

TITLE: Work-based Learning Project (Standard)

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Project Proposal and report 10541 (without List of Abbreviations, Recommendation and References)

Evaluating the Organisational Impact of Leadership Coaching:

A Mixed-Methods Case Study of Leadership Capabilities, Culture enhancement, Motivation and Retention. This research is a pilot and will be conducted in the Advisory Department.

Leadership capabilities include:

- communication
- conflict management
- emotional intelligence
- decision-making
- relationship management

Organisation values:

Collaboration, Leadership, Excellence, Agility, Respect, Responsibility

Name: Cristina-Laura Novotny

Student Number: 2016913

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
1. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	3
2. PROJECT PROPOSAL.....	3
3. INTRODUCTION.....	7
4. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
5. METHODS.....	12
6. FINDINGS.....	16
7. CONCLUSION.....	35
8. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	36
9. REFERENCES.....	38
10. ATTACHMENTS.....	40

1. List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
GROW	Goal, Reality, Options, Way Forward coaching model
HR	Human Resources
ICF	International Coaching Federation
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
UWTSD	University of Wales Trinity Saint David

2. Project Proposal

2.1. The context

This project is conducted within the Advisory function of a large professional-services organisation in Central Europe. The organisation operates in a competitive, client-facing environment, where managers are responsible for technical delivery, regulatory compliance, complex engagements, team leadership, and business development. In this context, leaders must show agility, commercial awareness, and responsibility for performance, client relationships, and market responsiveness, on top of technical expertise. Leadership effectiveness therefore influences team performance, client trust, and wider business outcomes.

Historically, leadership development took place mainly through practical experience, feedback, performance reviews, and mentorship. These approaches supported learning through everyday practice, which reflects work-based learning theory that views professional capability as shaped by participation, social interaction, and context-specific experience rather than formal instruction alone (Billett, 2001; Gray et al., 2004). However, as organisational complexity and leadership expectations increased, there was growing recognition that development needed to be more structured and intentional.

In 2024, a formal Leadership Coaching Programme was introduced to complement existing development mechanisms. The programme was positioned differently from mentoring or

training. Rather than transferring expertise, it focused on goal clarity, reflective inquiry, accountability, and behavioural application. This is consistent with coaching as a developmental process that supports reflection, self-awareness, and the translation of insight into action (Moon, 2004).

The programme was designed as a structured five-to-six-month process comprising eight sessions. It included an introductory contracting phase, a middle working phase, and a formal closure stage. A defining feature was the use of structured three-way meetings between the coach, the coachee (manager), and the Responsible Partner to align on the core SMART objectives, review progress mid-programme, and assess outcomes at completion.

Several coaching models were used flexibly, as leadership development in this professional-services context required both practical action and reflection. GROW provided a goal-focused structure for clarifying objectives, options, and next steps. Kolb supported learning from real workplace experience through reflection, experimentation, and adjustment (Moon, 2004). Integral U added a deeper reflective dimension by helping leaders examine assumptions and how they showed up in complex situations. NAVIGATOR was used to adapt the coaching approach to individual needs. However, coaching research suggests that effectiveness depends less on any single model and more on contextual fit, coaching relationship, and skilled application (Jones, Woods and Guillaume, 2016; Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023; Halliwell et al., 2023).

The programme aimed to strengthen leadership competencies, improve performance through SMART objectives, support reflection and experimentation, build resilience, align behaviour with organisational values, and contribute to broader organisational outcomes such as motivation, retention, teamwork, client satisfaction, and business performance.

Eight senior leaders participated in the programme. Although it had clear aims and structure, its organisational impact had not been systematically evaluated. This project evaluates the extent to which the programme supports leadership effectiveness, organisational culture, motivation, resilience, and retention within the Advisory function.

This project therefore comes at an important stage: leadership development is already treated as a strategic priority, but its effectiveness and longer-term impact now require more systematic evaluation.

Main Research Question:

To what extent does the Leadership Coaching Programme support leadership effectiveness, motivation, resilience, and intention to remain among coached leaders?

Sub-questions include:

1. How does coaching support leaders' career development and team management capability?
2. In what ways does coaching influence team openness, communication, and collaboration?
3. How does coaching affect leaders' motivation, confidence, engagement, and intention to remain?
4. What organisational factors enable or restrict the application of coaching insights?
5. What is the perceived value of the programme, based on qualitative and descriptive quantitative data?

2.2. The Justification

The justification for this project arises directly from the organisational evolution described above. The organisation has invested time, leadership attention, and financial resources into a structured coaching intervention, so its effectiveness needs to be evaluated. In a performance-driven environment, this is important for understanding whether the programme is achieving its objectives and whether adjustments are needed.

The project is also justified because leadership effectiveness is directly linked to team performance, client relationships, and business development. If coaching improves clarity, confidence, and relational capability, it may also influence client trust, team engagement, and commercial outcomes. However, this needs to be explored through evidence rather than assumption.

Research suggests that coaching is more effective when goals are clear and the organisation supports behavioural change in practice (Athanasopoulou and Dopson, 2018). However, there is limited research on the specific contribution of structured three-way meetings. This study therefore explores how such meetings may influence clarity of objectives, motivation, engagement, and implementation of development goals.

Finally, the project supports evidence-based coaching practice and strengthens ethical responsibility in the dual role of coach and researcher. Academically, it adds context-specific evidence from a Central European professional-services environment.

2.3. The intended impact

The intended impact of this project is both evaluative and practical: to assess the programme's effectiveness and produce evidence-based recommendations for future leadership development decisions.

The project will assess impact at individual, relational, cultural, and organisational levels. It will examine whether coaching strengthened leadership competencies, resilience, goal clarity, and behavioural alignment; contributed to feedback, collaboration, psychological safety, and alignment with organisational values; and influenced motivation, retention, client relationships, and business development.

The main practical deliverable of the study will be a set of recommendations for the organisation, to identify which aspects of the programme appear most valuable, which areas require refinement, and what organisational conditions support or restrict the application of coaching learning in practice. They may include recommendations on the use of three-way meetings, the transfer of coaching into team leadership, the use of coaching models in everyday management, and the conditions needed to sustain behavioural change.

The findings are intended to be used by the organisation to decide whether the programme should be continued, refined, or expanded, and to strengthen the alignment between leadership development investment and wider organisational priorities. From an academic perspective, the study will also contribute context-specific evidence on leadership coaching in a Central European professional-services environment.

2.4. The Expected Learning

This project represents an important stage in my professional and academic development. It will strengthen my ability to design and conduct a rigorous mixed-methods evaluation in a live organisational context, integrating qualitative insights with quantitative indicators. It will also deepen my reflexive awareness as an insider researcher, as working both as coach and researcher requires careful boundary management, ethical sensitivity, supervision, and awareness of potential bias, power dynamics, and role complexity. In addition, the project will strengthen my ability to link leadership development interventions to wider organisational outcomes, including client impact and business performance, and to translate research findings into practical recommendations. Finally, it supports my professional identity as an

evidence-based transformational coach by integrating theory, structured research, and organisational practice.

3. Introduction

As outlined in the Project Proposal, this study evaluates a formal Leadership Coaching Programme introduced in 2024 within the Advisory function of a large professional-services organisation in Central Europe. The programme was developed in response to increasing leadership complexity in a client-facing and commercially driven environment, where senior leaders are expected to combine technical delivery with people leadership, client management, commercial awareness, and business development.

Leadership development in this context has historically been shaped through practical experience, feedback, performance reviews, and mentoring. While these approaches remain valuable, the growing complexity of leadership roles created a need for a more structured and reflective development process. The Leadership Coaching Programme was therefore designed to complement existing development mechanisms by supporting goal clarity, reflective inquiry, accountability, behavioural application, resilience, and alignment with organisational values.

The programme was structured over approximately five to six months and included eight coaching sessions. It was supported by three-way meetings between the coach, the coachee, and the Responsible Partner, with the aim of clarifying SMART objectives, reviewing progress, and assessing outcomes. Coaching models such as GROW, Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, Integral U, and NAVIGATOR were used flexibly to support reflection, action planning, experimentation, and adaptation to individual development needs (Grant, 2012; Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004).

Although the programme had clear developmental aims and had been positively received in practice, its impact had not previously been systematically evaluated. Its value had mainly been understood through informal feedback, observation, and professional judgement. This study therefore addresses an important organisational and academic gap by examining the extent to which the programme supported leadership effectiveness, motivation, resilience, and intention to remain among coached leaders.

The research also considers whether coaching contributed to wider relational, cultural, and organisational outcomes, including communication, collaboration, team openness, behavioural change, and alignment with organisational values. This is important because

leadership coaching in a professional-services setting is expected not only to support individual development, but also to influence team leadership, client relationships, and wider organisational effectiveness.

Using a mixed-methods case study design, the project combines anonymous survey data, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group to provide a structured and context-sensitive evaluation of the programme. The aim is to generate evidence-based findings and practical recommendations that can inform future leadership development decisions within the organisation.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Leadership coaching in the wider context

Leadership coaching has moved from being seen mainly as a specialist executive intervention to becoming a more established part of organisational development. This reflects wider changes in the world of work. Organisations now operate in conditions of uncertainty, rapid change, high performance pressure, and increasing concern about burnout, engagement, and retention. In this context, leaders are expected not only to deliver results, but also to manage complexity, build trust, sustain motivation, and respond effectively to change. This helps explain why leadership coaching has become more visible as a developmental response to current organisational pressures.

The international growth of coaching supports this trend. The International Coaching Federation reports that the coaching profession continues to expand globally, with the *2025 Global Coaching Study* estimating annual coaching revenue at US\$5.34 billion and identifying 122,974 coach practitioners worldwide (International Coaching Federation, 2025). These figures suggest that coaching is now widely embedded in leadership and talent-development strategies. ICF also links coaching to leadership development, employee engagement, organisational culture, and transformation, indicating that coaching is increasingly understood as a strategic rather than purely individual intervention (International Coaching Federation, 2025).

This wider context is relevant to my study because the Leadership Coaching Programme was introduced in response to similar organisational pressures: strengthening leadership capability, sustaining engagement, improving retention, and maintaining performance in demanding conditions. In my professional-services setting, leaders are expected to combine commercial judgement, people leadership, client responsiveness, and resilience. Leadership

coaching is therefore relevant not only as an individual developmental intervention, but also as a possible contributor to wider organisational outcomes. This is illustrated by the International Coaching Federation case study *Coaching as a Strategic Enabler of Transformation with Saudi Electricity Company*, which linked coaching with improvements in engagement, psychological safety, retention, internal promotion, leadership effectiveness, and readiness for new roles (International Coaching Federation, 2025a). Such evidence reinforces the importance of examining coaching not only at the level of individual leader development, but also in relation to teams, culture, and organisational performance.

While the international literature establishes the wider relevance of leadership coaching, Czech-context research adds an important local lens. Honsová, Passmore and Brown (2018) examined Czech coaching practice in comparison with wider European coaching trends. Their study is useful because it shows that coaching in the Czech Republic cannot be treated simply as a direct copy of international coaching practice; it is shaped by local professional maturity, organisational expectations, and how coaching is understood and applied in practice. This is directly relevant to this study, because the Leadership Coaching Programme was introduced in a Czech/Central European professional-services environment where coaching had to be practical, credible, and connected to day-to-day leadership challenges. The broader Czech coaching report by Passmore et al. (2018) also positions coaching as an established but still developing professional practice in the Czech Republic, which supports the need for evidence-based evaluation rather than assuming impact. In addition, Pauknerová, Lorencová and Pubalová (2024) show that preferred leadership behaviour in the Czech context is influenced by local cultural and organisational expectations. This matters because the programme was not only developing individual leaders, but supporting leaders in a specific setting where autonomy, accountability, collaboration, role clarity, and trust all shape how leadership is practised. Together, these sources strengthen the rationale for evaluating coaching locally, as its impact depends not only on coaching models, but also on the organisational and cultural conditions in which leaders apply new behaviours.

4.2. Theoretical foundations of leadership coaching and development

The theoretical foundations of this study lie mainly in workplace learning, reflective learning, and experiential learning. These perspectives help explain how leadership capability develops in practice and why coaching may be relevant in organisational settings. According to Billett (2001), learning in the workplace is shaped through participation in everyday practice, while Gray et al. (2004) present work-based learning as integrated in daily organizational activity.

This is important for leadership development because senior leaders often learn through action, responsibility, interaction, and decision-making in context rather than through formal instruction alone.

Reflective and experiential learning provide a further basis for understanding leadership coaching. Moon (2004) indicates that experience does not automatically become learning; rather, learning develops when experience is reflected on, interpreted, and used to guide future action. From this perspective, coaching can be understood as a process that supports reflection, sense-making, and behavioural experimentation. This is especially relevant to leadership development, where individuals need not only to respond to immediate demands, but also to examine assumptions, adapt behaviour, and learn from complex situations.

These perspectives also help explain why leadership coaching often uses a range of models rather than a single method. Goal-oriented approaches such as GROW emphasise structure, action, and accountability. Experiential approaches such as Kolb's learning cycle emphasise reflection on practice and iterative learning. More reflective or transformative approaches, such as Integral U, focus on awareness, perspective shift, and deeper changes in how situations are understood. Together, these approaches reflect different but complementary assumptions about how leaders learn and change.

At the same time, the literature suggests that the evidence is stronger for leadership coaching as a broad developmental intervention than for the superiority of any one specific coaching model. This is important for the present study because coaching effectiveness may depend less on strict adherence to one framework and more on contextual fit, the quality of the coaching relationship, and the readiness of the coachee to engage in reflection and change (Jones, Woods and Guillaume, 2016; Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023). This is consistent with leadership coaching research that emphasises outcomes such as self-efficacy, authentic leadership, and change-oriented behaviour rather than validating one model as universally superior (Halliwell, Mitchell and Boyle, 2023).

A practitioner text such as *The Tao of Coaching* may still be useful, but mainly as a supporting source. Landsberg (2015) highlights the way coaching has become part of mainstream management and leadership practice, especially through practical conversations about goals, feedback, and development. However, it is better treated as an illustrative practitioner contribution than as a core academic source. For that reason, this study is grounded mainly in workplace learning, reflective practice, and research on leadership coaching effectiveness, while drawing on practitioner texts only where they help highlight how coaching has been translated into management practice.

4.3. Evidence on leadership coaching effectiveness

The research literature generally supports leadership coaching as a meaningful developmental intervention, although the evidence base also has limitations. Jones, Woods and Guillaume (2016) found positive effects of workplace coaching on learning and performance outcomes. Cannon-Bowers et al. (2023) also highlighted that workplace coaching is effective for positive organizational outcomes. These studies are important because they support the view that coaching can make a difference, while also showing that its impact is shaped by context, implementation quality, and the way outcomes are measured.

At the individual level, research suggests that coaching can support self-awareness, confidence, self-efficacy, learning, and behavioural change. This is relevant to my study because the outcomes I am exploring include leadership effectiveness, motivation, resilience, and intention to remain. Halliwell, Mitchell and Boyle (2023) are particularly useful because they show that leadership coaching may improve leader effectiveness by strengthening leadership self-efficacy, authentic leadership behaviour, and change-oriented leadership behaviour. This is important because it helps explain not only whether coaching has an effect, but also how that effect may occur.

At the relational level, coaching is often associated with stronger communication, feedback, trust, and collaboration. This matters in leadership settings because the effects of coaching exceed the individual level. Leaders influence others through how they listen, support, challenge, communicate, and respond under pressure. In this study, that is especially relevant because one area of interest is whether coaching affects not only leaders themselves, but also openness, communication, and team dynamics around them.

At the organisational level, the evidence is promising but less conclusive. Coaching is often associated with improved engagement, performance, and organisational culture, and ICF's work on coaching cultures supports the view that coaching may contribute to broader organisational development (International Coaching Federation, 2024). However, much of this evidence still relies on self-report data, internal evaluations, or context-specific programme reviews rather than tightly controlled research designs. This does not weaken the value of such studies, but it does mean that context-rich research, such as the present study, remains important in exploring how coaching is experienced and applied in real organisational settings.

5. Methods

5.1. What Methodology and Methods Are Being Used?

The study was guided by a pragmatic research paradigm, which focuses on selecting methods that best answer the research question (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010). This was suitable because leadership coaching is a complex organisational intervention, and its evaluation benefits from both qualitative and quantitative evidence. The qualitative strand provided depth of understanding, while the quantitative strand provided structured descriptive evidence of perceived change.

Within this overall pragmatic design, the qualitative element was informed by a constructivist perspective. Constructivism recognises that knowledge is shaped through lived experience, reflection, and dialogue rather than discovered as fixed objective truth (Crotty, 1998). This was relevant because the study explored participants' subjective experiences of coaching and how they interpreted its influence on their leadership practice. Leadership coaching itself is also commonly understood as a reflective and dialogical process through which meaning and insight emerge in interaction (Stober and Grant, 2006).

The methodology combined three sources of evidence: semi-structured interviews, an anonymous post-coaching survey, and a focus group. The interviews explored participants' experiences in high level of detail; the survey provided structured indicators of perceived impact; and the focus group validated and deepened themes emerging from the interview and survey data. This supported triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

5.2. Why These Methods?

Semi-structured interviews were selected because they allow participants to explain how coaching influenced their leadership capability, communication, decision-making, motivation, resilience, accountability, and application of learning. Qualitative methods are particularly useful for exploring subjective experience, meaning-making, and reflective learning (Flick, 2018).

The organisational context suggests a more structured evidence to inform strategic decisions regarding leadership development. In this respect, quantitative survey data provide measurable indicators of perception that allow identification of patterns across participants. The survey data adds structure and strengthens the practical value of the findings, it shows

what happened in this specific coaching programme, in this specific organisation. It does not prove that coaching would have the same effect everywhere.

A focus group was added as a validation stage rather than as the main source of data. Its purpose was to test whether the themes identified through the interviews and survey made sense collectively with participants and to explore shared implications for future development of the programme.

Alternative methods were considered but not selected. Experimental, quasi-experimental, 360-degree and longitudinal approaches would have required broader samples, comparison groups, multiple data points or extended timeframes beyond the scope of this pilot. They would also have increased ethical sensitivity in an insider-research context. The chosen design therefore focused on participants' lived experience, descriptive survey evidence, and triangulation.

The aim of this study is not broad generalisation, about leadership coaching in all organisations, but context-specific evaluation. The study seeks to evaluate how this specific coaching programme operates within its particular professional-services environment. The focus is therefore on depth of understanding rather than breadth of coverage.

Overall, the selected mixed-methods case study design provides the most appropriate balance between depth, structure, feasibility, and ethical clarity.

5.3. How Will the Methods Be Implemented?

The study included all eight senior leaders who participated in the Leadership Coaching Programme in the Advisory Department. This group was selected because its members had direct experience of the programme and were therefore best placed to provide relevant evidence about how it operated and what outcomes were perceived. The sample was not intended to be representative of leaders more broadly, but was chosen because it was directly relevant to the specific case being examined. Leaders outside the programme, staff from other departments, and other organisational stakeholders were not included in this phase because they did not have direct experience of the coaching intervention. Participants were invited directly after completion of the programme, and participation was voluntary.

5.3.1. Qualitative Phase

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with each participant following completion of the coaching programme. Interviews will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will explore

leadership capability development, goal clarity, motivation, resilience, accountability, client impact, and organisational enablers or constraints. Interviews will be audio-recorded with written consent and transcribed. Transcripts will be anonymised before analysis.

A pilot focus group will subsequently be conducted to validate and deepen themes identified in the interviews. Its purpose is triangulation and thematic validation rather than primary data generation. It will be positioned as a research activity separate from coaching sessions to minimise role confusion. Because participants were senior leaders discussing their experiences in a group, the focus group needed careful facilitation to help them speak openly and reduce the risk of overly positive or cautious responses.

Since the researcher is also the coach, facilitation by the coach-researcher may influence participants' responses. External facilitation was considered, but the coach-researcher will facilitate the session due to established trust with participants. Preventative measures will include conducting the focus group separately from coaching sessions, using neutral and non-evaluative language, clarifying that the purpose is collective reflection on shared themes rather than evaluation of individuals, and reminding participants that findings will be reported anonymously and thematically.

Qualitative data will be analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

5.3.2. Quantitative Phase

A 20-item anonymous post-coaching survey will be distributed electronically to participants. The survey includes Likert-scale items aligned with the research sub-questions and two open-ended questions exploring perceived mechanisms of change and contextual enablers or barriers. No identifying information will be collected, and response tracking will be disabled.

Quantitative data will be analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and response distributions. Survey findings will be compared with qualitative themes to support triangulation and enhance analytical coherence.

5.4. Ethical Considerations and Insider Research Position

Participation in the study will be voluntary. Written informed consent will be obtained from all participants, outlining the purpose of the research, the right to withdraw at any time without consequence, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality.

The researcher has a dual role as both an internal leadership coach and the researcher conducting the study. This means the research takes place within an insider context. Being an insider has advantages: the researcher understands the organisational culture, the leadership environment, and the practical realities of the workplace. There is already an established level of trust with participants, which can encourage openness and honest reflection.

However, this dual role also creates potential risks. Participants may perceive a power imbalance, even if the coaching relationship is developmental and not evaluative. They might feel cautious about expressing criticism or negative feedback. There is also a risk of social desirability bias, where participants give answers they believe are expected or appropriate rather than fully honest responses. In addition, the researcher may unintentionally interpret the data in a way that reflects personal assumptions or hopes about the programme. For these reasons, it is important to remain aware of these risks and take steps to ensure transparency, fairness, and objectivity throughout the study.

To mitigate these risks, coaching and research activities will be clearly separated. Interviews will be conducted outside coaching sessions, participation will not influence performance evaluation or how the participant is viewed professionally, their career prospects, their role, or their reputation in the organisation. The survey responses will remain anonymous. Findings will be presented in anonymised and aggregated form.

Structured academic supervision will provide an additional ethical safeguard by supporting independent review of research design, coding, interpretation, and reporting. All data will be securely stored and deleted following completion of the study.

5.5. Adverse Outcomes and Risk Management

Potential risks to participants include emotional discomfort when reflecting on leadership challenges and concerns regarding reputational implications. These risks will be mitigated through confidential interviews, anonymised reporting, and clear communication that findings will not be used for performance evaluation.

The research may identify organisational issues, such as unclear roles, workload pressure, or limited support for applying coaching learning. These findings will be presented as opportunities for learning and improvement, not as criticism or judgement.

There is also a risk that, as both coach and researcher, I may be too close to the programme or have personal assumptions about its value. This risk will be managed through reflexive

awareness, clear separation between coaching and research activities, and academic supervision.

Overall, the study is classified as low risk and adheres to professional and academic ethical standards.

6. Findings

6.1. Quantitative Findings: Survey Results

In line with the mixed-methods design outlined in the methods chapter, the quantitative strand of this study used an anonymous post-coaching survey to capture participants' perceptions of change following the Leadership Coaching Programme. The survey was distributed electronically to senior leaders participating in the programme and contained 20 structured items grouped around the main areas of the study: leadership capability, goal clarity and role alignment, motivation and resilience, action and accountability, behavioural change, coaching process impact, and organisational context. Its purpose was not statistical generalisation, but to provide a structured descriptive account of perceived change within this bounded participant group and support triangulation with the qualitative data. This is consistent with the pragmatic methodological approach adopted in the study.

All eight leaders in the programme were invited to complete the survey. Seven responses were received, giving a response rate of 87.5%. All seven surveys were complete, with no missing items. This strengthens the dataset because the findings are based on full responses rather than partial submissions. However, the sample remains very small, so the results should be interpreted as descriptive and exploratory rather than representative or statistically conclusive. As the survey is based on only seven respondents, each response represents 14.29% of the dataset. This means that small differences in answers can noticeably change the percentages, so the findings should be treated as indicative and context-specific rather than conclusive.

A first overall observation is that the response pattern is consistently positive. Across most items, responses cluster in Agree and Strongly agree, with relatively little disagreement. This indicates that participants generally experienced the Leadership Coaching Programme as beneficial. At the same time, the degree of positivity varies across themes. The strongest findings relate to goal clarity, role alignment, communication, conflict management, self-reported behavioural change, and intention to continue career development within the organisation. More mixed findings appear in relation to the regular use of formal coaching models, the visibility of behavioural change to others, identifying the most impactful aspect of

the coaching process, and the extent to which organisational conditions enabled experimentation with new behaviours. The survey therefore suggests clear value, but not in a uniform way across all dimensions.

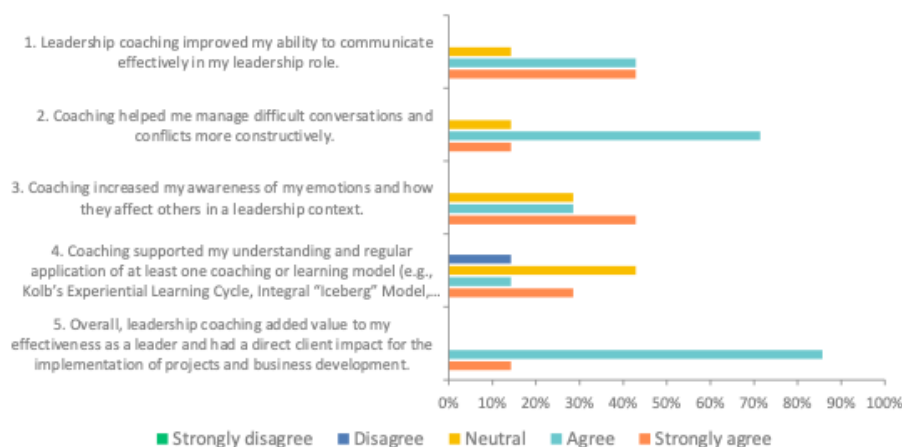
6.1.1. Leadership capabilities

The first question block explored perceived changes in leadership capabilities, particularly communication, conflict management, emotional awareness, and the use of coaching or learning models. As shown in the graph, the clearest positive results in this area relate to communication and conflict management. Most participants agreed that coaching had improved communication in their leadership role, and responses regarding the more constructive management of difficult conversations and conflict were similarly strong, with only a small minority remaining neutral and no disagreement on either item. These findings suggest that participants experienced coaching as particularly helpful in the interpersonal and relational dimensions of leadership practice. In a professional-services environment, where leadership is often enacted through conversations, influence, feedback, and stakeholder management, this is a significant finding.

Responses relating to emotional awareness were also positive, although somewhat less uniform. Most participants reported increased awareness of emotions and their impact on others, while a notable minority remained neutral. By contrast, the weakest item in this block concerned the regular application of named coaching or learning models such as GROW, Kolb, or the Integral Iceberg. Responses here were mixed, with a large neutral group, one negative response, and fewer clear positive responses than in the other items. Analytically, this does not necessarily indicate a weak programme. Rather, it suggests that participants may have benefited more from the reflective coaching process itself than from consciously applying formal models in daily practice. This can be interpreted in light of the distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use, where formal frameworks may be valued conceptually without being explicitly named or systematically applied in practice (Argyris and Schön, 1974). The developmental impact may therefore have been carried more through dialogue, questioning, and experimentation than through explicit model adoption. In this sense, the findings may indicate partial internalisation of coaching principles rather than routine use of formal techniques.

Q1: Leadership Capabilities (Communication, Conflict Management, Emotional Intelligence)

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



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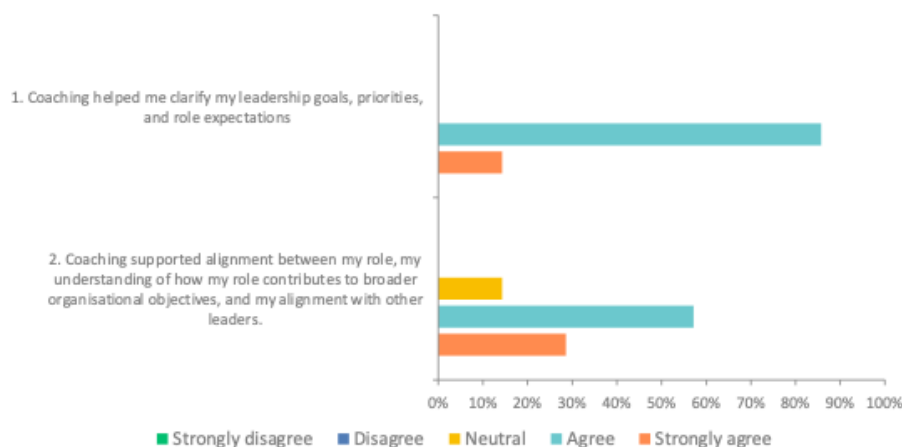
6.1.2. Goal clarity and role alignment

The strongest findings in the survey emerged in the area of goal clarity and role alignment. As illustrated in the graph, responses to the first item were unanimously positive, with all participants indicating that coaching had helped clarify leadership goals, priorities, and role expectations. This was the clearest result in the dataset and suggests that one of the programme's most significant contributions was to help leaders create greater focus around their role and priorities. In a high-pressure environment in which senior leaders must balance commercial delivery, team leadership, and client relationships, this is a particularly important outcome.

The second item in this block was also strongly positive. Most participants reported that coaching had supported alignment between their role, their contribution to wider organisational objectives, and their alignment with other leaders, while only a small minority were neutral and none disagreed. This indicates that the programme was experienced not only as personal development, but also as something that helped participants understand their place more clearly within the wider organisational system. This aligns with coaching literature that positions coaching as a mechanism for enhancing self-regulation, role clarity, and goal-focused performance within organisational settings (Grant, 2012). In relation to the programme's original aims, this is one of the strongest areas of apparent success.

Q2: Goal Clarity and Role Alignment

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



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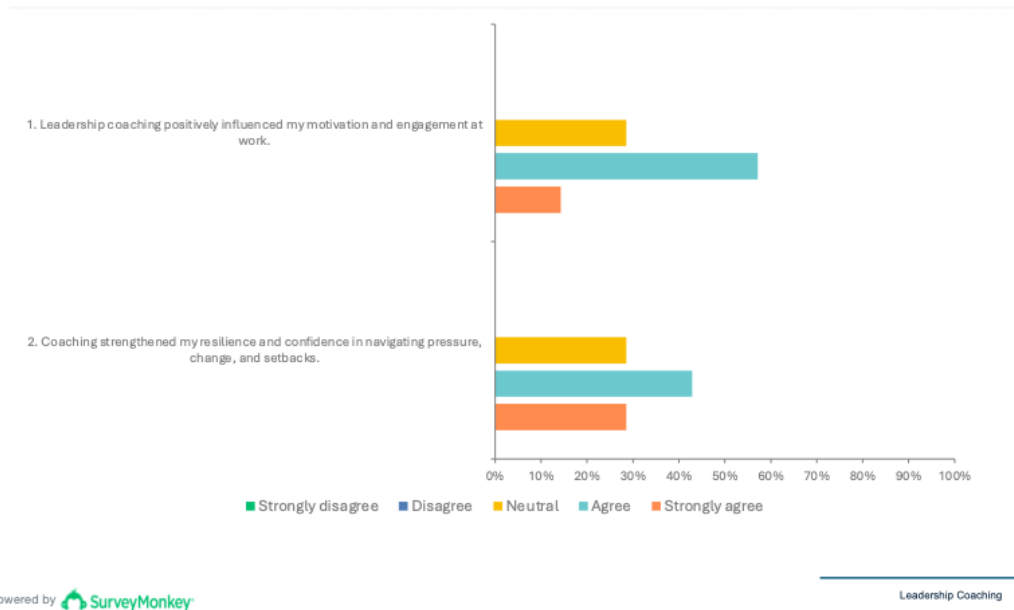
6.1.3. Motivation and resilience

The next block addressed motivation, engagement, resilience, and confidence under pressure. As shown in the graph, responses in this area were positive overall, although slightly less strong than those relating to goal clarity. Most participants agreed that coaching had positively influenced motivation and engagement at work, while a notable minority remained neutral. A similarly positive pattern appeared for resilience and confidence in navigating pressure, change, and setbacks, with most respondents reporting a beneficial effect and no negative responses.

These findings suggest that coaching was generally experienced as supportive of motivation and resilience, though not equally strongly by all participants. The neutral responses are analytically important, as they indicate that while coaching appears to have made a positive contribution, these outcomes were also shaped by wider contextual influences. This is understandable given that motivation and resilience are likely to be affected not only by coaching, but also by workload, culture, commercial pressure, and individual coping capacity. This reflects broader coaching research suggesting that individual outcomes such as motivation and resilience are rarely produced by coaching alone, but emerge through interaction between developmental support and organisational conditions (Theeboom, Beersma and van Vianen, 2014).

Q3: Motivation and Resilience

• Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



6.1.4. Action and accountability

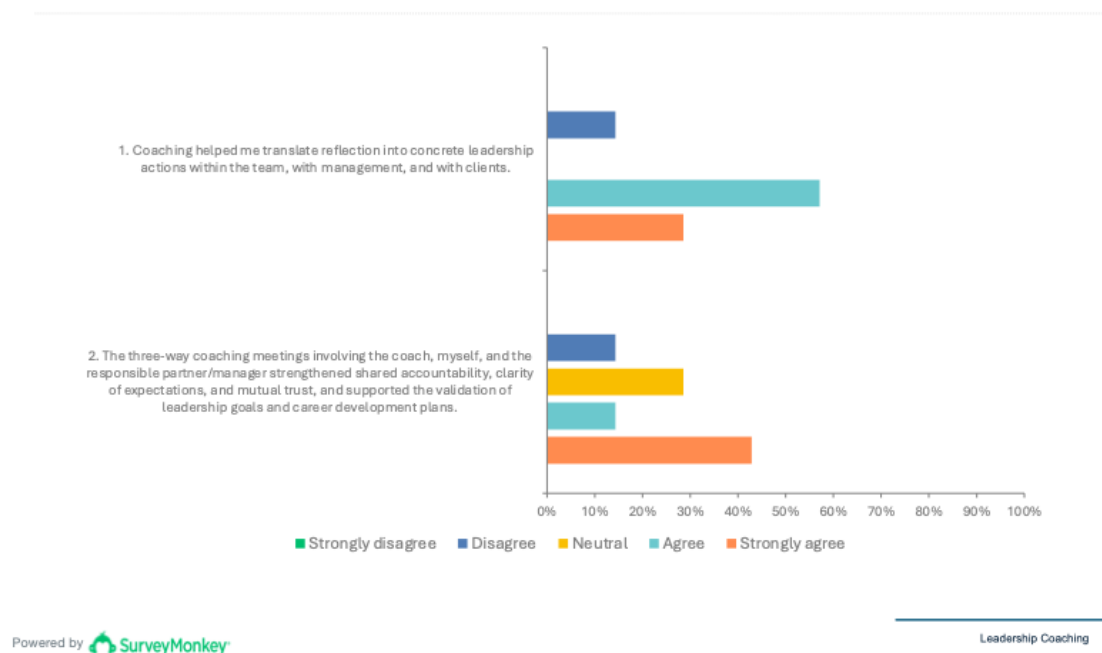
The fourth block examined whether coaching supported the translation of reflection into action and whether the programme's three-way structure added accountability. As illustrated in the graph, responses to the first item were predominantly positive, indicating that most participants experienced coaching as helping them convert reflection into concrete leadership actions within their teams, with management, and in client-facing situations. This suggests that the coaching process was experienced not merely as reflective, but as practically transferable and action-oriented. However, the presence of one negative response remains important, as it indicates that the translation of reflection into action was not equally strong for all participants.

Responses concerning the value of the three-way meetings were more varied. Although most participants evaluated these positively, a substantial minority were neutral, and one participant responded negatively. This suggests that, for some, the three-way meetings were a valuable mechanism for reinforcing accountability and clarifying expectations, while for others their added value was more limited. The findings therefore indicate that this element of the programme did not function in a uniform way and may have depended on factors such as sponsor engagement, relational quality, and the clarity of role expectations. This is consistent with coaching research suggesting that the effectiveness of accountability structures is shaped

not only by the coaching process itself, but also by wider organisational conditions such as support, clarity, and follow-through (Grover and Furnham, 2016).

Q4: Action and Accountability

• Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



6.1.5. Behavioural change

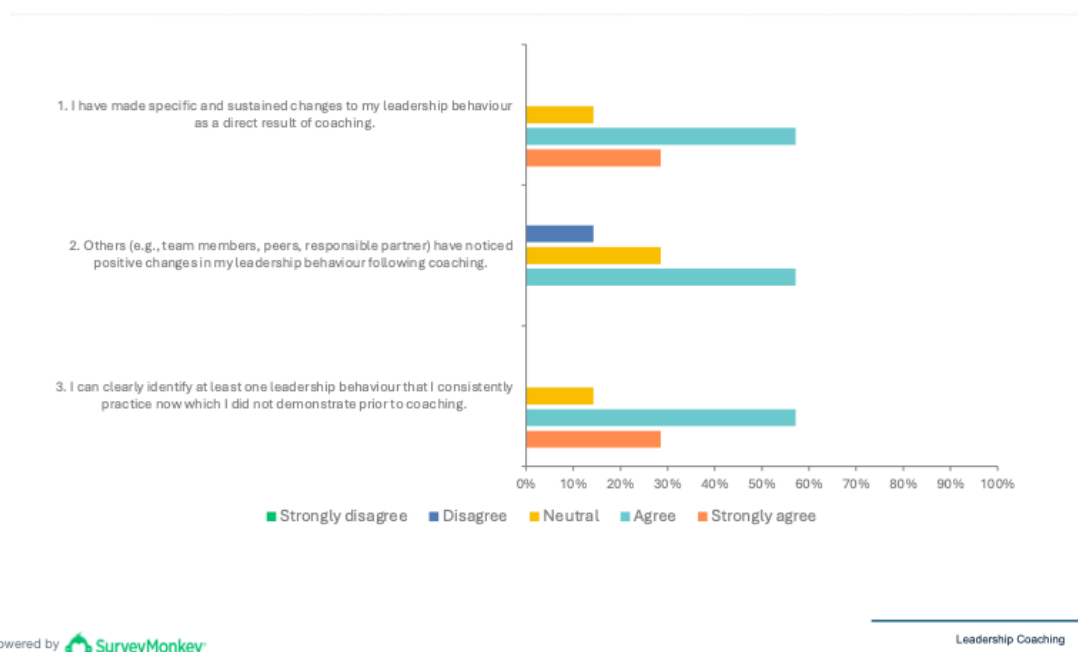
The behavioural change section is one of the most important parts of the survey because it moves beyond satisfaction or reflection and examines whether participants perceived actual change in leadership behaviour. As shown in the graph, results in this area were strongly positive. Most participants reported making specific and sustained changes to their leadership behaviour as a direct result of coaching, and most could identify at least one leadership behaviour they now practise consistently that they did not demonstrate prior to coaching. These findings suggest that the programme contributed to identifiable and sustained behavioural change.

Conceptually, this can be linked to adult learning and leadership identity work, as participants appeared to translate reflection into new leadership practices and gradually integrate these behaviours into how they understood and enacted their leadership role.

The second item in this section was more mixed. Although most participants agreed that others had noticed positive changes in their behaviour, a notable minority were neutral and one participant disagreed. This suggests that behavioural change was experienced more strongly at a self-reported level than it was externally recognised. Some changes may still have been emerging or not yet fully visible to others. This distinction is important, as coaching research notes that self-perceived change can precede externally visible behavioural confirmation, particularly while new practices are still being consolidated (Jones, Woods and Guillaume, 2016).

Q5: Behavioural Change

• Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



6.1.6. Coaching process impact

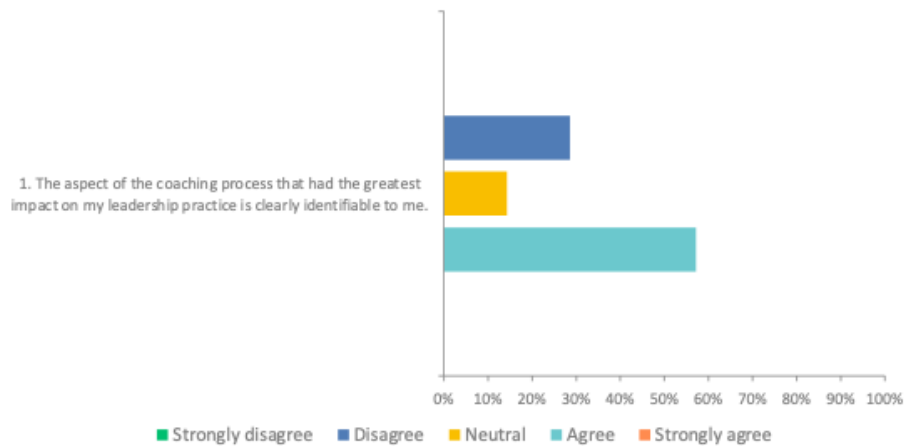
As shown in the graph, the item on coaching process impact produced one of the more mixed results. While a majority of participants agreed, a smaller number were neutral or disagreed.

This suggests that the programme's value was not always linked to one clearly identifiable feature. Some participants may have experienced the greatest impact through questioning, accountability, reflective space, or the three-way meetings, while others may have experienced impact through the coaching relationship and process as a whole. Analytically, this points to the complexity of coaching as an intervention: it may work through a combination

of relational, cognitive, and structural mechanisms rather than through one dominant factor alone.

Q6: Coaching Process Impact (Mechanism Exploration)

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



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6.1.7. Organisational context and wider effects

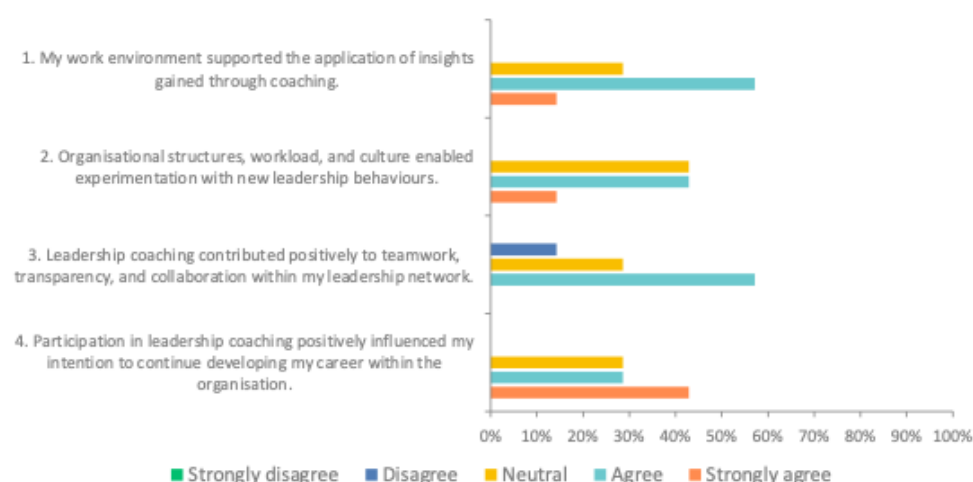
The final block explored organisational conditions and wider outcomes. As shown in the graph, responses in this area were broadly positive, although more mixed than those relating to goal clarity and behavioural change. Most participants agreed that their work environment supported the application of coaching insights, while a smaller proportion remained neutral. Responses were more cautious on whether organisational structures, workload, and culture enabled experimentation with new leadership behaviours. There was no disagreement, but the high level of neutral responses suggests that the organisation was not always experienced as clearly enabling experimentation, even where it was not seen as directly blocking it.

These findings are important because they point to the role of transfer of learning in coaching impact. Coaching may create insight, reflection, and intention, but its value depends partly on whether participants can apply and sustain new behaviours in their work context. The neutral responses suggest that transfer was possible, but not equally supported for all participants. This is understandable in a professional-services environment, where workload, commercial pressure, role expectations, and available time may influence whether leaders can experiment with new behaviours. This reflects transfer of learning literature, which emphasises that workplace support, opportunities for application, and feedback are critical for turning learning into sustained behavioural change (Baldwin and Ford, 1988).

The item on whether coaching contributed positively to teamwork, transparency, and collaboration showed a broadly positive but uneven pattern. The strongest result in this block concerned career continuation, with most participants reporting that coaching positively influenced their intention to continue developing their career within the organisation. In a professional-services context where retention of experienced leaders is strategically important, this is a relevant finding, although it does not demonstrate that coaching alone determines retention.

Q7: Organisational Context and Impact (Bounded Pilot)

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



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6.1.8. Issues encountered and limitations

Several limitations should be recognised. First, the sample is small because it reflects only the size of the pilot programme, so the findings cannot be widely generalised. Second, the survey collects participants' perceptions rather than objective performance data or direct observation of behaviour. This means the findings show reported impact, not definite proof that coaching caused the outcomes. Third, the study was carried out in an insider-research context. Although the survey was anonymous, it is still possible that some participants responded more positively. However, the fact that some neutral and negative responses were given suggests that participants did not simply rate everything positively. Overall, these limitations do not weaken the value of the findings, but they do mean that the survey should be interpreted as one source of evidence within the wider mixed-methods study.

6.1.9. Overall quantitative summary

Overall, the survey findings indicate that the Leadership Coaching Programme was experienced as positively impactful across the main domains measured. The strongest patterns relate to goal clarity, role alignment, communication, conflict management, action orientation, self-reported behavioural change, and intention to continue career development within the organisation. More mixed findings appear around formal model use, external recognition of behavioural change, identification of the most impactful coaching mechanism, and the organisational conditions enabling experimentation. The survey therefore provides useful structured evidence to compare with the interview and focus group findings.

6.2. Qualitative Findings: Semi-Structured Interviews

This chapter presents the findings from the eight semi-structured interviews conducted with participants in the leadership coaching programme.

Qualitative analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (Braun and Clarke, 2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. The researcher first read and re-read the interview notes and transcripts to become familiar with participants' accounts. Initial codes were then assigned to segments of data relevant to the study aims, for example communication style, emotional regulation, role clarity, delegation, motivation, coaching mechanisms, and organisational enablers or constraints.

These codes were compared across interviews and organised into broader themes aligned with the research questions, including leadership capability development, goal clarity and role alignment, motivation and resilience, action and accountability, behavioural change, coaching process impact, and organisational context. The themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected both common patterns and areas of difference across participants. The final themes were used to structure the qualitative findings and were interpreted alongside the survey results as part of the mixed-methods analysis, using the same chapter structure as the quantitative questionnaire to support comparison across methods.

While this chapter remains primarily findings-based, selected conceptual links are included at key analytic moments to clarify how the themes relate to the literature on reflective practice, adult learning, theory-in-use, and transfer of learning.

6.2.1. Leadership capabilities

The clearest theme in this chapter was the impact of coaching on communication effectiveness. Participants often described becoming more intentional, more differentiated, and more structured in how they communicate. Rather than using one style with everyone, several leaders explained that they had become better at adapting their communication to different individuals, depending on personality, confidence, role, or need. This included giving clearer instructions, being more precise in requests, creating more structured one-to-ones, and adjusting tone and pace depending on the person. In some cases, coaching reinforced practices already present rather than creating entirely new ones, but it still made leaders more conscious in how they used communication as a leadership tool.

A second theme was the shift from informal or friendship-based interaction toward more structured leadership communication. Some participants described becoming more comfortable giving direct feedback, setting expectations, and separating personal closeness from leadership responsibility. This was not described as becoming less relational, but as leading with clearer boundaries. Participants also linked this to becoming more present for the team and creating more frequent and purposeful feedback opportunities.

The findings on difficult conversations and conflict were more mixed. Some participants said this was not a major focus of coaching. Others described becoming more constructive and less reactive in difficult conversations. Reported changes included using clearer agendas, focusing on causes rather than blame, preparing better for difficult conversations, and accepting that not every discussion can end in an ideal outcome. One participant described becoming more willing to accept a realistic middle ground rather than pushing toward a perfect result. Another described being more willing to keep meetings focused rather than allowing detail or emotion to divert them.

In relation to emotional intelligence, the effect of coaching was usually described indirectly. Few participants identified this as a separate, explicit coaching outcome, but many described greater awareness of others' motivations, reactions, and needs. Leaders referred to trying to understand why others behave as they do, recognising that people do not all share the same values, and taking broader personal or contextual factors into account before responding. In some cases, coaching also helped leaders notice their own emotional triggers and step back before reacting. This suggests that coaching supported more reflective and empathetic interpersonal judgment, even where participants did not name it explicitly as emotional intelligence.

Use of coaching or learning models varied across participants. Some respondents consciously used GROW, Kolb, or the Iceberg/Integral model in one-to-one discussions and development conversations. These were valued because they provided structure, increased confidence, and helped conversations feel more purposeful and professional. Others did not use the models explicitly, but described internalising their logic and applying it more informally. This reflects the distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use, where formal frameworks may influence practice even when they are not explicitly named or consciously applied (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Overall, the strongest value of the models seems to have been in structuring one-to-one conversations and helping leaders consider multiple perspectives.

Overall, participants generally viewed coaching as having a positive effect on leadership effectiveness, especially through improved communication, better people leadership, stronger delegation, and clearer support for team development. The effect on clients and business development was usually described as indirect, while the impact on team leadership and project implementation was clearer. Several participants also stressed that leadership effectiveness is a long-term developmental process and that coaching should be understood as one contributing factor rather than the sole cause of change.

6.2.2. Goal clarity and role alignment

This was one of the strongest areas in the qualitative data. Participants often described coaching as highly valuable in clarifying leadership goals, priorities, and role expectations. Coaching created structured time to define what the role required, what success would look like, and how time should be prioritised. This was especially important where participants were newly appointed or where expectations had previously been informal or underdefined. Coaching therefore helped turn broad assumptions into clearer, shared, and more actionable leadership objectives.

A related theme was role transition. Participants moving from expert or delivery-focused roles into broader leadership roles described coaching as helping them shift from execution toward delegation, people development, and longer-term thinking. Some leaders spoke about becoming less involved in detailed delivery and more focused on managing key people, building capability, or supporting future team growth. In this sense, coaching helped not only with priority-setting, but with understanding leadership differently.

The three-way meetings were particularly important in this chapter. Many participants said these meetings helped validate priorities, formalise expectations, and connect personal development with partner expectations. The presence of the partner often made the

conversation more serious and more clearly linked to organisational needs. Several respondents described these meetings as one of the most useful elements of the programme because they helped clarify what mattered most in the role and how progress would be assessed.

Findings on alignment with organisational objectives were more mixed. Some participants clearly linked coaching to better understanding of how their unit or role contributed to wider business goals, especially through discussions with partners. Others said the impact here was limited. Where alignment did occur, it usually involved understanding why particular objectives mattered, how time should be divided across leadership, delivery, and business development, and how one's role contributed to the wider organisation.

6.2.3. Motivation and resilience

The interviews suggest that coaching influenced motivation and engagement in different ways. For some participants, coaching did not create motivation as such, because they already saw themselves as highly self-motivated. Instead, it helped them direct that motivation more effectively through structure, reflection, and greater clarity. For others, motivation improved because coaching reduced ambiguity, created a stronger sense of control, and confirmed that they were on the right path. In this respect, coaching seems to have supported motivation by making leadership feel more understandable and manageable.

A strong pattern in this chapter was the role of coaching in creating reflective space, particularly for leaders working under sustained pressure. In some cases, this reflective space helped participants notice unsustainable work habits, over-responsibility for delivery, or repeated cycles of overload. Through coaching, some leaders became more willing to delegate, set more realistic expectations, and manage themselves more consciously. This contributed to resilience not through a single technique, but through a more sustainable way of working. This aligns with reflective practice and adult learning perspectives, where learning develops through reflection on experience and subsequent adjustment of behaviour (Moon, 2004).

The evidence on resilience and confidence was more uneven. Some participants said coaching helped them reframe setbacks, manage difficult situations with more perspective, and feel less stressed. Others, especially more experienced leaders, felt the effect here was limited. Even so, where change was reported, it usually took the form of greater calm, better self-management, and more perspective under pressure rather than a dramatic increase in confidence.

6.2.4. Action and accountability

This was another strong chapter in the qualitative findings. A recurring theme across interviews was that coaching was valuable because it moved beyond reflection into concrete action. Participants often described the coach as helping them define next steps, review progress, and return to unfinished issues. Rather than only analysing problems, coaching helped them focus on what was within their control and what practical action they could take.

Examples of action included restructuring teams, increasing delegation, setting regular one-to-ones, clarifying responsibilities, preparing better for meetings, changing how feedback was delivered, and trying specific leadership approaches with team members before reviewing the results. Some participants described experimenting with different ways of managing and then adjusting their approach when one model did not work. This suggests that coaching supported not only new insight but also implementation and follow-through.

The three-way meetings also supported accountability by connecting development goals with partner expectations. Even where their added value was described as limited, they still served as a validation point. For others, they strengthened trust, clarified priorities, and opened the way for more regular follow-up with partners afterwards.

6.2.5. Behavioural change

The interviews indicate that behavioural change did occur, although it was usually described as gradual and practical rather than dramatic. The clearest changes included better listening, more differentiated communication, stronger delegation, more regular one-to-ones, and greater presence with the team. Some participants also described becoming less likely to solve everything themselves and more willing to support others in finding their own answers.

At the same time, several participants found it difficult to identify one fully new behaviour because change was intertwined with promotion or broader professional development. In these cases, the main change was often in the way leadership was enacted: more structure, more reflection, more patience, and clearer expectations. This suggests that leadership change may be better understood as refinement of practice than as a total behavioural shift.

6.2.6. Coaching process impact

Across the interviews, the most valued element of the coaching process was structured reflection. Participants repeatedly referred to the benefit of having dedicated time to step back from operational pressure, examine assumptions, and think more systematically. Reflective questioning was particularly valued because it helped them reach conclusions themselves while still being challenged. For some, this reflective space was itself one of the main benefits of coaching.

Other valued mechanisms included goal setting, accountability, feedback, and simple coaching models. Participants appreciated coaching most when it created a clear cycle of reflection, action, review, and adaptation. Some participants also valued the mentoring dimension within the relationship, particularly where experience-based input from someone who understood the consulting context helped make the coaching more practical and credible.

6.2.7. Organisational context and impact

The organisational context was generally described as supportive and open. Participants noted that the organisation funded coaching, made time available, and usually gave leaders flexibility in how they applied what they had learned. This freedom was often seen as an important enabler because it allowed experimentation and individual adaptation.

The main barriers were time, workload, understaffing, and lack of organisational tools or systems. Several participants noted that while the organisation supported development in principle, it did not always provide enough practical infrastructure, such as templates, systems, or ready-made processes, to make coaching-based leadership easy to sustain. Leaders often had to design and maintain their own ways of working, which required considerable personal energy. This points to the importance of transfer of learning, as coaching insights are more likely to become sustained behaviours when the work environment provides opportunities, tools, feedback, and support for application (Baldwin and Ford, 1988).

In broader organisational terms, coaching was seen as contributing to teamwork, transparency, leadership culture, and in some cases retention, mainly through better communication and stronger people development. Some participants felt that being included in the coaching programme signalled trust and investment, which strengthened their desire to stay and grow in the organisation. Others were more cautious and did not link coaching directly to retention. Overall, the findings suggest that coaching contributed most clearly to a more

developmental leadership culture, although its wider organisational effect depends on continued follow-through.

6.2.8. Summary of qualitative findings

Taken together, the interviews suggest that leadership coaching was experienced primarily as a developmental and structuring intervention, with some transformational elements. Its strongest contributions were in helping leaders think more clearly, communicate more intentionally, manage others more thoughtfully, and translate reflection into action. This reflects experiential and reflective learning theory, where development occurs through experience, reflection, learning, and action (Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004).

The most consistent themes were communication, role clarity, reflection, delegation, and people development. These findings align with developmental coaching literature, which positions coaching as a process that supports self-awareness, goal clarification, learning, and behavioural adjustment over time (Stober and Grant, 2006; Jones, Woods and Guillaume, 2016; Athanasopoulou and Dopson, 2018).

However, some findings also suggest a transformational dimension. Coaching helped some leaders challenge expectations and identify limiting beliefs, such as the belief that they needed to have all the answers, solve problems directly, or remain closely involved in operational detail. By questioning these assumptions, participants began to shift towards a more facilitative leadership role, enabling others to think, decide, and take greater ownership. This reflects transformational learning theory, where deeper development occurs when individuals critically examine assumptions and change how they understand themselves and their role (Mezirow, 1991; Bachkirova, 2011).

The findings also suggest that coaching was particularly valuable during role transition and under conditions of complexity and delivery pressure. At the same time, the data indicates that coaching impact was gradual and context-dependent, and should be understood as part of a wider developmental process rather than as a stand-alone cause of change.

6.3. Focus Group

The focus group was conducted as the final stage of the research design, with the purpose of validating and deepening themes identified through the semi-structured interviews and survey data. Consistent with the methodological approach, it did not serve as a primary data collection method, but as a collective sense-making and triangulation mechanism. Importantly, all eight

coached leaders participated, ensuring full alignment between interview, survey, and group-level validation of findings.

Overall, the discussion confirmed that leadership coaching was experienced as a structured developmental process that enhanced leadership effectiveness primarily through increased self-awareness, reflection, and intentionality. This was reflected in participants' emphasis on creating time and structure for development: "to have time for improving yourself is absolutely crucial... to follow the structure... makes sense to move forward".

A central theme was the importance of reflection and dedicated thinking time. Participants emphasised that coaching created space to pause, think, and reflect, which is often limited in a fast-paced consulting environment. This reflective space was perceived as valuable for both personal development and leadership decision-making. However, time constraints were identified as the main barrier to sustaining this practice, as operational pressure, client demands, and administrative workload were often prioritised over development activity. This tension was captured in one participant's comment: "the limitation was time... consulting is fast-paced... I was thinking if it has a solution and I'm not sure". Conceptually, this aligns with reflective practice and adult learning perspectives, which suggest that experience becomes developmental when individuals pause, make sense of what happened, identify learning, and apply this learning to future action (Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004). Coaching therefore helped convert day-to-day leadership experience into more conscious leadership practice.

The focus group also reinforced the impact of coaching on communication and relational leadership. Participants described improvements in listening, asking better questions, giving clearer feedback, and managing expectations more proactively. A key behavioural shift was movement away from a directive, solution-oriented style toward a more facilitative approach, where leaders enabled others to think and generate their own solutions. This reflects coaching-style leadership, where leaders use questioning, listening, feedback, and developmental conversations to increase ownership and problem-solving in others. Its value lies in supporting self-regulation, autonomy, and engagement, which are linked in the literature to goal-focused coaching and empowering leadership (Grant, 2012; Kim, Beehr and Prewett, 2018).

As one participant explained: "I realised that I don't need to have all the answers... it's about asking the right questions". This was closely linked to greater awareness of individual differences in motivation, behaviour, and perspective. Participants recognised the need to understand "what motivates this person... not only what I expect from them", supporting more tailored leadership approaches and improved team dynamics.

Another important theme was the role of coaching in strengthening goal clarity and structured leadership practice. Participants highlighted the importance of clear objectives, alignment between individual and organisational priorities, and more consistent follow-up. This was reflected in the comment: “the question is... if we are aligned between each other”. Coaching was therefore experienced not only as an individual development intervention, but also as a mechanism for supporting collective coherence and team effectiveness. This was reinforced by the view that “the group can do much more than a set of individuals”. This aligns with goal-focused coaching literature, which links coaching with goal clarity, self-regulation, and purposeful action (Grant, 2012), and with team effectiveness research showing that shared understanding, information sharing, and trust support coordination and performance (Mesmer-Magnus and DeChurch, 2009; Legood et al., 2021).

These findings were consistent with the survey results, where goal clarity and role alignment were among the strongest areas of perceived impact.

In terms of practical application, participants feedback was that coaching models were most effective when used pragmatically and selectively. While several models were introduced, participants tended to adopt simpler and more intuitive approaches that could be integrated into daily leadership practice. As one participant noted, “it’s not about remembering the model... it’s about what works for you”. More complex frameworks were perceived as harder to apply consistently under time pressure. This reflects the distinction between formal model adoption and theory-in-use, where participants may apply the logic of coaching models without explicitly naming them (Argyris and Schön, 1974). It also aligns with practice-based learning theory, which suggests that professional learning is adapted through real work activity rather than simply applied as abstract knowledge (Billett, 2001). This is also consistent with Czech-context coaching research, which suggests that coaching practice should be understood in relation to local professional and organisational conditions rather than simply transferred from wider international models (Honsová, Passmore and Brown, 2018). Here, the value of the models was in their practical translation into everyday leadership behaviours such as questioning, reflection, and follow-up.

The focus group also highlighted the importance of balancing coaching with mentoring within the coaching relationship. Participants appreciated that questioning was valuable, but not always sufficient where they needed practical guidance, contextual understanding, or experience-based input. In such situations, the coach’s ability to combine reflective questioning with appropriate mentoring support was seen as helpful. This reflects literature that recognises coaching and mentoring as related but distinct developmental practices:

coaching often emphasises questioning, reflection, and self-directed learning, while mentoring may include guidance, experience-sharing, and contextual advice (Stober and Grant, 2006; Garvey, Stokes and Megginson, 2018). In this study, the value appeared to lie in flexible movement between these roles depending on the coachee's needs and context: "pure questions are not enough... sometimes you need to help or guide".

Participants further indicated that coaching had implications beyond individual development. By clarifying roles, priorities, and expectations, coaching appeared to support greater alignment within the leadership team during a period of structural change. It was also seen as contributing to a more open and development-oriented culture, where reflection, feedback, and continuous improvement could become more embedded in everyday practice.

The focus group extended earlier findings by highlighting potential links between coaching, business development, and strategic impact. Participants suggested that greater delegation and reduced operational involvement allowed leaders to focus more on higher-value activities, including client relationships, strategic thinking, and business development. As one participant explained, coaching created space "to use the time more effectively for business development... because I'm not so needed in regular business". In this sense, coaching was perceived as contributing indirectly to organisational performance and growth, although this should be understood as an emerging perception rather than a measured outcome.

Finally, participants emphasised personal responsibility for development. Although organisational support remained important, individuals also needed to prioritise time for reflection and growth. This was reflected in the shift from viewing time only as a constraint to seeing it as a matter of prioritisation: "we have 24 hours... it's a question of priority". This points to the importance of transfer of learning, as coaching outcomes are more likely to be sustained where leaders have both personal commitment and organisational conditions that support application.

In conclusion, the focus group validated the findings from interviews and survey data, providing additional depth and collective confirmation. It reinforced that coaching contributed to more reflective, intentional, and relationally effective leadership, while also highlighting the importance of time, prioritisation, and organisational support in sustaining coaching outcomes. The discussion also generated practical implications for embedding coaching more systematically, including clearer role definitions, structured developmental goal setting, stronger one-to-one practices, and better follow-up.

7. Conclusion

The findings suggest that the Leadership Coaching Programme supported leadership effectiveness to a strong extent. In relation to its original objectives, the programme made its most significant contribution to goal clarity, communication, structured reflection, action planning, and self-reported behavioural change. Delegation also emerged as an important practical outcome linked to stronger leadership capability and team management.

Coaching supported participants in listening more effectively, providing clearer feedback, managing expectations, structuring one-to-one conversations, and leading people with greater intentionality. This suggests that the programme was highly developmental, as it enabled experienced leaders to refine and strengthen their existing leadership practice. This aligns with developmental coaching literature, which positions coaching as supporting self-awareness, goal clarity, learning, and behavioural adjustment over time (Stober and Grant, 2006; Jones, Woods and Guillaume, 2016; Athanasopoulou and Dopson, 2018).

The findings also demonstrate several transformational aspects. Participants questioned assumptions such as needing to have all the answers, solving problems directly, or remaining too closely involved in operational detail. This supported a shift towards a more facilitative leadership role, where leaders enabled others to think, decide, and take greater ownership. This reflects transformational learning theory, where deeper development occurs when individuals critically examine assumptions and change how they understand themselves and their role (Mezirow, 1991; Bachkirova, 2011).

The programme also helped participants move from reflection to action. Through goal setting, accountability, feedback, and accessible coaching models, particularly GROW and Kolb, participants identified what they needed to do differently and applied this learning in practice. This reflects experiential and reflective learning theory, where development happens when individuals make sense of experience and use that learning to guide future behaviour (Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004).

The programme contributed positively to motivation, resilience, teamwork, and intention to remain, although these outcomes were more context-dependent than goal clarity, communication, and behavioural change. They were shaped by time and workload, role clarity, three-way meetings, and the extent to which participants could translate coaching insights into practice. Three-way meetings were highly valued by some participants because they clarified expectations and strengthened accountability, although their impact was not uniform across all participants.

The insider-research position was also an important source of learning. Acting as both coach and researcher required careful attention to the boundary between coaching as developmental support and research as a potentially evaluative process. Coaching is generally understood as supporting reflection, learning, and goal-directed change (Stober and Grant, 2006). However, in insider research, participants may interpret the researcher's role through existing organisational relationships, power dynamics, and expectations, which can create risks of caution, bias, or role confusion (Mercer, 2007; Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010). This helped me understand that trust, role expectations, and power can affect both the coaching relationship and the quality of research data. Reflexivity was therefore not only about recognising possible bias, but also about questioning how my role, assumptions, relationships, and hopes for the programme could influence data collection and interpretation. Ethical safeguards, including separating coaching and research activities, anonymous survey data, anonymised reporting, neutral language, and academic supervision, helped manage these risks and strengthen trustworthiness. This was important because cautious or socially desirable responses could have affected the credibility of the findings.

This experience developed my reflexive practice as a coach-researcher and reinforced the importance of ethical discipline when evaluating a programme in which I am professionally involved.

Overall, the programme should continue because it provides clear developmental value and meaningful transformational potential. To increase its future impact, coaching should be more strongly connected to team routines, structured follow-up, client work, business development, and organisational priorities, so that insight becomes visible and sustained change in everyday leadership practice.

8. Recommendations

The findings suggest several practical recommendations for strengthening the impact of the Leadership Coaching Programme. First, the organisation should implement a clearer coaching structure within teams, including shared goal setting, jointly agreed action plans, implementation timelines, and regular follow-up meetings. This should be linked to the proposed work on clarifying functional roles and responsibilities, so that leadership development goals are aligned with expectations around sales, delivery, operational duties, internal efficiency, HR, and finance. The focus group action plan identifies the need to define roles more clearly and discuss them at the next Partners and Strategy Meetings to reduce inefficiencies, task overlap, and ambiguity, while increasing accountability.

Second, the organisation should introduce a more consistent personal developmental goal-setting methodology. Development goals should be structured using SMART objectives and linked to the gap between required skills, current employee skills, and current business priorities. This would help ensure that coaching outcomes are not isolated from role expectations, career planning, or departmental priorities. It would also strengthen motivation by connecting individual development with future career direction and business opportunities.

Third, leaders should be encouraged to use coaching models more consciously and consistently in everyday management practice. Kolb's reflective cycle should be used to support reflection on workplace experience and help leaders learn from what worked, what did not work, and what could be adjusted next time (Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004). GROW should be used as a simple structure for one-to-one meetings and developmental conversations, particularly to clarify goals, explore options, agree actions, and strengthen accountability (Grant, 2012). Skill/Will could also be considered as a practical team-management tool to help leaders adapt their support depending on each individual's competence and motivation, consistent with situational leadership principles (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). The focus group action plan also identifies the sharing of one-to-one meeting best practices and the possibility of standardising practical tools such as GROW, Kolb, and potentially Skill/Will across the organisation.

Fourth, the transfer of coaching learning should be strengthened beyond individual leadership development and project implementation. Leaders should be supported to apply coaching insights to client conversations, stakeholder management, commercial thinking, and business development activities. This would connect the developmental value of coaching more directly with external impact and organisational performance.

Fifth, the organisation should create clearer mechanisms for managing operational topics separately but in alignment with performance improvement. The focus group action plan proposes assessing the need for regular management meetings and considering whether operational topics should be integrated into existing forums such as Image Hub or Strategy Meetings. This would help ensure that process, productivity, and operational improvements are addressed systematically rather than informally.

Finally, the coach should support implementation through follow-up evaluation and targeted support. This includes observing the objective-setting process, assessing consistency against the agreed role and goal-setting methodology, and supporting leaders in setting development objectives for their teams. This would help move the coaching programme from individual development into wider organisational learning and practical implementation.

For future evaluations, the organisation should continue to use clear ethical safeguards when research is conducted by an insider. This includes separating coaching from research activity, anonymising findings, using neutral language, and involving academic or independent review where appropriate. This would help preserve trust while still allowing the organisation to benefit from the contextual understanding of an insider researcher.

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10. Attachments

1. Ethics Form - Work-based Learning Project - Evaluating the Organisational Impact of Leadership Coaching (separate document attached)
2. Organisation Approval Research (included below)
3. Consent and Indemnity form (included below)
4. Summary Results of the Post-Coaching Survey (separate document attached)
5. Semi-structured interview questions (included below)
6. Power Point Presentation (separate document attached)

Attachment no 2:

Organisation Approval Research

From: Senior Partner

Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 5:16 PM

To: Novotny, Cristina

Subject: RE: Kind Request for Organisational Approval – Leadership Coaching Research (Pilot Study)

Dear Cristina, I hope you are fine as well.

I can confirm that we are ready to support your research and I will be happy to support you and get valuable feedback.

Go ahead and good luck!

Best regards,

Senior Partner

From: Novotny, Cristina

Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 1:38 PM

To: Senior Partner

Subject: Kind Request for Organisational Approval – Leadership Coaching Research (Pilot Study)

Dear

I hope you are well.

I am writing to request formal organisational approval to conduct a small-scale academic research study within the Advisory Department, as part of my postgraduate studies at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Purpose and aim of the research

The aim of the study is to explore the perceived impact of the Leadership Coaching Programme on coached leaders, with specific attention to leadership effectiveness, motivation, resilience, and the application of coaching insights in daily leadership practice. This research is designed as a pilot study and will focus exclusively on the Advisory Department.

Research objectives

The study seeks to:

1. explore how leadership coaching supports leaders' career development and their ability to manage teams effectively
2. examine how coaching influences the immediate team environment, including communication, feedback, and collaboration
3. assess the perceived impact of coaching on motivation, confidence, resilience, and intention to remain within the organisation
4. identify organisational and contextual factors that enable or constrain the application of coaching insights

5. assess the perceived value of the Leadership Coaching Programme for leaders and organisational leadership capability
6. inform potential future decisions about extending leadership coaching to other departments (Phase 2)

Scope and participants

1. The research will involve only the eight leaders who have participated in the Leadership Coaching Programme within the Advisory Department.
2. Participation will be entirely voluntary, with no impact on employment, professional standing, or coaching relationships.
3. No data will be collected from non-coached employees.

Methods

Data will be collected using a mixed-methods approach, including:

1. individual semi-structured interviews
2. one pilot focus group with coached leaders
3. a short anonymous questionnaire

Confidentiality and anonymisation

1. The organisation will be fully anonymised in all academic outputs.
2. No individual names, roles, or identifiable organisational information will be included.
3. Findings will be reported only in aggregated or non-identifiable form.
4. The research is conducted for academic purposes only.

Timing of the research

5. 16th February 2026 – 31st March 2026

I will send you an invitation for a separate meeting, in order to review:

1. a brief summary of the research design
2. the interview themes and detailed questions
3. any additional information

Thank you very much for all your time and support.

Kind regards,

Cristina

Attachment no 3:

Leadership Coaching Impact Research

Participant Consent and Indemnity Form

Researcher: Cristina-Laura Novotny

Master's Programme in Coaching and Mentoring

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Purpose of the Research

As part of the Master's programme in Coaching and Mentoring at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, this study evaluates the **impact of the Leadership Coaching Programme implemented within the organisation**.

The research seeks to understand how leadership coaching contributes to:

- Leadership capability and behavioural development
- Communication, collaboration, and conflict management
- Confidence, motivation, and resilience
- The translation of reflection into sustained leadership practice
- Broader organisational impact and leadership culture

Following the **questionnaire phase of the research**, semi-structured interviews are conducted to explore participants' experiences and insights in greater depth.

Participation

Participation involves **one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45–60 minutes**.

The discussion will focus on your reflections regarding the leadership coaching programme and its potential impact on your leadership practice and organisational contribution.

Participation is **entirely voluntary**. You may decline to answer any question and may withdraw from the interview at any time without consequence.

Confidentiality

All information shared will be treated with **strict confidentiality**.

- Interview data will be stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes.
- Personal identifiers will be removed from transcripts.
- Findings will be reported only in **anonymised or aggregated form**.
- No identifiable comments will be attributed to individual participants.

Participation or non-participation will **not affect professional roles, evaluations, or organisational standing**.

Research Context

The researcher holds a **dual role as internal leadership coach and academic researcher**. The study follows university ethical research standards and aims to contribute to a structured and reflective evaluation of leadership development within the organisation.

Indemnity

By signing this form, you confirm that:

- You understand the purpose and nature of this research.
- Your participation is voluntary.
- You agree to participate in the interview.

Except in cases of negligence or misconduct, participation does not create liability for the researcher or the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Recording Consent

Please indicate your preference:

- ☐ I consent to the interview being **audio recorded** for transcription purposes.
☐ I prefer the interview **not to be recorded**.

Participant Confirmation

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher

Cristina-Laura Novotny

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Attachment no 5:

Semi-structured interview questions

(Aligned directly with Leadership Coaching Impact Evaluation Questionnaire)

Introduction

Thank you for taking part in this interview.

The purpose is to explore your experience of leadership coaching in greater depth. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your honest reflections and concrete examples.

Please reflect on the full period of the coaching engagement — from its beginning to its completion. Where relevant, I may ask you to compare your leadership before coaching and after coaching.

All responses will be treated confidentially and anonymised in reporting.

1. Leadership Capabilities

1.1 Communication

- In what ways, if any, did leadership coaching influence your ability to communicate effectively in your leadership role?
- How would you describe your communication approach before coaching began?
- Can you provide a concrete example of change?

1.2 Difficult Conversations and Conflict

- How did coaching affect the way you manage difficult conversations or conflicts?
- What do you do differently now compared to before coaching?
- Can you describe a specific situation?

1.3 Emotional Intelligence

- In what ways did coaching increase your awareness of your emotions and their impact on others?
- How does this awareness influence your day-to-day leadership practice?

1.4 Use of Coaching or Learning Models

- Have you applied any coaching or learning models (e.g., Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, GROW, Integral "Iceberg" Model) in your leadership practice?
- How do you use them?
- What value do they bring to your leadership effectiveness?

1.5 Overall Leadership Effectiveness

- Overall, how would you describe the impact of leadership coaching on your effectiveness as a leader?
- Did it influence client impact, project implementation, or business development? If so, how?

Theme 1: Leadership Capability Development

Sub-themes (Level 2 Codes):

- Communication effectiveness
- Conflict management

- Emotional self-awareness
- Use of coaching/learning models
- Perceived overall leadership effectiveness
- Client/project impact

2. Goal Clarity and Role Alignment

2.1 Leadership Goals and Role Expectations

- How did coaching influence your clarity regarding leadership goals, priorities, or role expectations?
- Were there particular insights that shifted your understanding?

2.2 Alignment with Organisational Objectives

- How did coaching support your understanding of how your role contributes to broader organisational objectives?
- Did it influence your alignment or collaboration with other leaders?

Theme 2: Goal Clarity and Role Alignment

Sub-themes:

- Leadership goal clarity
- Role expectation clarity
- Strategic alignment
- Cross-leader alignment

3. Motivation and Resilience

3.1 Motivation and Engagement

- In what ways did leadership coaching influence your motivation and engagement at work?
- Did you notice changes over time?

3.2 Resilience and Confidence

- How did coaching strengthen your resilience or confidence when navigating pressure, change, or setbacks?
- Can you share an example where this was evident?

4. Action and Accountability

4.1 From Reflection to Action

- How did coaching help you translate reflection into concrete leadership actions within your team, with management, or with clients?
- What enabled or limited this process?

4.2 Three-Way Coaching Meetings

- What was your experience of the three-way coaching meetings involving yourself, the coach, and the responsible partner/manager?

- How did these meetings influence:
 - Shared accountability?
 - Clarity of expectations?
 - Mutual trust?
 - Validation of leadership goals and career development plans?

5. Behavioural Change

5.1 Sustained Behavioural Change

- Have you made specific and sustained changes to your leadership behaviour as a result of coaching?
- Can you identify at least one behaviour you now consistently practice that you did not demonstrate before coaching?

5.2 External Perception of Change

- Have others (e.g., team members, peers, responsible partner) noticed changes in your leadership behaviour?
- What feedback have you received?

5.3 Identifiable New Leadership Behaviour

- If you reflect carefully, what is one clear leadership behaviour that you now demonstrate consistently that was not present before coaching?

6. Coaching Process Impact (Mechanism Exploration)

6.1 Most Impactful Element

- Which specific aspect of the coaching process had the greatest impact on your leadership practice?
(e.g., reflective questioning, experimentation, goal setting, feedback, accountability structure, three-way meetings, use of models)
- Why was this element particularly impactful?
- How did it translate into behavioural change?

7. Organisational Context and Impact (Bounded Pilot)

7.1 Application of Insights

- To what extent did your work environment support the application of insights gained through coaching

7.2 Organisational Enablers or Constraints

- How did organisational structures, workload, or culture enable or limit experimentation with new leadership behaviours?

7.3 Teamwork and Collaboration

- Did leadership coaching contribute to teamwork, transparency, or collaboration within your leadership network? If so, how?

7.4 Career Development and Retention

- Has participation in leadership coaching influenced your intention to continue developing your career within the organisation?
- In what way?

7.5 Organisational Factors (Open Reflection)

- What organisational factors most supported or hindered your ability to apply coaching insights in practice?

Closing Question

- Looking back across the entire coaching experience, what has been its most valuable impact on you as a leader?
- Is there anything important we have not discussed?