

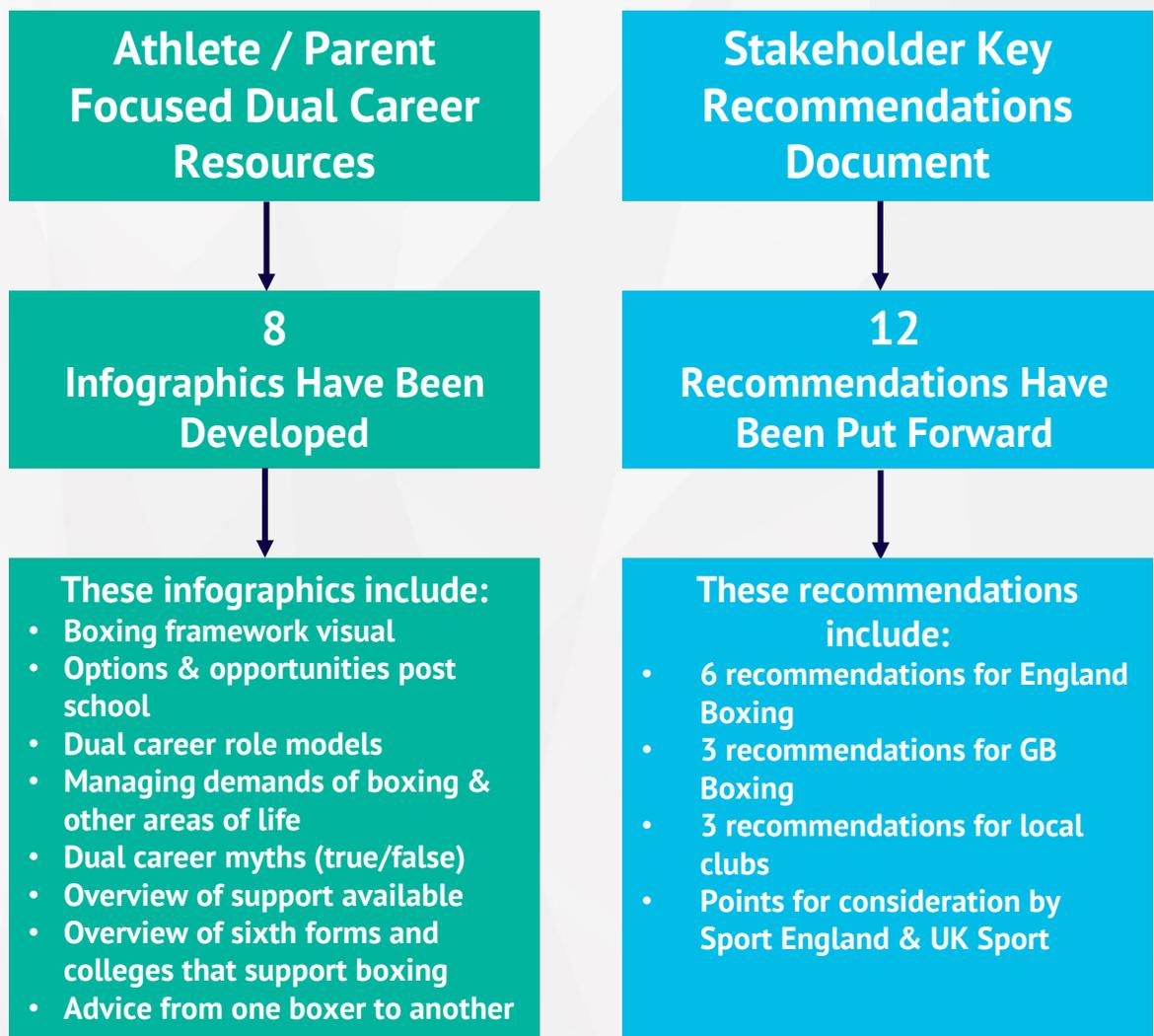
Dual Career Recommendations

England Boxing, GB Boxing, & Clubs



Background of the Project

We were asked by England Boxing to explore boxers' dual career opportunities, perceptions, and experiences. The project aimed to generate two key outcomes:



To achieve the outcomes above, we used a multi-method approach, that included conducting interviews and administering a survey. The breakdown of participants is as follows:



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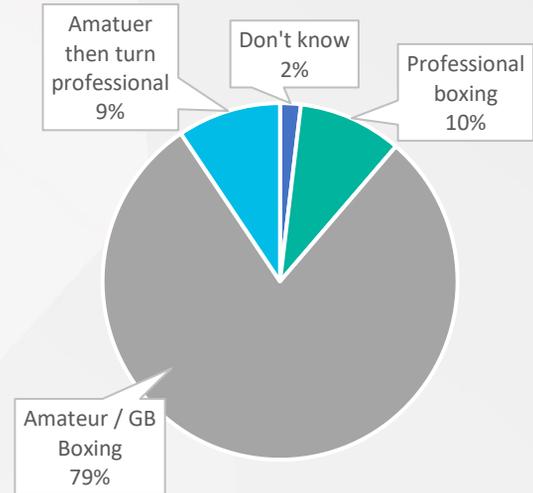
Key Findings

There were some interesting findings from the survey we conducted with 14–15-year-old boxers which impacted the recommendations we made.

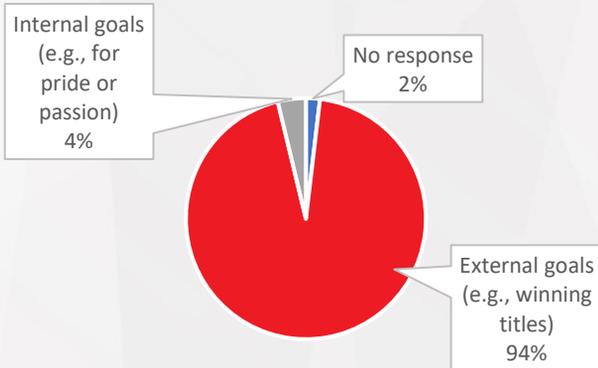
What are your long-term goals within boxing?

When asked this question, the majority (79%) of boxers' wrote goals that related to Amateur boxing or remaining in the GB Boxing pathway (e.g., "Win Olympics", "Box for Team GB in Olympics in 2028"). Only 10% of boxers mentioned goals that related to professional boxing (e.g., "Become pro and win titles", "Turn pro"); whereas 9% mentioned pursuing amateur boxing before later turning professional (e.g., "Go to the Olympics and win Gold, professional boxer", "win Olympics, turn pro")

Boxers' future career plans: amateur vs professional



Types of goals: external vs intrinsic

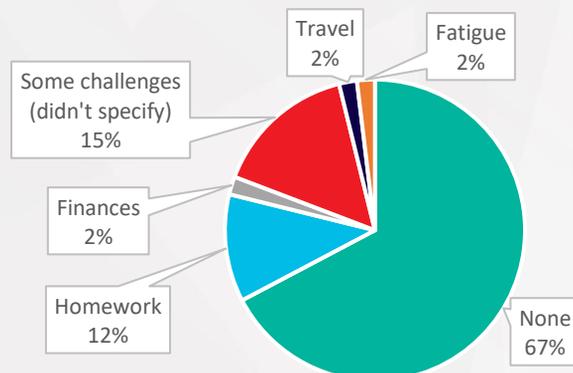


When we further analysed the statements of boxer's goals, it became clear that the vast majority (94%) related to external, outcome goals (e.g., "win titles", "No.1 in the world") rather than just 4% that described intrinsic goals relating to their enjoyment or passion for the sport (e.g., "do myself proud", "be someone's inspiration").

Do you have any challenges managing your boxing training/competitions and school?

While the majority (67%) of boxers said that they had no challenges, homework, finances, travel, and fatigue were identified by the other (33%).

Challenges managing boxing and school



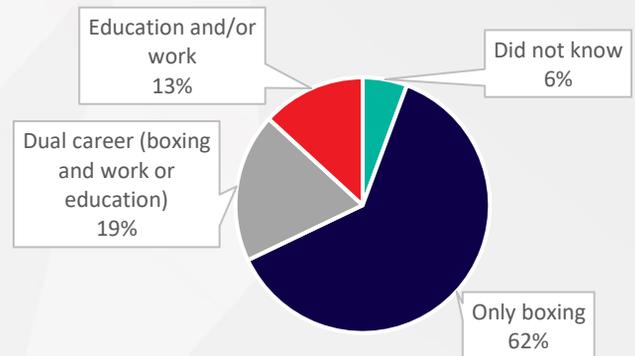
Recommendations for England Boxing

What could be implemented to educate and upskill coaches around the area of dual career?

Throughout the research process, we identified that some coaches were encouraging boxers to step away from education and focus solely on boxing. This is paired with the survey data, which suggests that most boxers aged 14-15 had future plans that only revolved around boxing.

It's important that coaching staff are educated on the importance of boxers engaging in something else outside of just doing the sport, gaining awareness of the benefits a dual career can provide for boxers both now and in the future.

Plans after leaving school



“My coach did say he thinks I should maybe not go to university. “Focus on your boxing and you can come back to the uni side of things in later life or maybe a few years after,” depending on what happens basically. That was his opinion anyway...” (Boxer)

Other coaches we spoke to explained that they felt they had a significant knowledge gap within this area and needed guidance around how to upskill themselves.

“The boxers are influenced by what the coaches say. Sometimes it's the messages that we pass that are really important and as important or more important than an outsider like a lifestyle person... We could probably do with being more educated and upskilled on some of the key messages and information so that we can then educate and help guide and direct.” (Staff Member)



This feedback from boxers and staff members encouraged us to reflect on the most suitable way of educating and upskilling coaches within the area of dual career and athlete personal development:

1. Is there space within the boxing coaching qualifications for some of this information to be shared? Accessing information via coaching qualifications may be an effective way of getting key messages across.
2. Could CPD programmes around key dual career topics be implemented? Creating links with the GB boxing performance lifestyle coach would be a great first step, hearing from someone closely involved in the sport further up the pathway.

Recommendations for England Boxing

Where does DiSE sit within the pathway?

The DiSE programme is a fantastic offer for young boxers aged 16-18, giving them the opportunity to box at a high-level whilst gaining educational qualifications, all within a supportive Academy environment.

It is not completely clear where DiSE sits within the England Boxing talent pathway, i.e., who is this programme being targeted at? Is it England's best young boxers, or is it any young boxer that is part of an England Boxing affiliated club?



Feedback we received from one boxer is that the level of boxing within the Academy would not be as advanced as that within their personal club. As a result of this, this boxer made the decision to not enrol on the DiSE programme.

"I was meant to go to somewhere called the [Name of Academy] Academy... it's the DiSE program through England Boxing... They [other boxers] didn't have as much experience as me, so I felt a bit of-- they call it novices in boxing, but I wasn't at that level, so it didn't really match what I was doing." (Boxer)

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Some questions worth reflecting on are as follows:

1. Who would England Boxing like the DiSE programme to be targeted at?
2. How do boxers find out about the DiSE programme? Are certain boxers encouraged to apply by England Boxing or club staff?
3. How are decisions made around which applications are accepted? Are these decisions made by the Academies themselves, or do England Boxing feed into this process?
4. Is there any support in place to guide boxers through the application process?

Recommendations for England Boxing

Could England Boxing run a social media campaign to promote dual career?

England Boxing has a good social media following across multiple platforms, including the newly launched TikTok account. The social media accounts are powerful tools for sharing important messages to young boxers across the country.

When it comes to dual career, social media can be a fantastic way of sharing a diversity of success stories, both in the boxing ring as well as outside of it.

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1. Could England Boxing run a dual career week via social media where a different boxer takes over each day to share a 'day in the life' of their dual career pathway?
2. Can social media platforms be used to highlight boxers' successes in other areas of life, i.e., education/work?
3. Can messages via these platforms be packaged appropriately to emphasise why this dual career information is important to them, i.e., how will doing a dual career make them a better boxer? 'Real-life' stories are the best way to do this!



Recommendations for England Boxing

Could more information be shared via video formats?

Boxers explained that they would benefit from key information being shared via video formats. This links nicely to the above recommendation around social media, with ready-made platforms for video content to be shared.

“I think videos and stuff like that is good because to me, if you just give me something to read... I’m a visual learner, I feel like. I feel like a lot of sport people are-- we’re not-- education-- made to be sitting in a classroom and reading. It doesn’t get into us. I think we just say whatever to it.”(Boxer)

Boxers also explained that they benefit from ‘real-life’ examples being shared. Sharing dual career success stories via an official England Boxing video would be hugely impactful.

“I think if you actually use an actual example that people might know, I think it’ll make it more real and think, “Actually that could happen to me.” No one thought it would happen to that person but it does.” (Boxer)



This could include boxers at different levels who have had successes as an athlete but have also followed different dual career pathways, i.e., armed services, university, coaching, vocational training, the services, business etc. Many young boxers will be surprised by what their sporting role models have achieved away from boxing.

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1. Could England Boxing create a boxing dual career video, highlighting the success stories of both current and former boxers?
2. Could clips from the video be shared via social media to gain greater reach?

Recommendations for England Boxing

Can connectivity be developed between boxers' schools/employers?

For athletes to successfully balance a dual career, it's important that both worlds (education/vocation and boxing) have an understanding of each other, and the demands placed upon the individual within each environment.

Within boxing, it will be a club's responsibility to develop links with the schools/employers their young boxers are connected to. However, there is something England Boxing could do to support this process:

1. For boxers identified by the England Boxing system, could an official letter be developed to share with schools, apprenticeship providers, and employers to make them aware of the individual's involvement in the elite side of the sport? This will increase understanding from these parties around the boxer's commitments outside of the school/work environment.

**"Maybe if people had an employee at the same time as they were going with England Boxing, England Boxing could contact their employer and create a work-life partnership between the two."
(Boxer)**

In addition to the benefits outlined above, for those boxers who may not be interested in pursuing their studies, or any other pursuit outside of boxing, creating links between the two environments may act as a catalyst for boxers better engaging with school/college education.

The survey responses also identified that some boxers (approx. 10%, 5/53) were not attending school, despite being under 16. Developing positive links between boxing and school, or highlighting the importance of education, could encourage boxers to remain in school during compulsory education.

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Recommendations for England Boxing

Are methods of communication used by England Boxing accessible to all?

An important part of our research process was identifying the most appropriate (and less appropriate) methods of communicating with boxers. This helped us to identify the following questions around wider England Boxing communication with athletes, parents, and club staff:

1. When signing up for events, being nominated for support, or sharing key messages, how is this information communicated? Are these methods of communication accessible for all?
2. What messages are shared with club coaches? Are they aware of the processes to follow if they have talented young boxers within their setup?
3. Is there transparency in the selection and application processes for financial aid projects such as 'Backing the Best' or 'SportsAid Awards'?

"A boxing club, it's run by one guy or one girl. They do everything. There's not a committee. There might be on paper sometimes, but it's not usually a committee of individuals that are pushing things and driving things and running it. If that one individual is not aware that TASS is available out there, for example, and they have a really talented boxer, then that boxer is not going to access it because that boxer relies on that coach for their knowledge and well, it's everything."
(Staff Member)

"Picking up the phone and meeting people in person, there's no shortcut. There's no other shortcut..." (Staff Member)



The newly launched apprenticeship programme appears to offer a fantastic opportunity for young people to develop educationally and vocationally. Linking to the above, it is important that this opportunity is showcased through various communication channels, meeting the needs of those athletes within the pathway who may be interested.

1. How is the apprenticeship programme being promoted? Could part of the programme be for the apprentices to showcase the offer during the next period of recruitment?

Recommendations for GB Boxing

How is the transition from England Boxing to GB Boxing supported and facilitated?

Throughout the interview process, it became apparent that a key transition these young boxers may experience is from the England Boxing pathway into the GB Boxing setup. Some boxers will be striving to experience this transition, however, it may not occur as soon as they're eligible. Coaching staff explained that many boxers who aren't selected to progress into the GB setup at 18+ choose to turn to the professional side of the sport.

“18 years of age at the moment is a massive, massive, massive risk to the future Olympic status of GB Boxing, if I'm honest, because if they don't make it to GB Boxing at 18, when it turns senior, certainly within a 12-month span, a lot of them are quite happy to turn professional and pursue that professional career route.” (Staff Member)

For those boxers that are chosen to transition onto the GB setup as soon as they're eligible, this transition doesn't come without its challenges. For some boxers, the transition from England Boxing to GB Boxing is overwhelmingly quick, not giving athletes the opportunity to understand the impact this will have on their wider lifestyle.

“Because you're expected overnight to be a full time athlete. Well, the reality is you've gone from being a full-time employed person training as a hobby, trying to make everything work because it's dual strategy, to then full-time athlete. It's a really difficult place. To get this transitional piece, I think it's going to be hugely beneficial for the long-term future of these athletes.” (Staff Member)

Due to the speed of this transition, some boxers were contemplating dropping out of education to pursue the sport within the GB setup. Greater support for the transition, as well as more gradual integration into the GB Boxing system, would provide boxers with the opportunity to better manage their educational/vocational decisions.



Recommendations for GB Boxing

How is the transition from England Boxing to GB Boxing supported and facilitated?

In addition to the above, some boxers also explained the challenges that came with waiting to hear about the outcomes of their GB assessments and the impact this had on their educational/vocational decisions. Some boxers were putting off having key discussions and developing applications until they knew the outcome of their GB assessments, potentially missing crucial decision-making periods, i.e., university application deadlines.

“I don't know yet, I'm not sure. I know it's a bit last minute... I'm waiting on GB. We were told that we were going to get a response back from them sooner, but we haven't. I think they're waiting until the nationals are over. Then we find something out then. I'm literally just waiting on that to make my decision [whether or not to go to university].” (Boxer)

The proposed U-22 programme, acting as an apprenticeship onto GB, will go a long way in mitigating against the three challenges identified above.

1. Within the GB Boxing setup specifically, how will this programme be utilised to generate the best outcomes for boxers transitioning between the two programmes?
2. What can be implemented to help these U-22 transition programme boxers become integrated into GB?
3. What considerations are in place around the timescales of boxers' educational/vocational decisions when running GB assessments, facilitating the U-22 programme, and determining who to invite onto the GB programme?



Recommendations for GB Boxing

Could lifestyle support be implemented within the England Boxing setup, with support from the GB programme?

Throughout the interview process, boxers within the GB setup spoke very positively about the lifestyle support they had access to. For some boxers, access to this support transformed their views of themselves and helped them to understand the impact that other areas outside of boxing could have on their life.



“We did this thing actually at GB not long ago. We had to a timeline of our life. We'd start with-- It's like, "Oh, I did this in my job and I did the ambulance." I looked at mine and mine was literally boxing, boxing, boxing. There was no other things to it. I was thinking, "Oh my God." (Boxer)

From our understanding, aside from the TASS nominated boxers, no other boxers that are part of the England Boxing programme have access to lifestyle support. It is clear from the interview and survey processes that many young boxers would benefit from having access to this type of support prior to qualifying for/being invited into the GB setup. Part of this support could be that it is a requirement for all boxers to develop their own personal development plan. For some boxers, this support could transform the direction their life takes. This raises the following questions:

1. Could the boxers that are part of the U-22 transition programme have access to lifestyle support? Guidance from the GB Boxing lifestyle practitioner would be an essential support mechanism for boxers due to make a number of key transitions (within and outside of boxing).
2. Could stronger links be created with the GB Boxing performance lifestyle advisor and England Boxing? The provision of monthly workshops, for example, would be an effective first step in integrating lifestyle support within the England Boxing programme.

Recommendations for England Boxing Affiliated Clubs

Could clubs further promote funding opportunities?

Throughout the interview process, the majority of boxers mentioned a desire to know more about different funding opportunities they may be able to access to facilitate their boxing careers.

**“Well yeah, that would help if I could get some financial support that would help definitely. But as of yet I haven’t had none of that.”
(Boxer)**

Many local governments and councils provide funding opportunities for young athletes. Having access to an overview of what support may be on offer in the local area and promoting these offers to the relevant boxers would be beneficial.

For those clubs that have athletes on the England Boxing pathway, it’s important to understand that wider support may be on offer, e.g., TASS, SportsAid, Backing the Best. It’s important for clubs to liaise with England Boxing around these support packages, ensuring they’re in a good position to showcase their boxers as potential recipients of this support when nomination periods come around.



1. Could clubs create a club-specific funding handbook and poster with an overview of the local funding opportunities that may be available?
2. Could clubs liaise with England Boxing around the wider support that may be available for high performing boxers? It’s important for clubs to be aware of the application processes for these types of support, ensuring that their boxers have access to the appropriate guidance when filling out forms, submitting information etc.

Recommendations for England Boxing Affiliated Clubs

Could clubs utilise local networks and connections to highlight educational/vocational opportunities?

As was described within an interview, the communities based around local boxing clubs can be extremely beneficial for sharing development opportunities (educational/vocational) with boxers within the club. This may be sharing information about qualifications, apprenticeships, work opportunities, volunteer roles etc.

“In my club, I have somebody who works at [company]. If he's got apprenticeships coming up, he'll come in and bring stuff in like that for the lads and let them know and print stuff out. We do quite a lot of things like that... If we know of any stuff going like forklift qualification or just things like that... They'll always know somebody who'll work somewhere who will get the lads on... I would say probably about maybe 70% of the clubs would be that way.” (Staff Member)

This encouraged us to reflect on the ways to best utilise these local networks and connections, heightening the benefits the local boxing community can have on young athletes.



1. Could clubs create formal systems for these opportunities to be shared, e.g., creating an ‘opportunities wall’ within the boxing gym or developing a WhatsApp group where information is shared.



Recommendations for England Boxing Affiliated Clubs

How can clubs better showcase stories of former and current boxers?

Clubs can play a significant role in sharing the successes of current and former club members. Showcasing the journeys of different boxers doesn't have to be restricted to just their experiences within the boxing world, but can also incorporate the pathways they are taking/have taken outside of the sport too.

"My coach has always told everyone about me, being at university, at the club and everyone's really supportive there, that's nice." (Boxer)

Sharing the different dual career pathways taken by current and former members can help to create important role models for younger boxers, showcasing what can be achieved within and outside the boxing ring. It's important that all dual career success stories are shared!

1. To effectively share the dual career journeys of current and former members, could a 'wall of fame' be developed within local boxing gyms showcasing boxing and educational/vocational successes?
2. In addition, could local social media channels be utilised to share these stories?

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Lessons Learned from this Research

Points for consideration by Sport England & UK Sport

Lessons Learned from this Research

As researchers and practitioners conducting this research, a number of important lessons were learned, specifically around how we communicate with athlete groups. A key question that we propose is - 'do we need to adapt our communication styles and methods to meet the needs of the individuals we are sharing messages with?'

An example of this from the research is our method of gathering participants to take part in the interview process. Our first point of contact was via email. After little success with this method, contact with potential participants was made via one of the England assistant coaches who has a good working relationship with the boxers. From here, contact was made via WhatsApp with almost immediate responses from athletes and parents.

Are our methods of communication accessible to all?

This raises the following points for consideration by Sport England and UK Sport:

1. When athletes are nominated for support, or when key messages are shared, how is this information communicated? Are athletes given the opportunity to share their preferred method of communication?
2. Are application processes (i.e., for Backing the Best) assessable to all? How are these offers and application processes promoted? What support is in place for those who may struggle with accessing emails, completing application forms etc?
3. To what extent are key members of the athlete support network (i.e., Club Support Officers) linked into these processes so suitable support can be provided if required?
4. Could closer links be made with NGBs around better understanding the demographics of different sports and the needs of the athletes within these sports?

The points for consideration outlined above aren't just relevant in the boxing community. Methods of communication from stakeholders should be tailored so they are accessible to all athletes regardless of their sport, age, socio-economic background, levels of literacy etc.





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