum	1
Liverpool Voluntary Community Services	1
Local venues	1
Management Consortium	1
Manchester City Hall	1
Northern Business Foundation	1
Reaching People Consortium	1
Residents groups and associations	1
Temple Bar Cultural Trust	1
Tradfest	1
Tyneside Irish Society	1
Veterans in the Community	1
Voluntary Action Leicester	1
War pensions	1



Warrington Council	1
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Capacity building primarily drives partnerships. Motivations for all partnerships listed are detailed below:

Motivation	Number of Partnerships	% of Partnerships
Financial	11	19
Promotion	9	16
Funding Opportunity	7	12
Capacity Building	17	29
Other	14	24

Three Cubs specified other reasons: supporting the elderly or the community (2) and cultural development (1). The interviewer noted one case where a Club is very well-run but could benefit further from local and regional developing partnerships.

The table below outlines the full list of affiliated organisations of which Clubs are members (excluding Irish in Britain):

Affiliated Organisation	Number of Clubs
Association of Church Clubs	2
British Institute of Inn Keeping	1
IIBN	1
Northern Business Foundation	1
Leicester CEO Network	1
IMC Ltd	1
Community Matters	1
Irish Professional Network	1
Museums Association	1
Lancashire Irish Democratic League	1

## The Future

The majority of interviewees (17 out of 18 who answered) said they feel generally positive about the future of their Clubs. Two clubs in particular say that they are in a strong financial position and have reserves / financial security which guarantee their continued operation in the medium term. Clubs generally felt their existing members were committed and variously cited the following reasons for feeling positive:

- cohesive management team
- centre offers a good resource (but needs funding)
- board members with commercial experience
- a recent successful marketing campaign
- team working to generate new members
- current plans to increase revenue (e.g. having set up a trading arm, private lets and car boot sales)
- custom driven by closure of two local clubs
- successful engagement with both longstanding members of the Irish community and newer Irish immigrants
- broadened customer base and feeling of inclusion (e.g. football fans, Asian community)
- bringing in new people through an Irish dancing school
- being profitable with the potential to do more business

Positivity tended to be qualified by a few common concerns. Several Clubs feel that, while they are financially sound at the moment, on-going declines in membership numbers and profits may impact them in the future. Half of Clubs (10) feel that there are some barriers to them remaining open in the future. Most cite the ageing first generation Irish population alongside decreasing membership as their main concern for the long term. The Club who feel more negative than positive about the future also cite

this as their primary concern. There was a sense that Clubs need to maintain and develop commercial activities to counter the decline in membership. Several also mentioned the need to develop marketing strategies to address the declining trend in membership levels. Recruiting younger trustees (and female ones) and those with professional skills was suggested as a way to support Clubs in the future. Some are concerned about funding sources for necessary renovations to premises (as outlined in the premises section above), and there was also concern about the maintenance of funding in order for welfare services to continue.

One Club has a debt to a member loan, which means that the property could become controlled by a small number of people. Three are aiming to pay off mortgages and loans in the medium term. One Club was noted by the interviewer as losing money and so potentially heading for financial straits. One Club does not own the land it is on, which is in a prime site, and so feels vulnerable to competing development plans which may threaten it.

16 Clubs expressed a need for support from Irish in Britain, particularly in the area of policies and procedures. Areas where Clubs specifically requested support were as follows:

- Policies and procedures (half of Clubs requested this) including:
  - Staff Handbook
  - Health and Safety Advice – including a request for regular updates in plain English
  - Human Resources legislation updates
  - Disciplinary procedures
  - Operational procedures
  - Induction / training and training records
  - Volunteer policy
- Business management, monitoring and planning (approximately a third of Clubs requested this) including

- Updating finance policy
- Writing tenders / tendering processes for services
- Facilities management training
- Facilitate bulk buying of energy between Clubs
- Staff recruitment (x 1 Club)
- Governance (approximately a fifth of Clubs requested support in this area) including
  - A common document on governance shared among Clubs
  - Appointment of trustees / committee members
  - Reviewing constitution
  - Keeping abreast of changes in charity law
  - Advice re renewal of governance documents
- Attracting new – particularly younger – members / users (approximately a sixth of Clubs requested support in this, although it was a significant area of concern for more)
  - Marketing support / training
  - Website / social media support – see IT section below
- Cultural support (a sixth of Clubs requested cultural support) including
  - Securing funding for cultural events
  - Planning offer that meets diverse community needs
  - Irish in Britain creating a national database of artists
- Sharing ideas with other Clubs (a sixth of Clubs)
- Welfare (a sixth of Clubs) including
  - developing a lunch club
  - securing or diversifying funding for welfare work
  - Dementia / memory loss work
- IT / Communications Training (a sixth)
  - social media
  - website support

- database management
- Fundraising (several Clubs) including:
  - Developing Club's planning, activities and expertise in this area
  - Information about potential funders in third sector
  - Letter of support from Irish in Britain for funding bids
  - Negotiating with Local Authority landlord re refurbishment
- Requests for more Irish in Britain events in the north (several Clubs)
- Feedback from Irish in Britain on Census data regarding the Irish community (x 1 Club)

Two requests flagged as urgent were around putting policies and procedures (x2) in place and support around staff recruitment and committee selection (x1).

Four Clubs said that they were prepared to pay for additional support. These comments came mainly from clubs looking for business management and governance support.

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