

## Notes from NICAS seminars 2010 Pete Stacey

### Questions to whole seminar

#### **1. What percentage of teaching happens with under-18s?**

**Swindon** - Most delegates agreed that 80 – 90% of classes are for under-18s

**Ratho** – the figure broadly identified was as above for Swindon.

**Manchester** – Interestingly the average appeared to be most delegates felt that teaching happens with about 70% of classes for under-18's with a few running classes for purely under-18's.

**Leicester** – Between 50% and 80% of the walls present at the seminar teach to under-18s, with a few teaching 100%.

#### **2. What interest might there be in an award for under 18s, say as an assistant supervisor?**

**Swindon** - On balance there was a majority in favour of such an award. Just over half the delegates use under 18s, **BUT** only after they have been with them for a number of years, and have been observed and developed by the staff at the wall. They are often involved in junior clubs both as members and as junior leaders. They often have 15/16 year olds asking about instructing qualifications

**Ratho** – The adult age in Scotland is 16, but generally no-one under 17 has any responsibility in an assistant role; however an award would be welcomed. It would need to be based on experience, ability, progressive skills development and defined responsibilities.

**Manchester** – most delegates felt they were using under-18s as peer mentors on kids clubs, or as part of the YP D of E award. They also felt that often under 18s staff have come through clubs, as for the Swindon comments. It was also felt that Assistant Coaches could be parents or over 18s as well. Over half the delegates wanted it.

**Leicester** – About half the walls wanted an award for under-18s; they recruit on the basis of knowledge of the yp, and are used as assistant coaches or supervisors on classes etc

**Note from PS** - Such an award would, if developed, be used heavily by people like PGL and colleges offering National Diploma courses to 16/17 year olds – I could put 70 students a year through such a programme along with running NICAS as I currently do with these groups. Also such an award would fit into the JSLA and CSLA schemes run by SLUK.

#### **3. What might be the key skills walls might want to see in coaching schemes?**

**Swindon & Ratho** commented on much the same points:

Different skills for different age and ability groups

Progression

Working with age groups over a prolonged period of years

Training/lesson plans for short/long term development

**Manchester** – mentoring of younger peers; 1:1 coaching but training and clear defined briefing was essential here; parents/Family belaying sessions; needs to be able retain info and also refer back up if unclear – difficult in this age range where perceptions of ability and skill can be different to the reality. Any senior staff or coaches would need good training to train young/assistant coach courses.

**Leicester** – emphasis was made here on the difference between training and assessment that would need to be clear about remit and management of such award holders not to push them too soon.

**4. Walls invest in one and two day training for staff (e.g. FUNdamentals, CWA etc). Would they invest in three, four or five day courses? Or are more modular courses more desirable?**

**Swindon & Ratho** made similar comments:

Both 4/5 day courses and modular delivered in regions were felt to be more desirable than necessarily going to just the National Centres.

**Manchester** – lots wanted modular courses locally, some wanted both Modular and block, very few wanted block courses. Also more on disability awareness, coaching processes, using the OEAP LOtC cards. Most delegates had done the Fundamentals course.

**Leicester** – lots wanted modular and block courses. There was brief discussion of how these might include or recognise APL/RPL issues and experiences. When pushed for ideas, people offered suggestions ranging from Neil Gresham's courses, the BCU coaching processes course, motivational and disabilities workshops. Paulo Fubini highlighted the Italian coaching scheme he had attended as another example of how it might be delivered.

#### **Other issues**

Issues of introducing leading – currently ABC & NICAS say 14 is the minimum age for this to begin. They are trialling in a few centres about teaching leading from 12 as they believe it can be done (on walls) and would bring the UK into line with Europe where it has been 12 for some time. This would enable youth athletes to compete and prepare for competition at the same age as European competitors.

However, it was felt that there was no reason to reduce the age for lead belaying from 14 to 12 at the same time. It was felt that the issues of lead belaying, coordination and importantly concentration were still a problem for 14 year olds.

The leading level at level 4 NICAS was a big jump from L3 and there was discussion about a re-organisation to have something like simulated leading in between at level 3a.

### **The role of the Technical Adviser & the NICAS scheme - workshops feedback**

Attendees from all workshops made similar comments:

Consideration should be made for a skill-set or checklist of criteria for walls and those acting as or wishing to become Technical Advisers to be developed. Knowledge & experience of working on climbing walls, was felt to be essential. TAs should be practitioners of working on walls and be able to clearly demonstrate their understanding of the NICAS scheme.

It was discussed that currently some TA's are not doing their job properly as application forms were read and signed by a TA confirming the wall's suitability; however it was apparent from some applications that the TA had not seen the wall or discussed the suitability with the managers. It was highlighted from NICAS that the TA was not just a signature and taking the money. There was an expectation of more involvement and fuller awareness of the NICAS requirements and the scheme itself. It was suggested that NICAS take up these issues formally with the AMI.

The issue of the role and involvement of the TA at the wall in developing and approving methods of teaching, leading etc especially for level 3 and 4 courses was discussed. The TA needs to be much more informed and involved in agreeing the methodology and process for teaching leading.

Overall, there was agreement that the TA should perhaps also attend the NICAS induction workshop alongside the wall staff, and ideally should have completed a FUNdamentals workshop as well.

There was interest in a TA workshop being developed probably between NICAS, ABC and AMI along with perhaps a register of TA's. There was some concern that this might be a 'closed shop' but it was also pointed out that if suitably experienced and can demonstrate this, then this concern would be allayed. One comment made was that perhaps a TA should be a CWA/CWLA provider as this would provide some easy evidence that they are current on walls.

In support of this statement there was much discussion about the wider role of a TA for a wall; it is clear that there is a desire to know more about the role. It was also clear that the older more 'traditionally experienced' MIs were less experienced about the issues regarding walls, whilst younger MIs who have grown up on walls or have been involved very much as a user or wall staff member had sometimes more knowledge about the fine detail regarding wall safety, usage and management. A parallel here is that the ropes course industry now recognises an ERCA trainer as being suitably qualified to provide technical advice to the same standard as a MI.

Pete Stacey