THE MARK SCOTT LEADERSHIP FOR LIFE AWARD

EVALUATION

REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES

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August 2008

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EVALUATION

CONTENTS OF REPORT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

> "I would recommend the Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award to everyone. I really loved being part of it. I gained so much confidence and made so many good friends"

These are the words of a past participant in the Award, and demonstrate the positive impact which the Award has on young people and on the communities those young people belong to.

The report concludes that the Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award is an extremely worthwhile and successful programme which succeeds in strengthening communities, developing young people and attempting to address sectarianism and other socially divisive influences.

Achievements as noted by past participants:

- 85% of respondents said they had increased confidence as a result of taking part in the Award;

- 95% of respondents believed they worked better in team since taking part in the Award;

- All respondents mentioned that they had learnt some sort of new skill as a result of taking part in the programme;

- 83% of respondents were able to mention at least three ways in which their local community had benefited;

- 97% of respondents felt that the Award brought people from different backgrounds together;

- 67% of respondents mentioned their views of people from different backgrounds had changed as a result of taking part in the Award.

Benefits as noted by school champions:

- 87% of respondents believed that the Award benefited their school.

- 94% of respondents believed that the Award benefited the local community.

- All respondents agreed that the Award significantly benefits individual pupils.

The report recommends some areas for potential improvement of the programme, and these recommendations have been based upon the findings laid out within.

Summary of recommendations:

- The recruitment process and in particular the presentation to schools could be improved upon;

- The support given to participants during the community project phase should be completely reviewed;

- The timeframe for the Award should be reviewed;

- The aims of the evaluation of the Award (i.e. the "paperwork phase") should be reviewed to ensure that it is an important part of the Award process and not just an additional burden on participants;

- If addressing sectarianism and other socially divisive influences is to remain an aim of the Award, it is important to review whether this is being implemented in the best way possible;

- School champions are kept involved and up-to-date on the Award and the work of the Foundation;

- The Award should raise its profile in the media and within the community.

2. BACKGROUND

After an application process through the Glasgow University "Find a Solution Project" run in conjunction with the Glasgow University Students' Representative Council and the Glasgow University Queen Margaret Settlement Association, two students - Michael Shanks and Rebekah Price - were selected to carry out a three month evaluation of the Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award ("The Award").

The Outward Bound Trust and The Mark Scott Foundation work in partnership to enable 17 and 18 year old young people to participate in The Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award. The Mark Scott Foundation was formed following the unprovoked sectarian murder of Mark Scott in 1995. Today the Award programme brings together young people from different schools on a one week training residential course, at Loch Eil Outward Bound, where participants develop team and project management skills. In returning home, supported by Outward Bound Metro, participants work in groups to identify, organise and deliver a project that benefits their local community, while breaking down community boundaries and boosting self confidence.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Mark Scott Foundation ("The Foundation") and The Outward Bound Trust ("Outward Bound") have funded and delivered The Award for 10 years. During this time the programme has undergone internal evaluations, and in 2004 a full external review was carried out. With the partnership looking forward to the next five years the two organisations wanted to do a further evaluation of the programme to ensure that areas for improvement are identified and to have appropriate evidence for funders and supporters of the programme.

After several meetings with the Trustees, it was concluded that there were three main aspects of the Award which required research:

3.1 **Motivation**
How can Outward Bound keep young people motivated throughout their time on the Award?

3.2 **Attraction**
How could more people be encouraged to apply?

3.3 **Retention**
How can Outward Bound retain people from start to completion of the Award, and avoid a drop-off?

Furthermore, they wanted to know if the Award meets the learning objectives set down by the Foundation, namely:

3.4 Does it help to develop the talents of young people?

3.5 Does it benefit local communities through delivering a project for them?

3.6 Does it address sectarianism and other socially divisive influences in a subtle way?

4.   METHODOLOGY

The authors met with some of the Trustees of the Foundation and representatives of Outward Bound informally several times and once formally at a meeting of the Operations Advisory Group where the Terms of Reference were discussed and concluded upon. Subsequently contact has been maintained through Outward Bound and individual Trustees.

It was concluded from initial research into the Award programme itself, that the views of the past participants would be most important to gauge how the Award was perceived and the key areas for improvement. Feedback was gained from participants through a questionnaire which could be completed either by paper or online. This was sent to 630 past participants from the past four years although this number included some participants who did not complete the Award. A copy of this questionnaire forms Appendix A. This questionnaire was drafted by the authors and reviewed with representatives of Outward Bound and Trustees of the Foundation before being released. It was tested on a group of respondents and amended as a result of feedback received.

Secondly, the authors sought the feedback of School Champions who work with the Award within a school setting. This took the form of a further questionnaire, which was sent to 53 school champions electronically. This forms Appendix B. This was reviewed by Outward Bound and limited testing took place before being released.

Finally, the authors wanted to gain feedback from representatives of the community projects to judge the wider impact which the Award has on local communities. These were researched individually and took the form of an initial telephone interview, followed by a meeting and a short questionnaire.

Four focus groups were held during which feedback was explored in more detail and additional feedback was gathered on a wide range of topics.

5. NOTES ON RESEARCH FINDINGS

It should be borne in mind that neither of the authors of this report are qualified research analysts, and that the statistical analysis and research methodology in this report has been carried out with our knowledge from University Research Methods courses and past experience of report writing. Additionally, it should be noted that:

5.1 The response rate for the participant questionnaire was quite low with only 1 in 6 past participants and 28% of school champions responding. However, substantial weight can be given to the individual views expressed in both questionnaires and this feedback has been used as the basis for many of our recommendations. It should be noted that over a quarter of the participants who completed the Award in 2007/08 have responded. Furthermore, the respondents came from 39 different schools, allowing for a good spread of results from various different geographic areas.

5.2 All responses which did not take the form of a "Yes" or "No" answer have been collated together to form the findings within the report. These responses have been listed unedited, and in full, and form Appendix C and D.

5.3 It should be noted that some respondents will take a different view on a particular issue as a result of individual influences or experiences or as a result of some bias and that individual feedback should be put in the correct context and interpreted within that context.

5.4 The authors' have used their own judgement in some cases to conclude what a respondent means by a particular response and it should therefore be borne in mind that the authors' judgement may not reflect the actual meaning of the respondent, though their full response can be viewed in Appendix C and D.

Taking all of the above into account, it can be concluded that while the results to our research may not be scientifically evidential, they do reflect accurate feedback from core groups of people related to the Award, and the similarity in the written responses suggests that our conclusions reflect the general consensus of the feedback and are not based on any statistical anomaly.

6. NOTE ON PROJECT

The timeframe for the completion of this project was 3 months from June 2008. It should be noted that if a further evaluation of the Award is to take place, that this timescale, taking into account the summer holiday period, is not the optimal time to carry out a review and that this is the probable cause of the low response rate to the aforementioned questionnaires.

The focus groups held were extremely informative and it should be noted that if a future evaluation such as this was to take place, similar focus groups should be convened.

It should also be noted that the support received by the writers from the Foundation and Outward Bound has been extremely helpful during this project and made it possible to complete such a research project in a short period of time. Thanks are due to them for their considerable contribution to this Report.

7. **FINDINGS**

The findings are compiled into seven sections. The first four findings follow the stages of the Award process – Application, Loch Eil, Community Projects and Awarding. Following this there are findings on the Aims of the Award, the school champions and finally the response to the specific research questions posed by the Foundation.

7.1 APPLICATION PHASE

There were a variety of expectations which participants had prior to applying to do the Award.
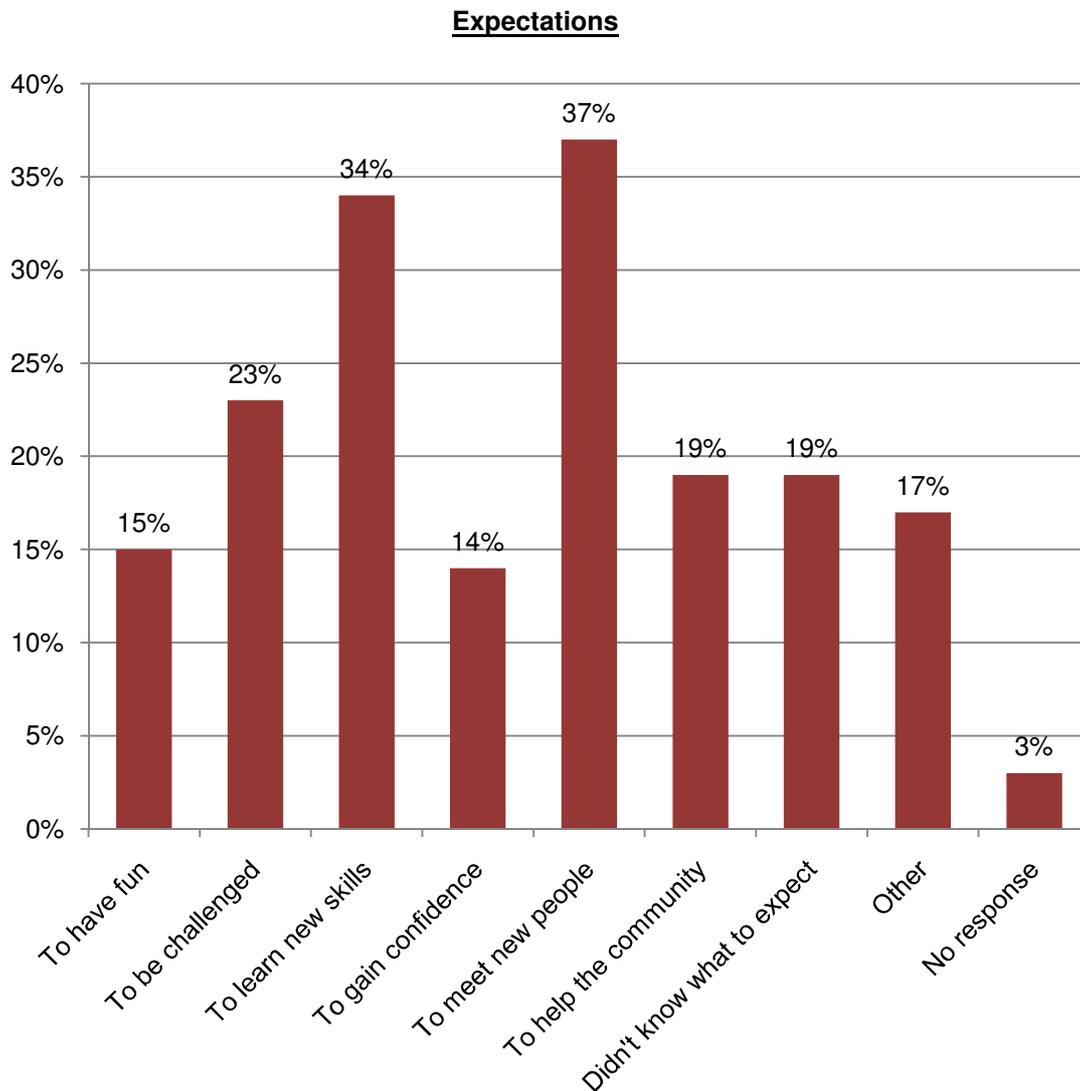
Expectations

These expectations also show the reasons why respondents applied to do the Award, and highlight that the main reasons were to learn new skills and to make new friends. However the results also show that a large proportion of the respondents did not know what to expect before commencing on the Award – 19% didn't know what to expect generally, and an additional 3% didn't know what to expect regarding the community project phase of the Award.

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"I didn't have any expectations as I wasn't entirely sure
what the Award was until I went to Loch Eil"

</div>

Some school champions also commented that the presentation given to prospective participants could be less formal and yet more informative. This view was reinforced during the focus groups, where there were comments that the presentation could be improved.

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"the speakers may benefit from letting go of the script slightly and
allowing themselves to show more passion and enthusiasm" (school champion)

"the project wasn't really sold by the person introducing it to the school" (participant)
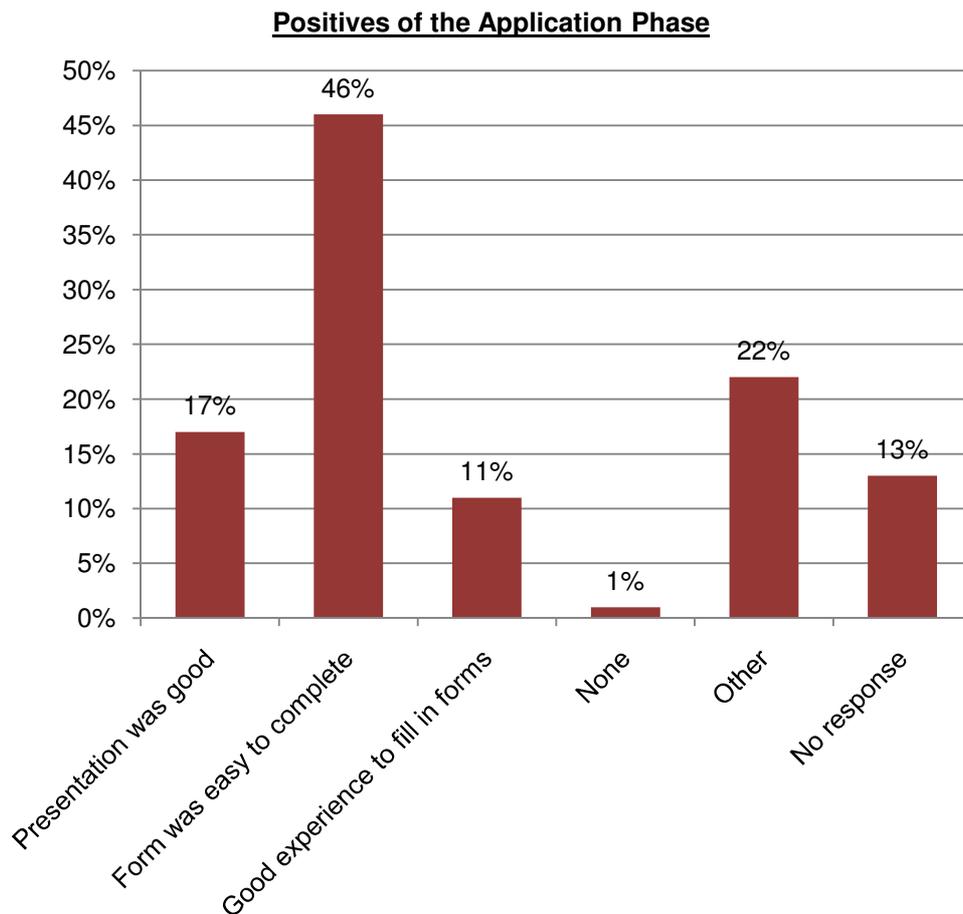
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Negatives of the Application Phase
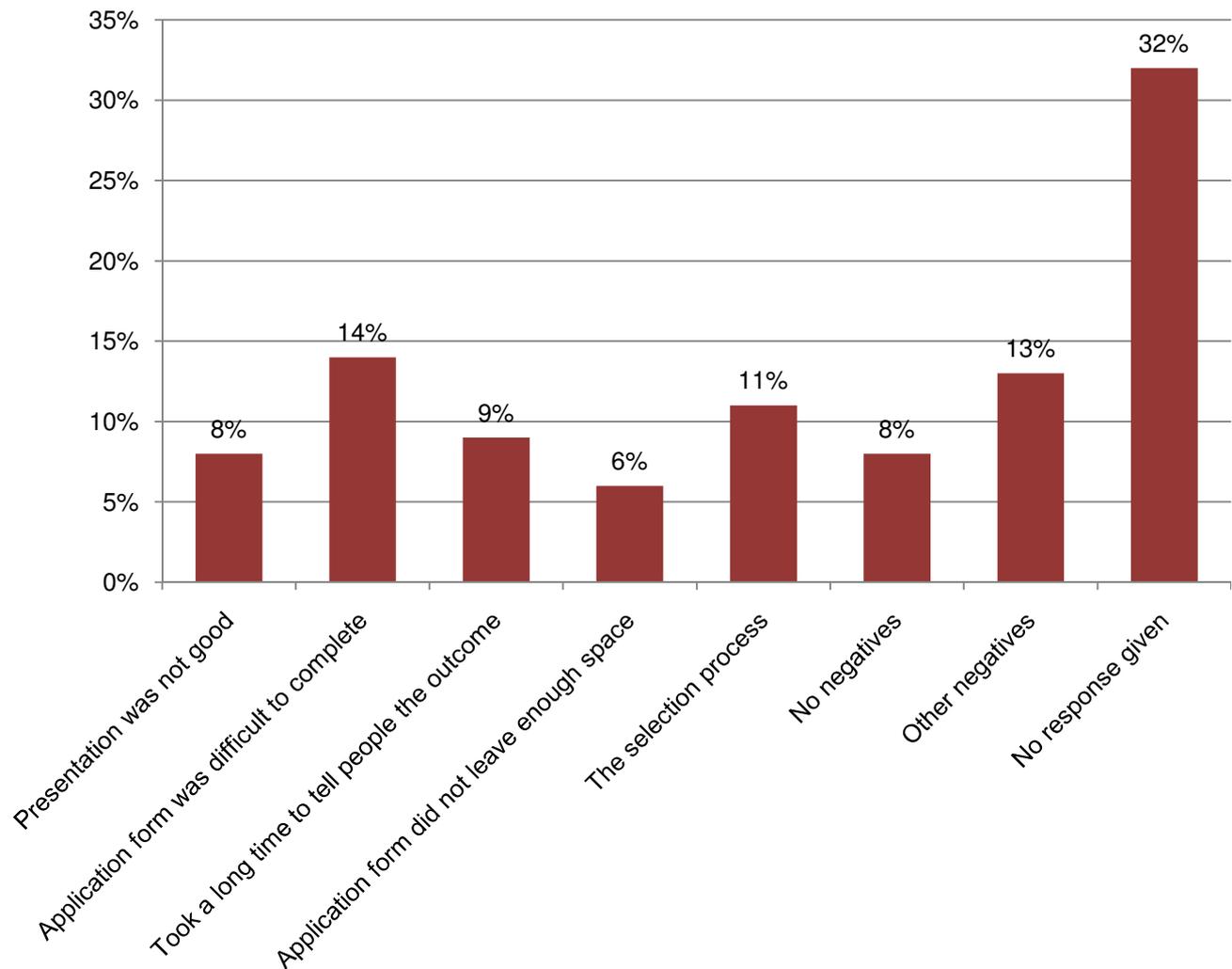
However, many respondents also commented that while they personally had no issue with the application form, some of their colleagues may have been put off applying because they had no experience to list or thought they had no skills to offer.

"probably put off a lot of people who could have benefited most from this scheme"

This issue was further discussed at a focus group, and many participants felt that the pupils who would benefit most from the Award – i.e. those who were not confident, outgoing or involved in other clubs and activities, may not apply.

Additionally, many commented that the form itself was impractical, oftentimes leaving not enough space to fill in all the required details.

School champions believed that to encourage more people to apply to do the Award, it was necessary for the Foundation to increase its profile both within the school communities and in the wider media.

Positives of the Application Phase

Chart showing percentages for the positives of the application phase:
- Presentation was good: 17%
- Form was easy to complete: 46%
- Good experience to fill in forms: 11%
- None: 1%
- Other: 22%
- No response: 13%

However, many respondents gave comments about the application form used to select participants for the Award. 87% of respondents gave positive feedback regarding the application form, with many commenting that it gave them an opportunity to list their motivations for taking part in the Award, and for them to really think about why they should do it. Additionally, many said that this was a good skill to learn for future life.

"the application form made me consider my motivation for doing the Award"
"the form was straight forward to complete"

Many of the participants commented that the DVD was good and that the presentation gave them enough information to make up their mind whether to apply or not.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

→ The recruitment presentation should be reviewed to ensure that it includes information on all stages of the Award, as well as the overall requirements of the Award. The general enthusiasm of the presentation should also be increased to ensure that school pupils are sufficiently encouraged to apply – this will require a complete overhaul of the current system of presentations.

→ The application form should be reviewed to ensure that it does not put off potential participants from applying. If necessary, additional information could be given by school champions and they could also assist in the completion of the form.

→ The literature given to pupils should be increased so that it includes more information about what the Award includes and what is expected of participants.

→ The involvement of past participants could be reviewed with the possibility of involving them in the application phase as a way to add more enthusiasm to the presentations.

7.2   LOCH EIL PHASE

Overwhelmingly the respondents stated that Loch Eil was a fantastic experience and should be continued in future years. Most respondents also stated that they had to overcome a number of personal challenges to complete the course, but that this made it all the more worthwhile.

> *"there can be no better way to truly get to know a group as well in 5 days and to allow the formation of a well rounded, bonded team"*
> (participant)

This view was shared in the focus groups, where the general consensus was that without the Loch Eil stage of the Award, the team would not be sufficiently prepared for the community projects phase.

**Positives of the Loch Eil Phase**
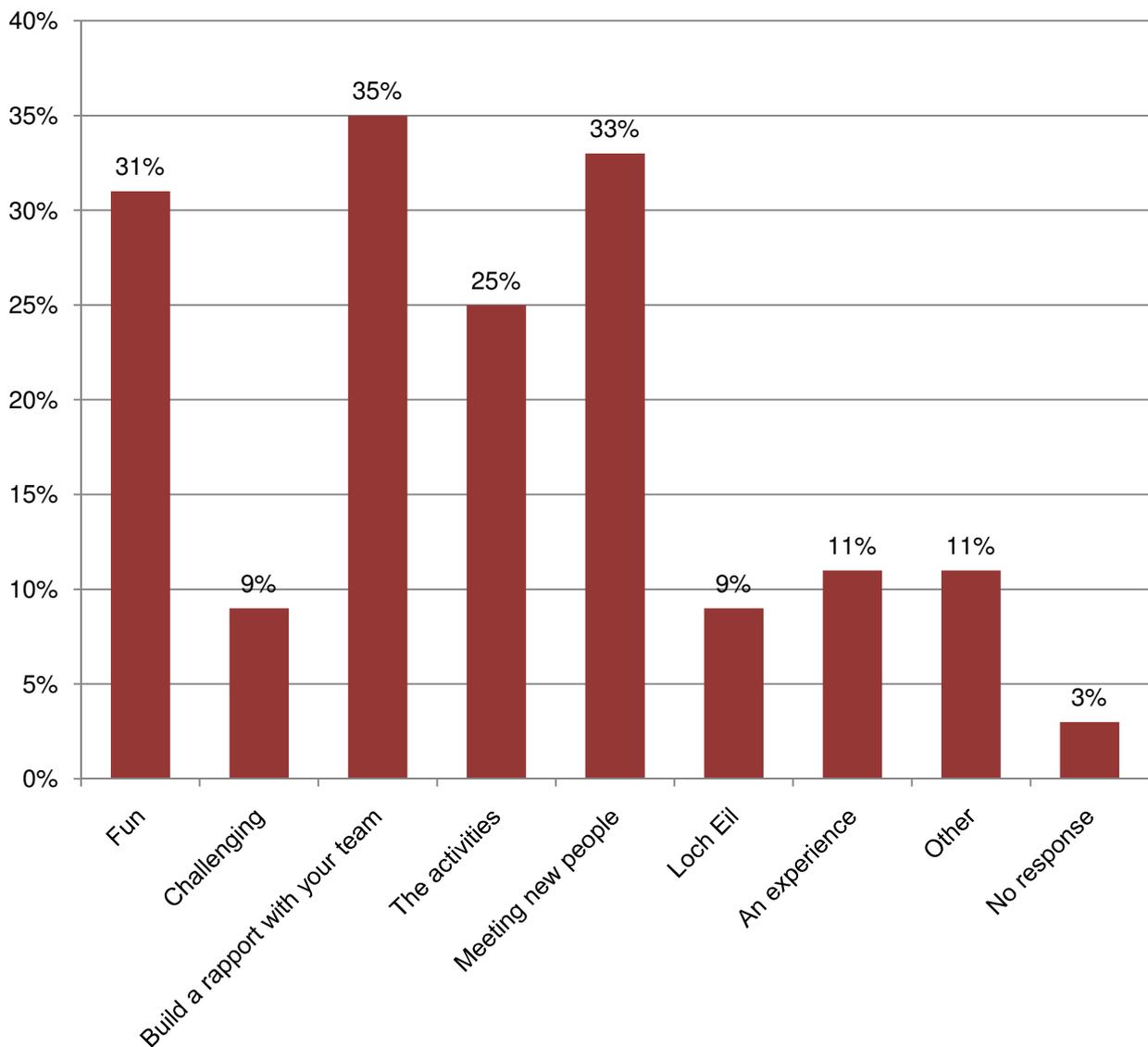
Many respondents commented however that the paperwork which is completed while at Loch Eil is often repetitive and largely unnecessary. Most saw the need for some form of evaluation and paperwork, but suggested that it need not be quite so monotonous.

> *"some of the worksheets we had to complete every night were unnecessary and were repeated every night"*

This issue was discussed at the focus groups, where there was a consensus that evaluating your own achievements and progress on a daily basis is not best practice and that a simpler, and more enjoyable system of paperwork could be implemented.

Negatives of the Loch Eil Phase
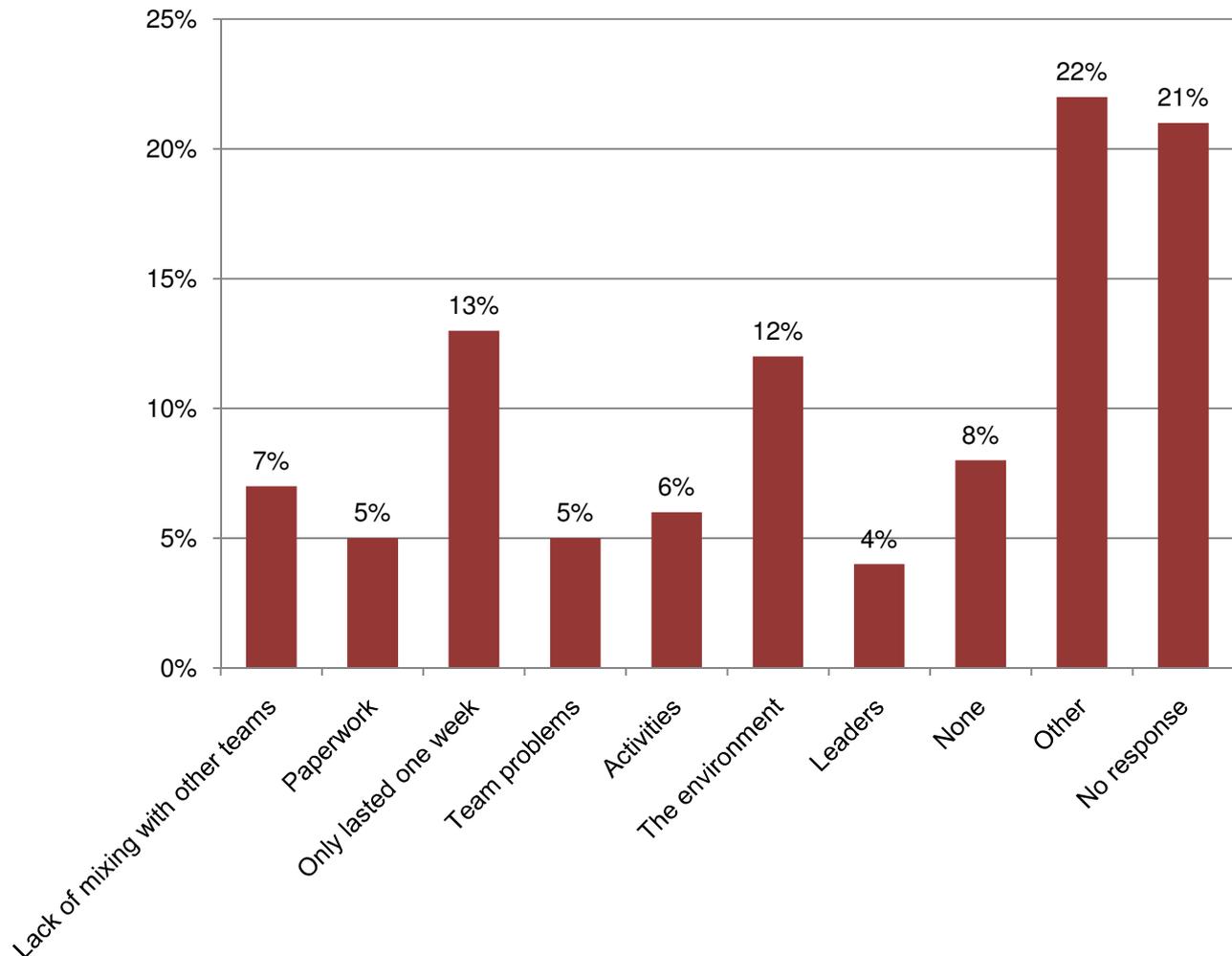
There was also suggestions that the format of the paperwork (in an A5 ring-binder) is not helpful during the later stages of the Award – as it is difficult to add in your own documents which are invariably A4 in size!

RECOMMENDATIONS:

→ Loch Eil should remain as a key component of the Award, and the programme itself should remain largely unchanged. It is highly rated by school champions and participants alike, and is successful in constructing well rounded teams.

→ The paperwork carried out during the Loch Eil week should be rationalised to ensure that it has a clear purpose and objective.
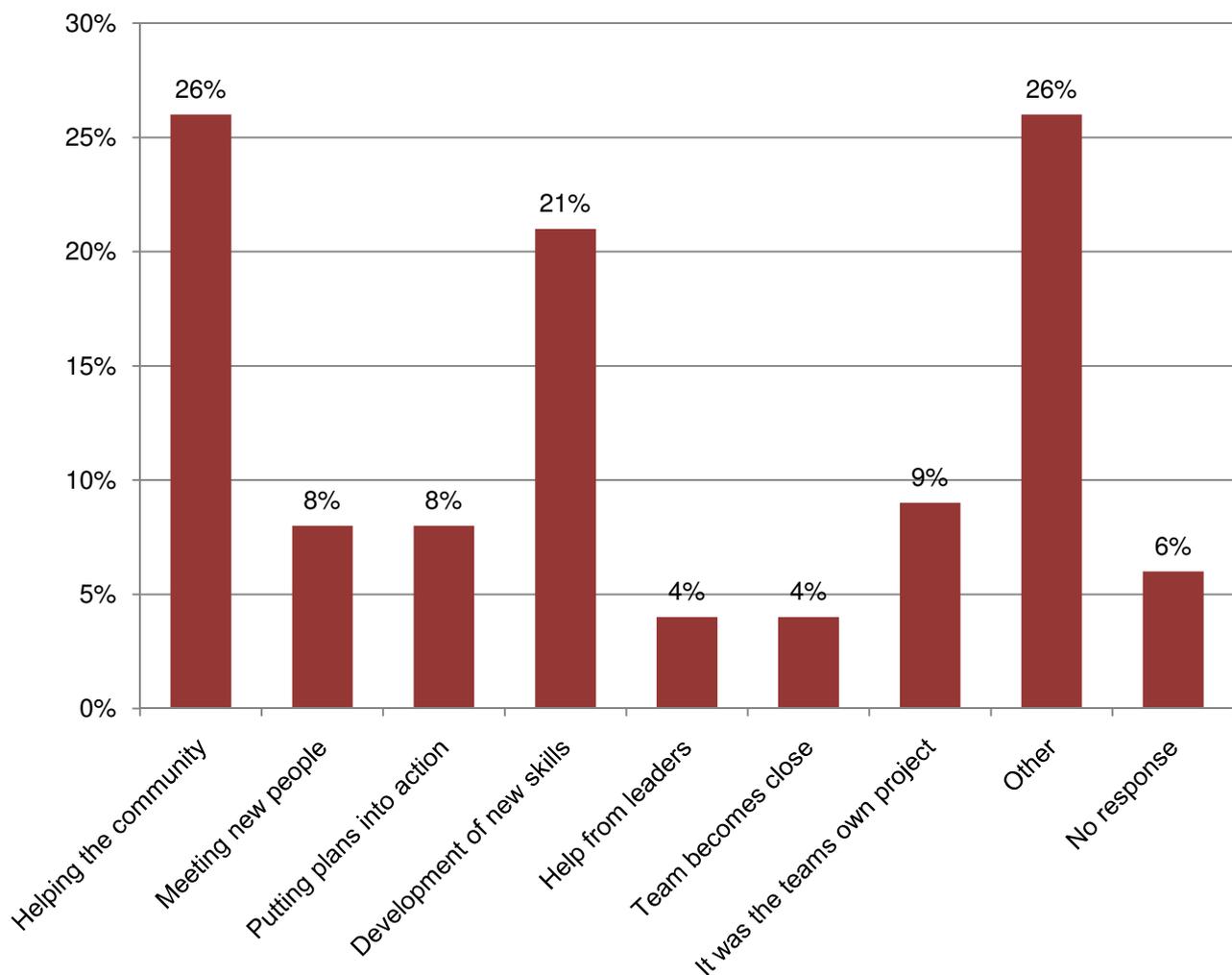
7.3 COMMUNITY PROJECT PHASE

From all the responses to the questionnaires and further discussion in focus groups, it is clear that the community project phase is not recognised as a key component of the Award before this phase is commenced. Many participants did not know what this stage would involve or what was expected of them. Many believed that this stage was far more challenging than they had originally expected, and found this difficult to cope with at a time when they were also studying for examinations and applying for college and university.

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"didn't have a clue what we were doing"

"a lot more work than you first expect"

</div>

For some, this made the challenge more worthwhile, but for others, this turned the Award into a difficult experience.

Positives of the Community Project Phase

| Category	Percentage
Helping the community	26%
Meeting new people	8%
Putting plans into action	8%
Development of new skills	21%
Help from leaders	4%
Team becomes close	4%
It was the teams own project	9%
Other	26%
No response	6%

A key finding from participants both in the questionnaire and from focus group feedback was that the period of time between completing the Loch Eil phase and actually carrying out the community project was too long. 21% of respondents stated that they lost motivation during the six months of planning and organising of the project.

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"the planning phase for the community projects was very difficult
and too long, so we all became a bit bored with it".

</div>

"I just felt like it was taking forever to get organised and wanted to get on with it"

Some participants suggested that a mid-term activity session, allowing the fun and enthusiasm experienced at Loch Eil to be repeated would keep the team motivated throughout the project planning phase.

Negatives of the Community Project Phase
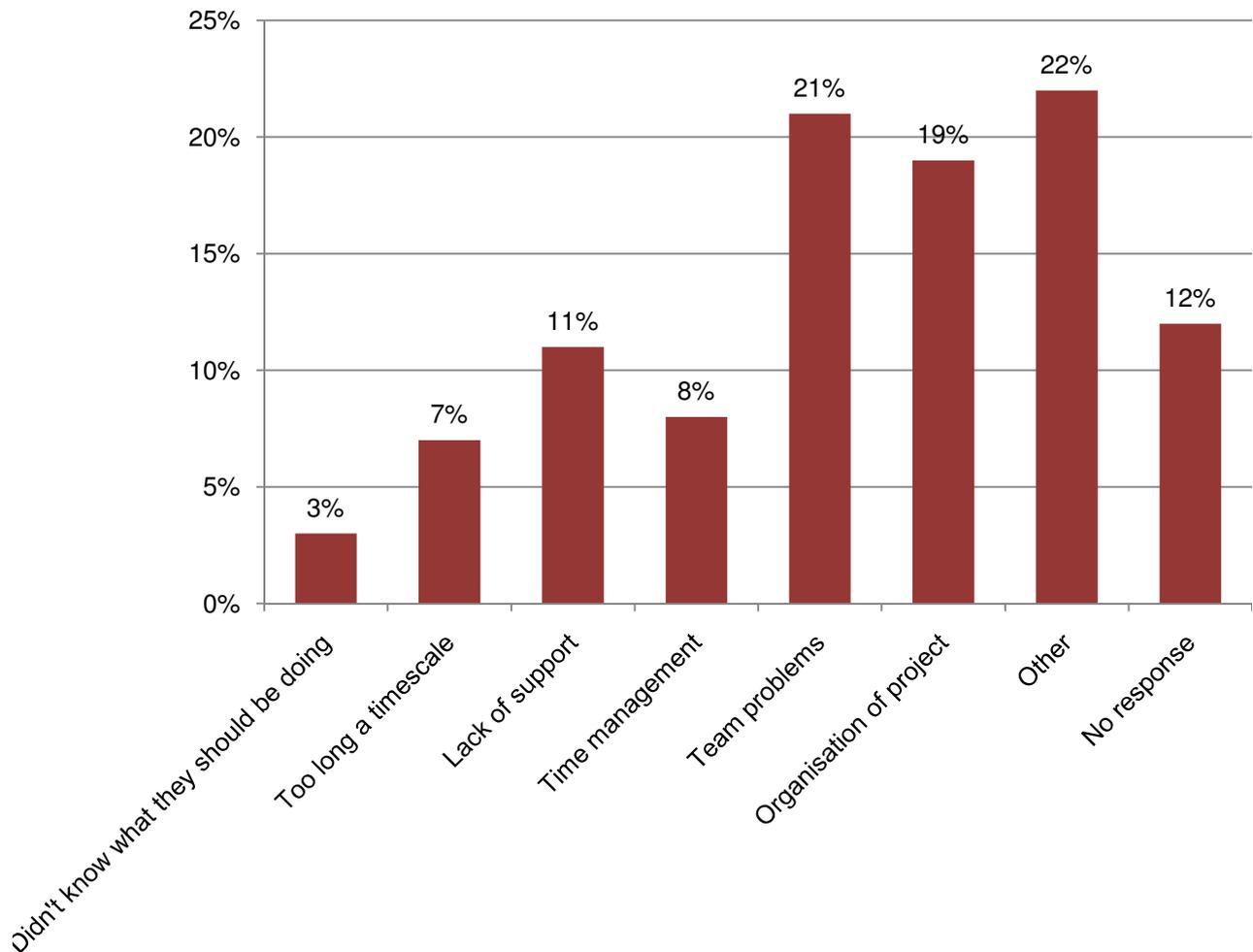
Respondents also commented that some teams suffered from a lack of support and guidance at key times in the planning of the project. Some groups only had minimal contact with their Instructor following Loch Eil.

"at times we felt quite neglected"

On the other hand, the participants who did have the support of an Instructor commented that it was very helpful and that the leader was an important part of keeping team morale going.

"our team leader was great at keeping us motivated and was amazing to work with"

RECOMMENDATIONS:

→ It is essential that the enthusiasm and drive which is obviously experienced at Loch Eil is continued into the community project phase. More instructor contact time could achieve this, along with organising an activity day for participants.

→ The support from instructors appears to be patchy. In some cases the support is there and in other cases it does not appear to get through to the participants. The network of instructors should review on a regular basis the progress of every group and ensure that they are on hand to offer support whenever necessary.

→ The timeframe for the community project phase should be reviewed. The motivation of the participants could be increased and sustained if the planning time was reduced and joined with the organisation timescales to form one period consisting of both planning and organisation.

→ The project delivery date should be reviewed to ensure this does not conflict with school examinations, which are the priority.

7.4   AWARDING PHASE

Findings were gathered on both the paperwork completed following the community project and the Award ceremony itself.

Most respondents agreed that the writing up phase of the Award was a good opportunity to look back and evaluate what had been achieved on the Award. 83% respondents agreed that some form of evaluation or paperwork was a good thing.

Thoughts on prize giving:

"Professional"

"Unsure of format"

"Excellent speaker"

"fantastic"

"great atmosphere"

"made you proud of what you had achieved"

"good to catch up with everyone again"

"sad because it is all over now!"

However, many found the paperwork to be slightly tedious and took a long time to complete. Furthermore, many respondents reported that the final review meeting of the team was not successful as some members of the team did not attend as the project was now complete.

"it all dragged on too much after the Award had finished. Felt like everything had been done but we were still being pestered for more of the same feedback".

Most respondents agreed that the prize giving was a great experience and a chance to showcase what they had achieved during their time on the Award.

"good chance for everyone to get together again and it is nice to be recognised"

A small number of respondents and a recurring theme in focus groups responded that they were unsure beforehand of what type of event this would be, i.e. whether it would be like their school prom, or just getting a certificate.

Interviews with the contacts at various community projects showed that some of these members of the community would appreciate an invite to the prize giving to see the participants who worked with them achieve their Award.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

→   Review the paperwork with a view to rationalising it in a way that makes it easy and enjoyable to complete. The majority of participants agree that some form of self-assessment is necessary, so this should not be avoided entirely, but it must be useful to complete.

→   Make clear the format of the evening – consider sending a dress code letter along with invitations.

→   Consider inviting individuals who have supported the Award through the community projects to attend the prize giving ceremony.

7.5   AIMS OF THE AWARD

7.5.1   "Helps to develop the talents of young people"

The Award certainly develops the talents of young people, and in this regard, meets its aim head on.

> *"my self-confidence and ability to deal with challenges increased more whilst taking part in the Award than at any other stage in my life so far"*

Participants were asked to identify the ways in which they benefited from taking part in the Award.

Benefits as listed by participants:

Increased Confidence	85%
Made new friends	90%
New Skills	78%
Leadership Experience	90%
Team working skills	95%

Other benefits as recorded by participants included learning to value other people, increased determination to succeed, patience and being able to work outside of one's comfort zone.

These statistics show that participants feel they benefited greatly in numerous ways by completing the Award and that it set them up with skills and experience for the future.

School champions agreed that the Award develops young people, and all commented that their pupils have gained new skills and developed personally as a result of taking part in the Award.

> *"without a doubt those who go on the course and give a lot to the programme develop hugely in terms of leadership, interpersonal skills and confidence"*

Additionally, parents have commented that their child came back "a changed person" and that the Award has

> *"helped them develop their skills in a way which will remain with them for the rest of their life"*

In the participant questionnaire, feedback was sought from a parent or friend. 52 people responded and of these responses, 56% commented that the participant had increased confidence as a result of taking part in the Award.

Benefits as listed by relatives or friends:

Increase in independence	8%
Increase in confidence	56%
Organisation skills	15%
Made new friends	12%
Learned sense of responsibility	8%
Team work skills	27%
Leadership skills	12%

It should be noted that these benefits were given in response to an open question, and each category was not, therefore given as an option. It is quite likely that had relatives or friends been given specific options, these statistics would be considerably higher.

In this regard, the Award makes a genuine impact on the long term development of individuals, and in this way, it really does offer Leadership for Life.

7.5.2   "Benefits local communities through delivering a project for them"

Local communities have benefited from the range of projects run on their behalf by participants in the Award. Many projects have been carried out in areas which would not otherwise have had such assistance.

"the fruits of our students projects are still around as visible objects or valued memories"

Community projects visited for these findings consistently show that the impact of the Award is overwhelmingly positive and in most cases offers a long term benefit to the local communities.

Undoubtedly there could be small amendments to the project phase (as listed in section 7.3) to allow the participants to get more into the community and offer hands on help when required, but generally the Award offers a real benefit to local communities.

7.5.3   "Addresses sectarianism and other socially divisive influences in a subtle way"

Of those who responded, 70% of participants and 67% of school champions stated that the Award did address sectarianism.

However, this statistic is misleading, as further comments given after this in the questionnaires highlight that presented with a "Yes" or "No" option, they think it does address sectarianism, yet after detailed reflection they are unsure whether it does or not.

Collating the responses to the open question relating to sectarianism, the response shows:

Does the Award address sectarianism?

Yes — 64
No — 30
Not Sure — 14
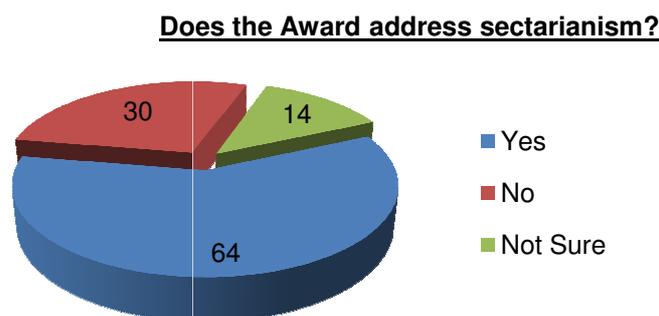
"the Award taught me that everyone is equal, that no-one is lesser or greater than yourself due to their background"

Participants and school champions understand the reasons for the creation of the Foundation and Award, but are not convinced overall that addressing sectarianism is a high profile aim of the Award.

67% of respondents agreed that the Award does bring people from different backgrounds together, although some suggested that they could have gained more from the experience if they were in a team with participants from a different community to their own.

"there could be more emphasis on sectarianism"

RECOMMENDATIONS:

→ If addressing sectarianism and other socially divisive influences is to remain an aim of the Award, it is important to review whether this is being implemented in the best way possible.

→ A review of the groupings within the Award should take place to ensure that wherever possible groups are constructed with participants from different communities and social backgrounds working together.

7.6   SCHOOL CHAMPIONS

School champions raised some specific issues relating to their role in the Award.

All school champions who responded stated that they were glad they were a part of the Award, and believed that it had a positive impact on the lives and development of their students.

<div align="center"><i>"this scheme has probably given me the greatest amount of
'non-teaching' satisfaction over the past decade"</i></div>

The most difficult parts of the job, as reported by school champions, was communicating with the participants, having enough time to meet with the participants, trying to not become too involved in the process and allowing the participants to make their own mistakes.

<div align="center"><i>"the Award has been hugely beneficial to my school"</i></div>

They also suggested that they could be better supported in their role by having far more communication and on a more regular basis with Outward Bound. A quick update email would suffice for this. Largely however, the school champions are happy with the support they currently receive:

<div align="center"><i>"I am delighted with the support from the team. The expertise they have
in this area is enormous and it takes a heavy load from me"</i></div>

RECOMMENDATIONS:

→   Send out a regular (e.g. monthly) e-newsletter to all school champions updating them on the work of groups (not necessarily in their own schools) and progress on the Award generally.

→   Have regular catch-up meetings with all school champions to review the overall direction of the Award.

7.7 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The terms of reference requested that the writers specifically research the motivation of participants and the attraction of the Award to possible participants.

7.7.1 ATTRACTION

Respondents mentioned a variety of reasons why they chose to apply to do the Award. The majority of responses included Loch Eil, making new friends, learning new skills and developing leadership and teamwork abilities. Other responses included missing a week from school, something to put on their C.V. and that the Award looked interesting.

Some respondents gave possible reasons why others, (i.e. their friends), did not apply to participate in the Award. These reasons included the Award "not looking cool", not knowing enough about what was involved in it, forgetting to fill in the form, not attending the assembly where it was discussed and not looking forward to Loch Eil. These responses were small in number, so it has been difficult to judge exactly why people do not apply to do the Award. Additionally, one of the key reasons given during visits to schools, was that the pupils were too apathetic or "lazy" to take part in any long-term extra-curricular activities.

A focus group was convened after the "launch event" which was organised in 2008 for the first time. This involved participants who had yet to complete the Award itself. The general consensus from this group was that the event was a good idea in principle, but that it did not provide any more information than was already available to them. A further focus group of participants who did not attend a "launch event" suggested that such an event was not required.

> "A very valuable scheme but perhaps too demanding for some of those who would most benefit, i.e. pupils from areas of deprivation. Time commitment difficult for disadvantaged young people who often work after school/weekends when meetings etc. take place." (school champion)

When discussing why people from some areas do not apply, such as areas of social deprivation, the response from school champions in those areas was that the programme is perhaps too demanding for pupils who often have other commitments on their time. School champions suggest that many of these pupils are completing important examinations, or their free time is taken up with part time employment, and that they would not therefore consider applying to do the Award.

It seems that very few people outside of those who have been directly involved in the Award know what it is about, what is involved in taking part or the benefits it offers. When a participant was asked what one thing she could change about the Award, she responded that she would like other people to know what she was talking about when she discussed it. This would make finding a community project easier.

The case for increasing the public profile of the Award has been researched. The conclusions were that whilst it is an aim of the Foundation to develop young people's talents, benefit communities and combat sectarianism in a subtle manner, it would be more beneficial for the Foundation to market the Award to a wider audience. This could include presentations to younger pupils in participating schools, a media campaign, press releases regarding the award ceremony and local community projects and generally raising the profile of the Award.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

→ Review the public relations position of the Award with a view to increasing the profile of the Award and the Foundation's work.

→ Review the need for a "launch event" and if this is to be continued, review its purpose and the programme of the event to ensure it encourages participation.

→ Make note of those recommendations listed under Section 7.1

7.7.2 MOTIVATION AND RETENTION

The findings regarding motivation and retention were very closely linked, and, for ease of reference, have therefore been put together.

Did you remain motivated throughout your time on the Award?
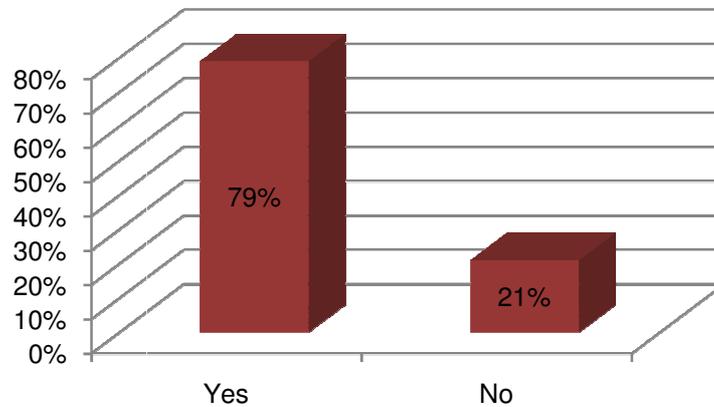
Most respondents commented that they did remain motivated throughout the Award, yet 33% stated that there were times during the Award where they thought about giving up.

Were there any times when you thought about giving up?
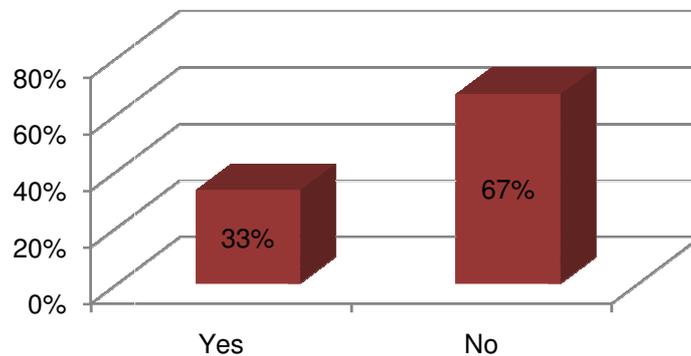
The Award has a drop out rate on average of 9% each year.

36% of respondents commented that they lost motivation during the community project phase. This was due to several reasons, including team members not turning up to meetings or 'pulling their weight' which 24% said was the main issue for them. Some commented that the length of this phase of the Award led to some demoralisation of the team.

38% of respondents commented that Outward Bound could help them stay more motivated. Out of these 36 respondents:

    14   said they wanted more contact with Outward Bound staff
    5   suggested having a big meeting sometime in the middle
    4   wanted group activities like at Loch Eil throughout the year

Additionally, one third of the respondents who did remain motivated throughout the programme reported that this was mainly because of the support that they received from Outward Bound. This demonstrates that where the support is available, it is beneficial and appreciated by the participants.

Some respondents also suggested that getting together with other teams would help them to remain motivated throughout the project planning phase. They suggested that the project forum be moved to the middle of the planning phase or an additional meeting be organised for mid-year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

→   Make note of those recommendations listed under Section 7.3, as this appears to be the period where most of the motivation is lost.

→   Review the project forum to ensure that it offers the best chance of motivating participants and consider organising an additional get-together around Christmas time, perhaps involving some 'outward bound' activities but nearer to Glasgow to reintroduce the 'fun' element into the programme.