

Exploring the financial constraints of athletes on the England Talent Pathway

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OVERVIEW

- Project aims
- Project team
- What we already know
- Who we worked with
- What we did with them
- What we found
- What we would recommend, moving forwards

PROJECT AIMS

- Evaluate the extent of financial ‘constraints’ experienced by athletes on the England Talent Pathway (ETP).
- Inform the potential implementation of a talented athlete bursary scheme being considered by Sport England.

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER



PROJECT OFFICER



RESEARCH CONSULTANTS



RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



What we already know- not a lot!

- Nearly 40% of athletes surveyed stated that the cost of participation was the single greatest barrier to success (Sports Aid, 2013)
- 53% of US Olympians cited *lack* of financial support was the greatest obstacle to success (US Olympic committee, 2003)
- Parental support can be pivotal in the development of the talented athlete because parents provide emotional, informational and financial support (Côté, 1999; Baker *et al.*, 2003; Gould *et al.*, 2006).

WHO WE WORKED WITH



Table 1. Demographic data for athletes divided by sport cost per athlete

	Total sample (n = 2053)	Low cost per athlete sport (n = 1378)	Medium cost per athlete sport (n = 443)	High cost per athlete sport (n = 232)
General				
Percentage of total sample (%)	100	67.1	21.6	11.3
Age, years (mean \pm SD)	14 \pm 2	14 \pm 2	14 \pm 3	15 \pm 3
Disability sport (% total)	2	0.5	3	9
Gender				
Male (%)	45	47	33	51
Female (%)	65	53	67	49
Ethnic group				
White (%)	91.8	91.8	91.7	91.9
Mixed (%)	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.6
Asian (%)	1.5	1.8	1.4	0.9
Black (%)	1.1	1.2	0.9	1.8
Chinese (%)	0.3	0.1	0.9	0
Other (%)	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.9
Prefer not to say (%)	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9
Family structure				
Two parent family (%)	89	90.5	88.2	89.6
Single-parent family (%)	10	9	10.6	9.9
Other (%)	1	0.5	1.2	0.5
Number of children (mean \pm SD)	2 \pm 1	2 \pm 1	2 \pm 1	2 \pm 1

WHAT WE DID WITH THEM

Sport England Survey: NGB

This survey will ask you questions about the role of finances in the development of talented athletes in your sport. The information you provide will help us to understand how finances affect an athlete at the start of, or during, the England Talent Pathway. More information about this work is provided in the information sheet sent with this survey link. Thank you for taking part in this survey.

*Required

I have read the information associated with this survey and understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary. I can stop my participation at any time and my name and personal details will be kept separate from any answers I provide to ensure all results are completely anonymous. *

Yes

No

2447 Parents

2053 Athletes

34 NGBs

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22 Parents

18 Athletes

26 NGBs

17 CSPs

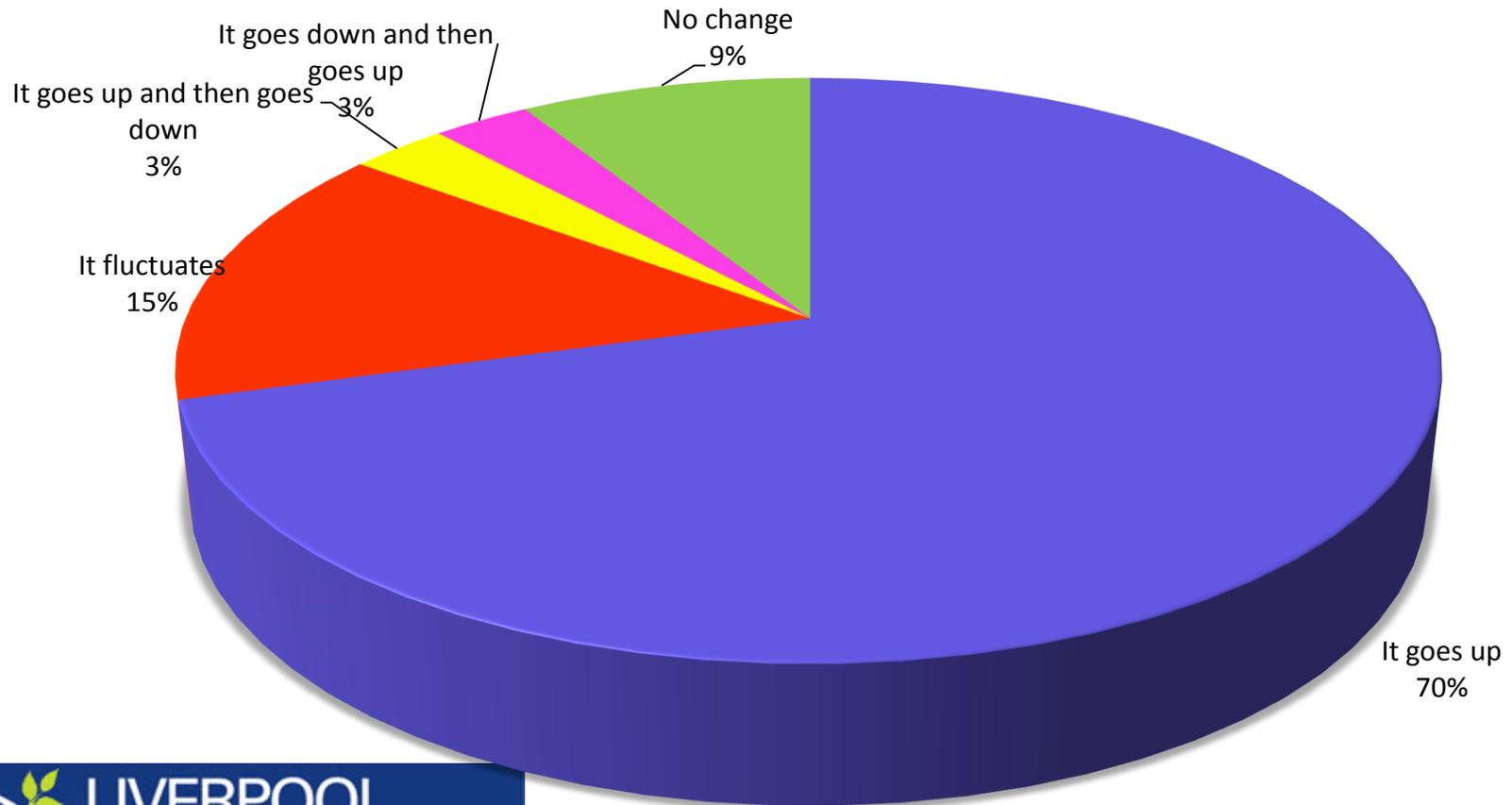


WHAT WE FOUND

What happens to the costs associated with participation in the ETP?

Survey and interview responses from NGB's and parents / athletes described increasing costs (both human and financial) as athletes progressed through the ETP.

NGBs: What happens to the cost of participating as athletes progress along the ETP?



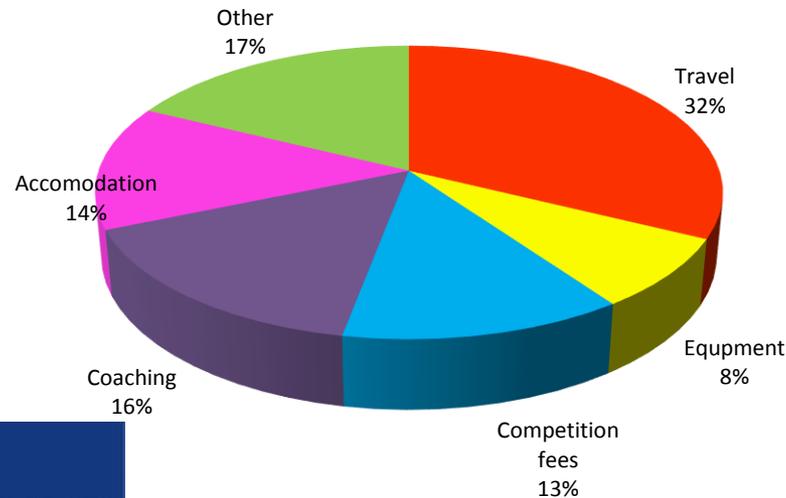
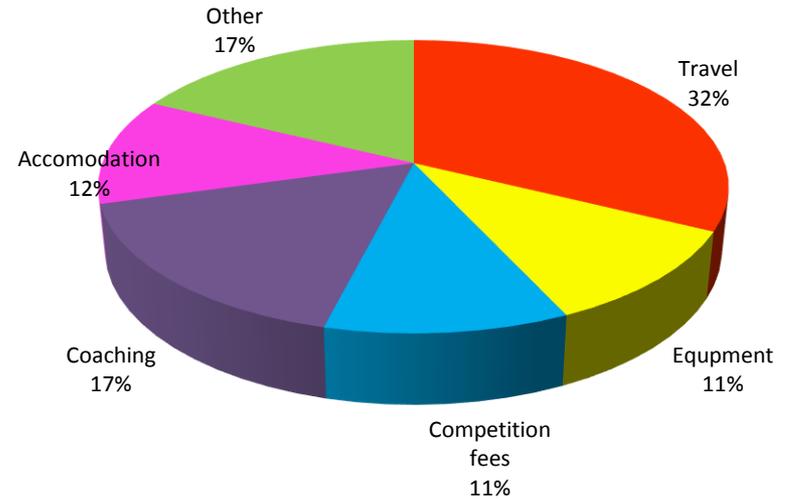
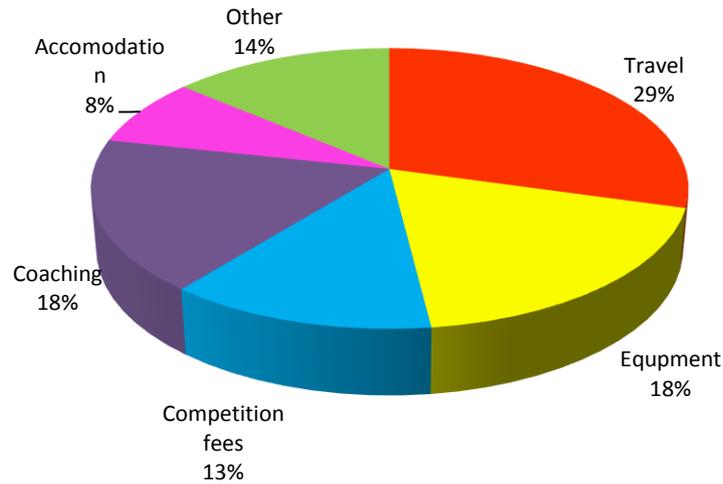
Emotional investment- sacrifices

- *“If you’re talking about in terms of our personal spend, yes there has been[an increase in financial demand]. So we literally can’t replace our car, we can’t go on holidays...”(Parent 05)*
- *“...we just have to keep either re-mortgaging, or asking for assistance... Certainly sacrifices all the way around, everything from cars to holidays to borrowing money of friends and relatives, loans, everyway basically.” (Parent 15)*

What types of costs are associated to participation in ETP activities?

Travel costs are the main expense faced by athletes at all levels of the ETP. Costs associated with equipment, competition fees and coaching were also apparent at all levels of the ETP.

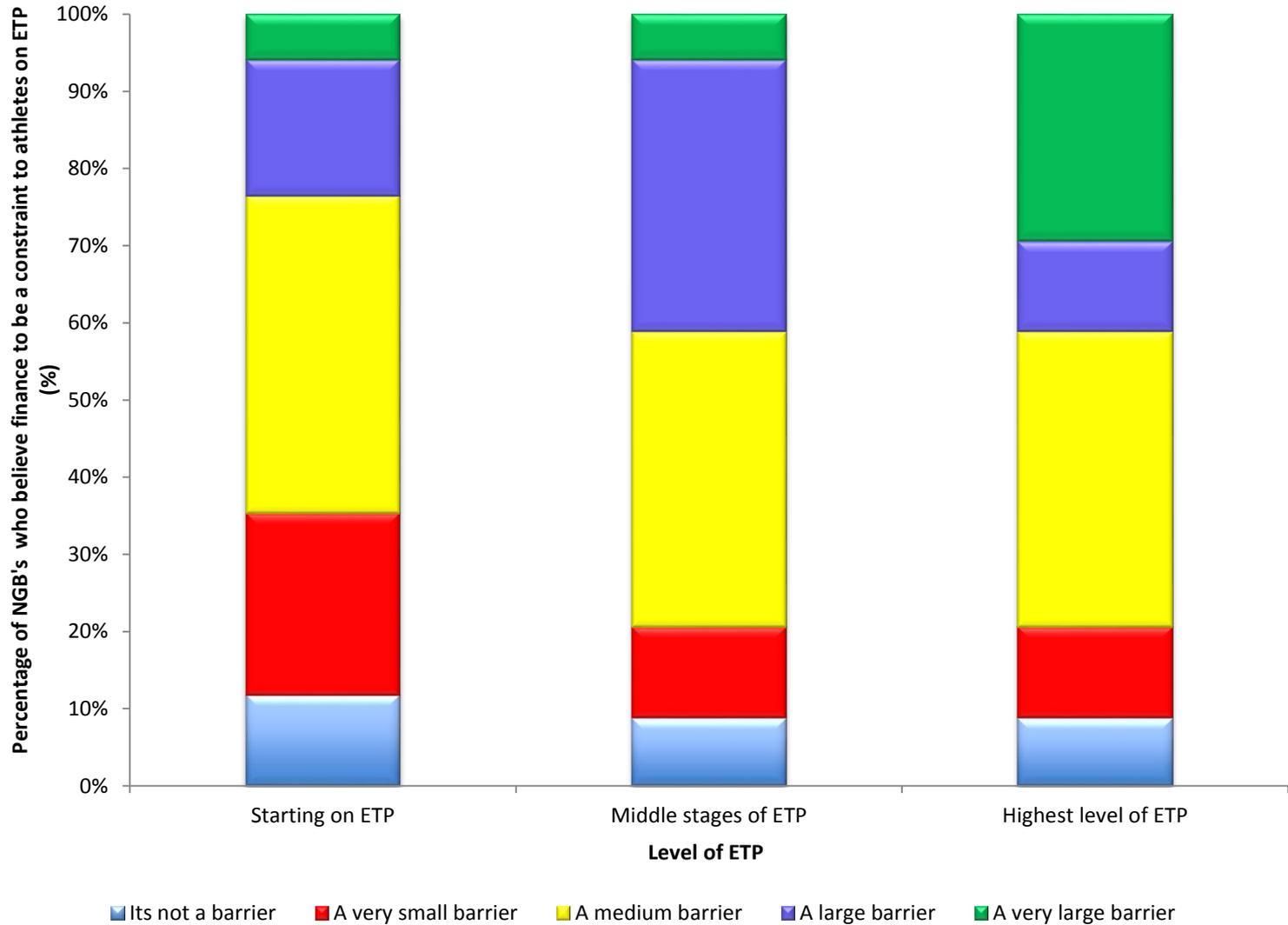
NGB's: The main costs for athletes on the ETP by level



Do finances constrain participation in the ETP? Does the effect differ at all?

NGBs, parents and athletes reported that finances did provide a constraint to athlete progression along the ETP although the size of the constraint reported varied between groups of participants and at different stages of the ETP.

NGBs: How large a constraint is finance for athletes at different ETP levels?



- *“To tell you the truth, he really doesn’t know the actual cost that is happening, because it all gets done by me. So it hasn’t affected him” (Parent 04)*
- *“I try not to let him worry because I’m a single parent and I know that he is very conscious of me obviously making personal sacrifices because he has a sister so a lot of money is going towards him and [he] does try sort of say well he doesn’t have to do a certain competition when I know that he should do it so I will try to so I think that internally he does worry but I try to sort of let him know everything is okay not to let him know about the financial aspect so that he can concentrate on his sport” (Parent 13)*

Do financial constraints affect ETP dropout? If so, how?

Being 'female' and '17-19 years of age' were the two most common characteristics provided for athletes dropping out of the ETP (Table 2). From the perceptions of NGBs, there were no differences in drop-out rate noted for athletes from different ethnic groups, or from different family structures

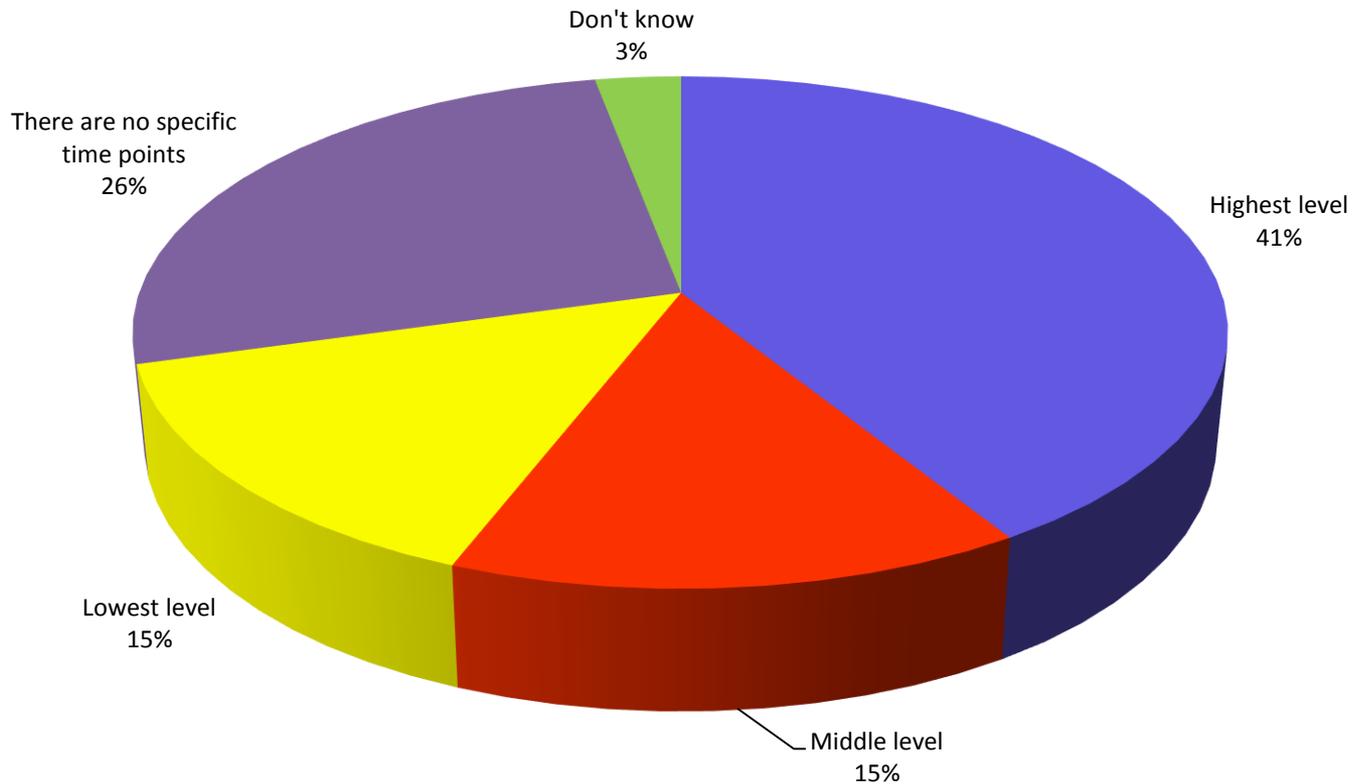
NGBs: Characterise athletes dropping out of the ETP?

Percentage of NGB's stating demographic characteristics of athletes dropping out of ETP	
	Characteristic of NGB drop-outs (%)
Male	38
Female	50
Disabled	9
Age group	
Under 11 years of age	0
11-13 years of age	3
14-16 years of age	32
17-19 years of age	47
20-24 years of age	56
25 years of age or older	6
Ethnic groups	
White ethnic group	29
Mixed ethnic group	15
Asian ethnic group	9
Black ethnic group	12
Chinese ethnic group	9
Family structure	
Single parent family	24
Single income family	24
Siblings in family	26

Are there any pinch points of financial constraint?

Both survey and interview data suggests that there is a clearly defined pinch point and that it exists at the higher level of the pathway, before athletes could progress onto World Class or Elite programmes

NGBs: At what level of the ETP are athletes most limited by funding?



Are there any specific areas of financial constraints?

1. *Demands on athletes*
 - a. *Regional level*
 - b. *Attend more regularly*
2. *Geography*
 - a. *Proximity to training venues*
 - b. *Support team to travel*
3. *Quality and costs of provision*
 - a. *High level facilities*

Is financial hardship easily recognised?

There is a large emphasis placed on the coach to identify hardship and a lack of systematic understanding of where financial hardship could be occurring

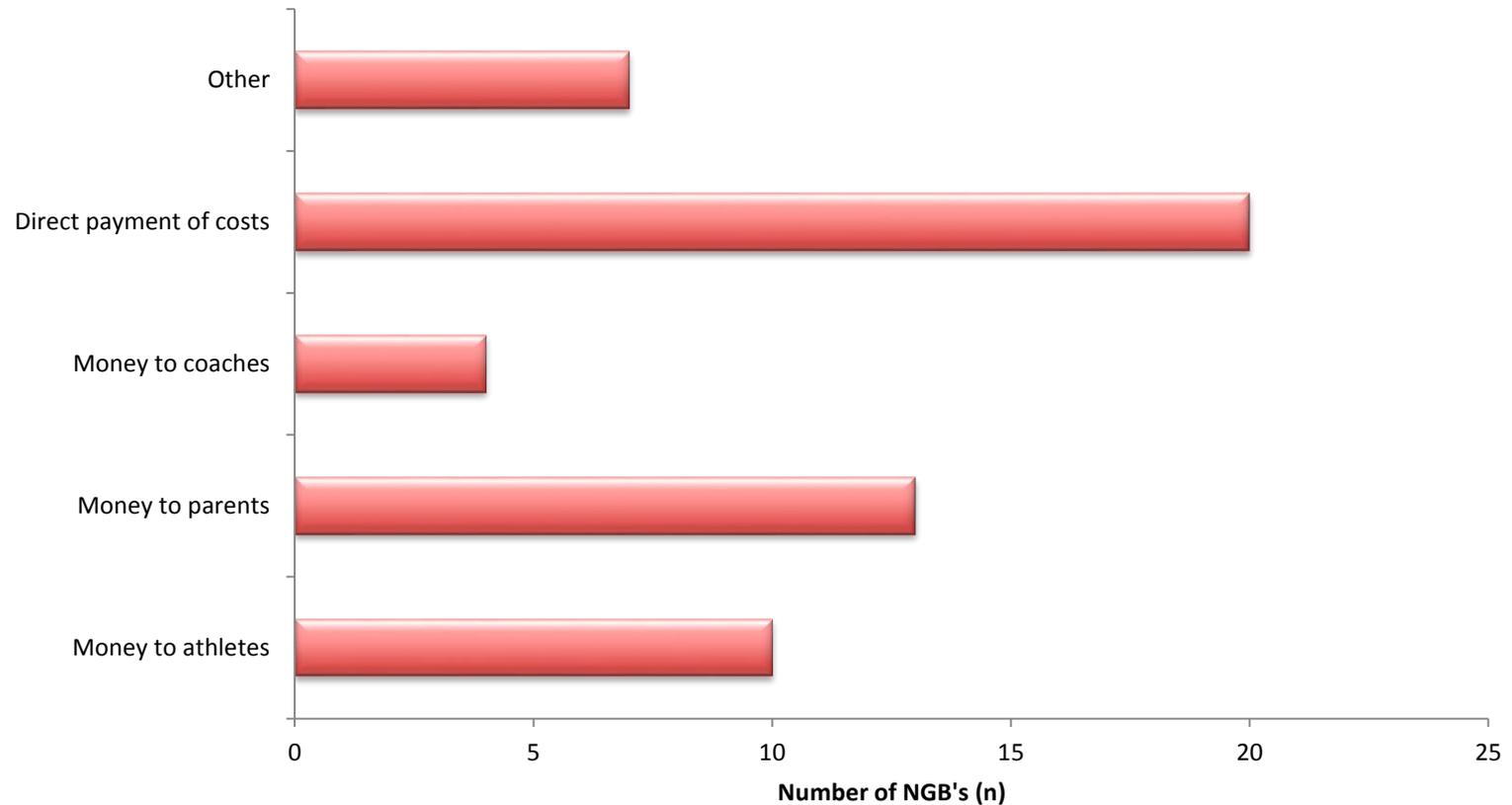
“It would be hard for us to say which twelve year olds are the ones we really need to subsidise to keep in the sport because at that point its really hard to, you know, really understand the potential... I don’t suppose we have a structured way to gather that information either in terms of exit interviews or questionnaires.” (NGB 10)

“One of the areas I want to look at is lifestyle, and within lifestyle I want to try and understand a little bit more about their travel and financial situation, just so that we are able to capture that level of information.” (NGB 19)

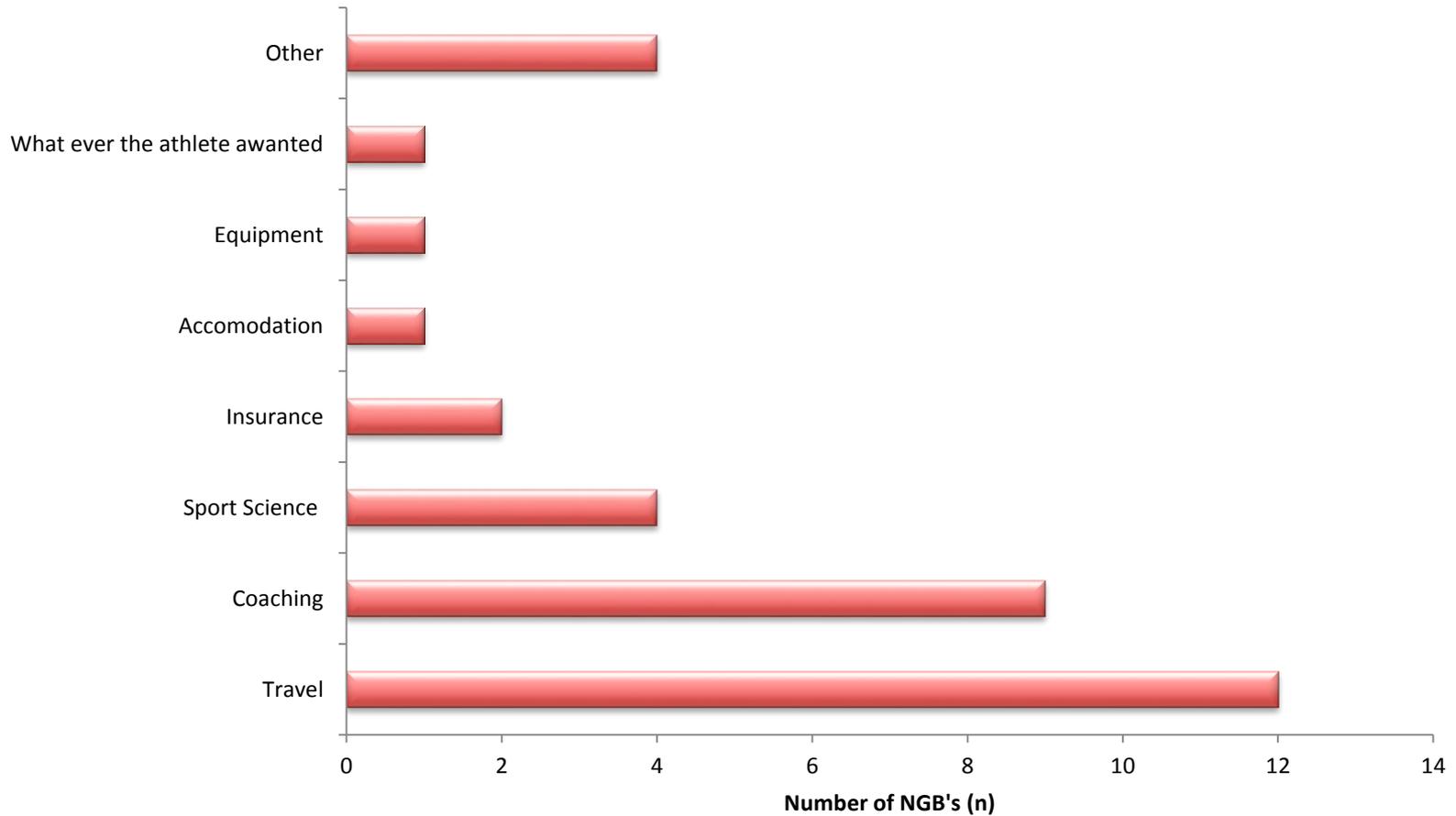
How should any additional funding that could support athletes experiencing financial constraints be spent, in the future?

Money was often described as a motivating factor, it should be means tested, although there is a recognition that means testing could prove to be problematic. Any funds should be used based on potential.

NGBs: How to distribute further financial support to athletes on the ETP?



NGBs: The most important focus for spending additional ETP funding?



- *“I think you could means test it, couldn’t you? Now whether that’s right, wrong or indifferent is a political view, isn’t it, really? But you could means test it.” (Parent 05)*
- *“I think it’s very hard to do a means test, because it all depends how supportive the parents are to what the child does, because some parents might not even support their children, therefore a means test wouldn’t really give the right... I don’t think show the right thing” (Parent 04)*
- *So I think it should be means tested, but it also should be based on your achievement, on your level as well”. (Parent 07)*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority athletes

- University-aged athletes at higher levels
 - Athletes who are geographically disadvantaged
 - Athletes from single parent families
 - Disabled athletes
 - Athletes in the North East of England
- ...with demonstrated potential
And greater financial need

Identifying hardship

- Provide support for NGBs in establishing systems for identifying financial hardship, particularly at lower levels of the pathway, but also for the priority high to WCP/Elite levels.

Parental support

- Parents should be supported in having the opportunity to discuss financial hardship with neutral parties.
- Parental support should also entail information for parents to use in applying for additional funding, that is often available but seems difficult to access or is not clearly signposted.
- Sport England and NGBs need to consider the impact of the finding that suggests parents shield their children from the realities of them supporting their son/daughter's participation on the ETP, particularly at lower levels of the pathway.

Detailed costs support

- Travel costs dominate the findings and NGBs should be encouraged to think creatively about how transport arrangements are made to facilitate the transportation of athletes **and coaches** to their venues
- This would also require a review of how training and competitions are structured in relation to their frequency and location, with a preference for a greater number of localised provision over regional, national and international.

Type of funding support

- Costs should be devolved to athletes by way of funding support services, rather than directly offering cash. These support services should be applied for, means tested (although there has been reports of potential difficulties with this) and prioritised for those athletes demonstrating potential to reach high levels of the ETP, and beyond.

Comms and transparency

- Provide 'financial top tips' to alert NGBs to the variety of financial constraints that exist
- Support NGBs in clearly articulating their recognition of the financial hardship being experienced by athletes and their families by them demonstrating the mechanisms that they are employing in reducing costs

CSPs

- Support CSPs by cascading examples of best practice

Acknowledgements.. thanks

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- Finally, to the tireless efforts all of the research team with particular mention to Dr Stephen Gilbert for coordinating the complexities of a wide-ranging and fast-moving research project.

Discussion areas

PRIORITY ATHLETES

- University-aged athletes at higher levels of ETP
- Athletes who are geographically disadvantaged
- Athletes from single parent families
- Disabled athletes
- Athletes in the North East of England

ETP LEVEL

- Lower and upper levels



Discussion areas

PARENTAL SUPPORT

- ‘Neutral’ support opportunity for parents
- Information on how to apply for funding and what is available

COST AREAS

- Transport costs for athletes and coaches to attend training and competitions
- Location of activities – local vs. regional vs. national



Operational aspects of the scheme

- Application process linked to NGB nomination and talent potential
- Funding support through NGB, rather than direct cash to athletes
- Means testing
- Application frequency?
- Duration of funding award
- Known and/or unknown athletes?



Possible delivery models

- Financial ‘top tips’ – for NGBs & parents
- Enhanced information to parents and athletes
 - How have costs been reduced within the ETP programme?
 - Recognition it is costly to be a talented athlete
 - Other funding options available
- More information to partners about athletes, e.g. CSPs, Local Authorities
- Funding support to athletes
- Provision of services, e.g. S&C, lifestyle, transport – linked to TASS TACs



Next steps

- Research is complete
- Consultation with NGBs and partners
- Funding is available
- Scoping of the scheme – including assessment of financial hardship
- Operational to work ‘on the ground’
- Live during next financial year (2015-16)

