



UK Coaching Framework

Consultation Report

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Executive Summary

As part of the development of the UK Coaching Framework, a widespread consultation was undertaken to gain a greater understanding of individual and organisational experiences and opinions of sports coaching within the UK. This consultation process was undertaken in parallel with two series of meetings with Governing Bodies, as well as the Home Country Sports Councils, UK Sport, Skills Active, Youth Sport Trust and other agencies.

There were 816 responses to the consultation from children, adult participants, parents, coaches and partner organisations. The results are organised around a number of key themes:

- The benefits of coaching provision
- The weaknesses of existing coaching provision
- The quality of coaching
- Access to coaching
- Quality assuring coaching
- Paying for coaching
- Building a coaching system

The findings from the research helped form the initial consultation documents as part of the development of the UK Coaching Framework.

The Benefits of Coaching Provision

The children, parents and adult participants were united – coaches provide sporting environments that are fun; motivating; encourage learning, development and confidence building; within a safe well-structured environment.

The benefits from coaching appeared to change by participant age/stage with younger children emphasising play and fun, and older children and adults – whilst crucially still emphasising fun and enjoyment – placing a greater emphasis on development and social networking, thus highlighting how coaching needs to change between participant groups and depending on the motivations of the participant.

Parents appeared to emphasise wider skill development in their children, that is, the coaches did not just provide sporting skills but also social skills (working with a group), and discipline.

Partner organisations recognised these benefits and praised the commitment, in particular, of volunteer coaches.

The Weaknesses of Existing Coaching Provision

Before commenting on the weaknesses of coaching, it is worth noting that many respondents were satisfied with the standard of the coaching they were receiving.

However, the majority of respondents could point to areas of weakness and improvement. The children were most likely to bring up the issue of over-coaching – that is, their enjoyment/benefit received from the session was reduced because it was too coach focused, too rigid and did not emphasise free play or expression.

The adults were more likely to bring up issues around poor communication, poor delivery, poor coaching techniques or people management. Others commented that their coach was 'stale', lacked variety and was not very motivating.

A number of partner organisations commented that the over-reliance on volunteer coaches was creating problems because these coaches had less time, or were less willing, to develop and improve their coaching.

The Quality of Coaching

A major theme in the consultation exercise concerned what good coaches should do; or what 'good' or 'quality' coaching practice looked like.

The main messages related to the need for coaches to be 'participant centred' and individual needs led. The respondents also highlighted the differentiation of coaching practice in terms of the stage and pathway of the participant. For example, greater emphasis on fun and enjoyment for children and recreational pathways; appropriate learning opportunities and technical skill development as participants progress or move into more performance related opportunities.

Parents were looking for pedagogical skills, child friendliness, technical knowledge, motivation and a fun approach from their children's coaches. Adult participants and athletes were looking for creativity, friendliness, good communication skills, inspiration/motivation, commitment, support and trust from their coaches. Adult athletes were also interested in the coach's technical knowledge, understanding of an athlete's requirements, and having a good reputation / coaching experience.

Access To Coaching

Another significant theme in the research was the lack of access to quality coaches and coaching opportunities. This was mentioned by the parents and adult participants with common issues emerging.

There was a need for more coaching opportunities – more coaches, more sessions etc. in a variety of settings – schools, clubs and local community. Adult participants also mentioned the need for more specific types of coaching opportunities, for example, to suit different pathway needs.

More particular concerns related to the need for more individual sessions or smaller group sizes. Perhaps predictably there was also a request for coaching sessions to occur at more appropriate times and locations.

A number of respondents raised concerns about more systemic issues. For example, many parents and adult participants were able to access coaches, but not coaching that was appropriate to the their child's or their own stage of development.

Many parents also mentioned providing more opportunities for them to become involved in coaching.

Quality Assuring Coaching

Though the respondents requested improved coaches and coaching practice, and believed that qualifications were important (about four-fifths of parents and adult participants thought that qualifications were an important element of improving and

quality assuring coaching), they were also reluctant to tie their 'buying decision' to formal qualifications.

For example, only a small minority of parents and adult participants (about a quarter) checked their coaches' qualifications before committing their children or themselves to a coaching session. Many left this to the club/other coach employer, or preferred to make their own assessments based on observations of classes or recommendations from friends.

The status of coaching qualifications as a credible means of quality assuring coaching practice, and being recognised as such by the wider public, clearly has some way to go. As the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) starts to bed down, this should start to address the former, but there is also clearly a need to address the public's perception of the value of a qualification system for it to realise its central role in the professionalisation of coaching.

Paying for Coaching

Parents, participants and coaches would like to see greater incentives provided to coaches including improved remuneration.

This point was raised in terms of inducing and sustaining coach development, establishing clear entry, exits and pathways through coaching, and, importantly in the context of the study, building sustainable club environments with payment seen as keeping coaches involved long term.

It is clear, however, that coach pay needs to be linked with increased professional standards. A half of parents (49%) suggested they would be prepared to pay for coaches if they had the right level of qualification. Three-fifths of parents (60%) suggested they would be prepared to pay for coaching if they had the right kind of experiences to support their children.

Qualifications and experience clearly need to be linked to any licensing or registration system that emerges in relation to coaching.

More Information

A major concern expressed by the respondents was the need for more information about coaching (what is it and how it relates to other activities), coaching pathways and coaching opportunities, for example, taster sessions, teams and classes.

Respondents cited the need for more information on coaching standards, qualifications and/or licensing schemes. A number of respondents also mentioned the need for a centralised register of local coaches.

Parents also requested more information on the role that was expected of themselves in relation to their children's development and, for example, in the context of a club environment. A number mentioned the need for a single access point for information on sport and coaching.

Building A Coaching System

The previous sections have established the parameters for the development of a coaching system – better coaches, more coaches, professional coaching practice,

increasing public profile and remuneration. So what does this coaching system look like? The consultation identified the following priorities...

1. Strategic approach to participant and coach development

The coach system should be built around the needs of participants at particular stages of their development and in different pathways (recreational and performance, for example).

Another crucial concern is establishing a clear model of coach development with clear pathways, stages of coaching practice/expertise development, assessment, and the implications of this for experience and career opportunities.

2. Unified system and resources

Participant and coach outcomes will only be achieved by establishing system change based on a unified agreed approach with adequate resources for the employment and development of coaches, and the support structure which underpins this.

3. Quality coaches coaching

There is a clear need to increase the amount of quality coaching hours available to participants, delivered by a quality coaching workforce. The issue of coach remuneration, and funding for paid coaching, needs to be considered - perhaps building on the successes of the Community Sports Coach scheme in England.

4. Developing and supporting coaches

Within the context of a clear model for coach development, structures and systems should be put in place to provide coaches with the most relevant services, high quality advice, and formal and informal development opportunities such as the UKCC and mentoring.

5. Licensing coaches

There was clear support for the development of a coach licensing system and/or registration system for active coaches. This was seen as providing a base for the improving the consistency and quality of coaching practice through, for example, regular CPD and appropriate safety checks.

6. Better information on coaches and coaching

There is a clear need not only to improve the quality of the information underpinning coaching and coaching practice through research, and information system building, but also to communicate effectively to children, parents, adult participants, coaches and the public at large about the benefits of coaching and the systems underpinning it.

1. Introduction

As part of the development of the UK Coaching Framework, a widespread consultation was undertaken to gain a greater understanding of individual's and organisation's experiences and opinions of sports coaching within the UK. This consultation process was undertaken in parallel with two series of meetings with Governing Bodies, as well as the Home Country Sports Councils, UK Sport, Skills Active, Youth Sport Trust and other agencies.

The consultation covers much of the ground highlighted in the 1991 Coaching Matters (Sports Council, 1991), the UK Vision for Coaching (UK Sport, 2001) and the Coaching Task Force Final Report (DCMS, 2002), particularly at the coaching 'system' level. However, greater emphasis was placed on understanding the experiences and opinions of individuals at the heart of the coaching experience, that is, the children, the participants, parents and the coaches themselves.

The report brings together the key findings from the consultation, and the results have been instrumental in the development of the final UK Coaching Framework document.

2. Research approach

2.1. The Sample

Table 1 outlines the individuals and organisations involved in the consultation process. Over 800 individuals and organisations were involved in the formal data collection process between January and March 2006. However, many more individuals and organisations were involved in 1:1 meetings and discussions with sports coach UK staff. This provided another essential layer of information to feed into early developments of the UK Coaching Framework.

Table 1 – Consultation Sample

Target group	Responses
Children (5–11 years)	229
Children (12–15 years)	74
Adult athletes / players	62
Parents	88
Coaches	105
Partner Organisations	258
Base	816

Note: Partner organisations include Home Country Sports Councils, Sports Institutes, Governing Bodies of Sport, Higher and Further Education, Regional and Sub-regional agencies such as the Regional Sports Boards and County Sports Partnerships in England, and other sport related organisations.

2.2. Approach

The key objective of the consultation was to collect detailed feedback from the six key groups with regard to their coaching experiences. As such, questionnaires and topic guides were designed for each type of respondent, taking into account their particular involvement with coaches and coaching. This process allowed the data to be collected in the most appropriate way for each group. For example, the young children took part in small informal focus groups (because of the sensitivities of collecting information from

individual children) whilst the adult athletes participated in detailed one-to-one interviews.¹

The research followed a three-stage process, allowing detailed data to be collected from each group:

- **Stage One** – Partner organisations were invited to complete a web-based questionnaire highlighting their experiences and opinions of the current coaching system. The survey was widely advertised, and organisations had the choice of completing either the full-length questionnaire or a reduced questionnaire, depending on the detailed nature of their responses.
- **Stage Two** – Children between the ages of five and 15 years were invited to take part in small informal focus groups. Each group lasted no longer than 20 minutes and focused on approximately 12 key questions. Where possible, the children were interviewed on a primary school / secondary school basis (i.e. 5-11 year olds and 12-15 year olds).
- **Stage Three** – Parents, adult athletes, and coaches were invited to take part in structured interviews. Each interview was conducted on a one-to-one basis, and typically lasted 30 minutes. Again, a formal questionnaire was used to collect the information, with opportunities to gain additional insight in specific situations.

Key demographics, such as age, gender, disability, ethnicity and region, were monitored to ensure that a wide variety of people / groups were involved in the consultation.

Although the proposed methodologies do not provide a representative sample of respondents (i.e. most data was collected in a 'club' environment), it provided a valid opportunity to gain insight into the coaching experiences of individuals 'close' to sport. The data also provided the basis on which key themes were identified for further discussion with governing bodies and other partners.

2.3. Report structure

The following sections bring together the key findings from the consultation. Where possible, the data is analysed to allow comparisons between the different respondent groups (i.e. children, parents, athletes, coaches, and partner organisations).

The structure of the report is detailed in the paragraphs below, based on the following sections:

- The Coaches (Section 3); and
- The Coaching System (Section 4).

Further sample information is available in Appendix 1.

¹ A copy of the questionnaires and topic guides are available on request.

Section 3: The Coaches

Section 3 focuses on the coaches themselves, and begins by looking at the key characteristics people look for in a coach. It then examines in detail the perceived benefits and weaknesses of receiving coaching, and concludes by identifying the ways in which coaches could improve. This section also looks at ways to encourage a greater number of people to participate in coaching.

Section 4: The Coaching System

Section 4 takes a closer look at the coaching system. It begins by looking at the difficulties people faced when trying to access coaching. It then focuses on the perceived importance of coaching qualifications, and the extent to which people were prepared to pay more for more qualified or experienced coaching. It concludes by looking at the weaknesses of the coaching system and potential action areas.

3. The Coaches

3.1. Introduction

Coaches are at the heart of the coaching system and thus are the central concern of the UK Coaching Framework. This may seem obvious, but previous reviews have rather neglected the coach and the close networks within which they operate – favouring rather to consider the bigger picture ‘systems’ elements.

This section seeks to address this gap by considering the children’s, the athletes’, the parents’ and the coaches’ experiences and views on coaches themselves. The section considers the key benefits coaches provide to children and athletes. It then considers the main weaknesses in the existing provision, and provides some suggestions about how these weaknesses may be addressed.

3.2. Benefits of Coaching

The Participants’ Perspective:

When looking at the key benefits of coaching, it is possible to see a number of elements raised by the respondents. These included: having fun; learning and developing; participating in a safe environment; and benefiting from the structured nature of coaching sessions.

For the younger children (5-11 year olds), the key element was having the opportunity to play and have fun:

“I like the different things Alison makes us do, they are fun and I enjoy them”
(Younger child)

“Playing good games” (Younger child)

“Running around” (Younger child)

Having fun was also an important consideration for older children (12-15 years) and adults – though it was perhaps slightly less pronounced than for younger children, as other benefits such as learning and networking were seen as important. Only eight of the 62 athletes and 15 of the 88 parents mentioned this aspect as being a benefit to receiving coaching.

“The more fun the coaching, the more I enjoy the sport” (Adult athlete)

“Depending on the coach, the sport can be made to feel like a hobby or a chore. When you have the right coaching the enjoyment you get out of sport is 100 times more!” (Adult athlete)

Younger children (5-11 year olds) also liked being able to learn new skills from their coach, which in turn allowed them to see themselves improve and develop a much wider skills base.

“We get much more talented” (Younger child)

“They help you do things what you can’t do” (Younger child)

“I enjoyed learning new skills and tricks” (Younger child)

"I like it because my coach shows me how to it, because I want to be good at it, I show him what I can do and he says well done" (Younger child)

In comparison to the younger respondents, the 'learning and developing' element appeared to take on greater importance to the older children and adults. Specifically amongst the older children (12-15 years), it was possible to see from their responses how they began to value coaching as a way to learn new skills, allowing them to improve and develop within a particular sport.

"Because you get better at the skills and then you win the games" (Older child)

"It teaches you new skills that can be used in a game situation. Therefore more chances to get better" (Older child)

Similarly, the adult athletes believed that one of the key benefits of receiving coaching was having a coach who could encourage personal development and improvement, leading to higher levels of confidence. For many, this was achieved through having an opportunity to learn new skills, apply skills correctly, and therefore become a better player within their sport. Being motivated by their coach was also an important part of this aspect, and it was therefore seen as important to have a coach who could motivate athletes / participants to achieve their highest level of personal development.

"Knowing they can make you better, and you know they know what they're talking about" (Adult athlete)

"Feeling like I have achieved something when I finish a session" (Adult athlete)

"Learning new things and becoming technically competent" (Adult athlete)

"Enjoy learning new skills and sharing success with my coach" (Adult athlete)

"Seeing how I improve over time. Being shown the correct way to do things and how to improve. And putting new skills into practice to improve your game" (Adult athlete)

"My coach motivates me and helps me to become better, even when it's hard. I feel good about myself when I can see me improve" (Adult athlete)

"It has helped me reach a level which I am not sure I could have done without help" (Adult athlete)

"I enjoy it because I am better than I used to be and don't get as frustrated" (Adult athlete)

"It has enabled me to have the confidence to enter certain tournaments knowing that I can hold my ground" (Adult athlete)

"I can beat players and win tournaments which gives me personal satisfaction" (Adult athlete)

"It's improved my knowledge of the game and improved my level of the play, also given me more confidence" (Adult athlete)

"Without my coach I would not be an international athlete as I would not have had the knowledge needed to develop my own skills and would not have had the determination to train as hard as I do" (Adult athlete)

"For me it has made a massive difference. If it was not for my coach looking at the potential I had and working on it through his own knowledge of the sport, there is no way I would be competing at the level I do now!" (Adult athlete)

In line with the adult athletes' perceptions, the parents also believed that the greatest benefit of coaching was that it could have a wider impact on their child's knowledge and ability to learn. Interestingly, this does not support the main reasons of 'why' children like to receive coaching (i.e. having fun whilst exercising and keeping fit), but in fact is closer to the perceptions of the adult athletes in terms of what they believe is the benefit of receiving coaching. This perhaps, hints again at the need for targeted messages to parents about the nature of child participation in sport, as well as the need to ensure that successful coaching is both enjoyable and a successful learning experience.

"If you have the right coach, the kids will develop skills that allow them to perform better at that sport" (Parent)

"They have made significant improvements in the technique since receiving some coaching" (Parent)

"Good coaches teach them how to perform properly in a correct and safe manner; get the most out of it they can" (Parent)

"The opportunity to learn from someone who has the sport as a specialist discipline ...greater knowledge and enthusiasm" (Parent)

Although less important to the children and adult athletes, the parents also placed a certain level of importance on the coach's ability to develop the wider life skills of children. By this, they refer to the skills such as listening, teamwork, discipline, confidence, and social interaction, as well as being encouraged to succeed:

"The right way of doing things, give them confidence" (Parent)

"Sharing, playing as a team" (Parent)

"Being involved with other children apart from their school friends" (Parent)

In addition to having fun and learning, it was also important to the participants (of all age groups) that the coach provided a motivating learning environment, within a safe and structured setting. By this, they referred to elements such as a 'controlled' learning environment, that is, the coach understands the technical and environmental boundaries of the sport, and the benefits of being taught by an 'external source' (i.e. neither a family member or a teacher).

"It stops arguments" (Older child)

"They are safe when they are with the coaches / teachers" (Parent)

"They learn the sport in a structured and safe way" (Parent)

"It's better than being taught by my family or my teacher" (Younger child)

"The instructor, he knows what to do. The teachers don't help, they just talk, they're chatterboxes, a coach helps me play" (Younger child)

"No one helps at school, the teachers just watch and tell you when you get into trouble" (Younger child)

The quotations made by the younger children, above, are particularly interesting and may reflect the lack of qualified PE teachers in the early years of schooling. There is also significant evidence of external coaches delivering PE lessons, in particular through the Community Sports Coach scheme in England, and this may therefore have influenced the younger participant's perception of coaches.

The final beneficial aspect, according to the adult athletes, was the strong impact the coach had on their level of participation within a sport. Having a coach appeared to have a positive impact on an athlete's desire to train and improve, and would therefore often lead to a more sustained level of participation. Having access to a coach also had an impact on the continuity of participation, by motivating and maintaining an athlete's interest within sport.

"I played more because I know how to play better, I get more enjoyment" (Adult athlete)

"Coaching has given me something to aim for and work towards, so this raises my level of participation and encourages me to compete as a way of measuring my success" (Adult athlete)

"His attitude and personality has motivated me in games and training. It makes me want to train and guilty when I don't" (Adult athlete)

The Coaches' Perspective:

Having evaluated the benefits of coaching from the perspective of participants, it is interesting to make comparisons with the coaches' perspectives, particularly with regards to the elements that they considered to be the most enjoyable aspects of their work. Interestingly, the vast majority of coaches (all but seven) reported that the aspect they most enjoyed about their work was being able to help other people and watch them improve and progress.

"Seeing them have fun, learn and develop. Seeing the spark when they achieve something they have been working hard for" (Coach)

"It has got to be the passing on of knowledge and skills to the individual, plus the personal interaction that comes from that" (Coach)

"I enjoy the kids and their response and keenness for the sport, helping youngsters travel from not showing much ability to being able to put them forward to county trials, watching teams and individuals progress and knowing that I helped and played a part in that" (Coach)

"The problem-solving element. Different ways of doing things and helping people overcome their difficulties. I enjoy seeing people make progress, even reaching national level and also seeing them stay in sport as coaches or volunteers" (Coach)

This, therefore, sits extremely closely with the fact that the participants considered one of the key benefits of coaching to be that they could learn and develop skills within sport.

The Partner Organisations' Perspective:

The partner organisations were asked to indicate the key areas that have the greatest impact on the overall quality of the coaching system. The vast majority of the comments are reported in the coaching system section. For the purpose of this section, however, it is important to note that 14 comments made by the partners illustrated that the success of the coaching system was simply a reflection of individual coaches and their contribution to the system.

"The willingness of individual coaches to give up many hours of their time, unpaid, to develop the skills of those in their clubs" (Partner)

"Motivation of coaches to assist athletes to be the best they can" (Partners)

"Number of volunteer coaches keeps sport going (although this can also be seen as a weakness)" (Partner)

3.3. Weaknesses of Coaching

The following section considers some of the weaknesses cited about coaching. Only the adult athletes were directly asked about weaknesses, however, a couple of the older children also gave responses that were applicable to this section, and so these have been included.

Although there were many aspects of coaching that the respondents would like to see improved, it is important to note that 11 of the 62 adult athletes said that there was 'nothing' that they disliked about being coached, and therefore for 18% of this sample, no action was needed to improve the current provision.

Of the remaining 51 athletes, the largest proportion of comments (20 in total) were made in relation to specific problems with their coach, for example poor communication, poor delivery, coaching techniques, or poor people management.

"Insulting my intelligence" (Adult athlete)

"Negative, unreasonable coaches, who criticise as apposed to being critical" (Adult athlete)

The 'staleness' of a coaching session was seen as a problem for a number of the athletes (13 comments). The results suggest that coaches need to be inspiring and maintain a high level of motivation by making their sessions as varied and flexible as possible. This criticism illustrates how some coaching sessions are not providing either the fun / social learning environment or the opportunity to learn, which were considered to be key benefits of receiving coaching.

"If the coach is not very inspiring or motivating it can be boring. I want to be coached by someone who keeps the sessions very active and fun" (Adult athlete)

"Sometimes I don't feel like I'm learning anything new and feel like I am getting held back" (Adult athlete)

"The coach is stale in terms of ideas, we lost players because of the coach just doing the same things each week" (Adult athlete)

In addition to this, the adult athletes indicated that it was important that the coach focused their sessions on the needs of the participants who attend – i.e. an appropriate

standard, right combination of demonstration and practice, and again, maintaining a suitable level of fun which is appropriate for the particular participants.

"I don't like waiting around" (Adult athlete)

"Too much jargon, always referring to their bygone achievements" (Adult athlete)

"I like group coaching to be less structured if it is a social session, but individual coaching to be more structured" (Adult athlete)

This latter viewpoint was also supported by some of the older children who – without prompt - noted that the coaching environment could sometimes be too structured, and a more relaxed environment would be preferred. For some, it was almost viewed as being 'over-coached', and this therefore returns to the fact that it is important to maintain a level of fun (even for older children and adults) when conducting coaching sessions, especially in recreational pathways.

"Sometimes it's fun to have a kick around, it's nice to make up your own things sometimes" (Older child)

"They make training better, although sometimes you do just want to muck around with friends" (Older child)

The other aspects that the athletes considered to be weaknesses of receiving coaching were primarily personal issues (i.e. getting older, dislike of certain elements of training) and also the cost of attending training. To a certain extent, these elements can be considered 'external' or 'independent' to the coach, and therefore it is difficult for the coaches to tackle these issues. However, they do relate to the coaching system, which is discussed later.

3.4. Improving Coaches

Having evaluated both the benefits and weaknesses of coaching, it is possible to identify key ways in which the coaches need to improve, which will encourage greater use of coaching services, and therefore benefit the coaching system as a whole.

It is clear from the analysis throughout this report that coaching sessions need to be fun to ensure people enjoy taking part and long-term participation is encouraged. Although this finding is true for all the respondent groups, it is particularly true amongst the younger children (5-11 year olds) who place a strong importance on having the opportunity to have fun and take part in enjoyable sessions.

As this element was important to all the groups, it is important to understand how coaching sessions could be made more fun (according to the needs of each particular group of participants), and how such improvements could have an impact on increasing participation in sport. However, it is important to note that the results from this consultation are only the beginning, and it is clear that further research will be required to fully understand how to make sessions more engaging and developmentally appropriate.

The data suggests that a large proportion of the younger children (5-11 years) believed the sessions would be more enjoyable if they were encouraged, in particular, in a less formal/structured environment. This does not mean that learning new skills and techniques was not important but that it should be situated appropriately:

"Make it like a party and play with the balls and the floats and the floating animals" (Younger child)

"I like it when we play games" (Younger child)

"Not to shout as much" (Younger child)

"Supply some sweets as an incentive to make good shots" (Younger child)

"More loopy" (Younger child)

In many ways the older children had similar views to the younger children, in that they stressed the importance of fun during coaching sessions. However, there was also an awareness of technical skills development and ensuring that the coaching sessions were appropriately structured. It is therefore important that as the children get older, the coach should allow the participants to continue to learn through play whilst also being encouraged to have personal input / involvement into the sessions.

"We should do more game play and be more active, not so many drills" (Older child)

"Talk to me to find out what I want to learn and why" (Older child)

"Sometimes the younger ones mess around and spoil the session" (Older child)

As was noted on page 6, the parents were keen to see their children develop, but this should be undertaken in a fun and safe way to ensure their sustained commitment to sport:

"Encourage the children to really enjoy what they do, so that they leave with a smile on their face" (Parent)

"Apply their skills in line with the players' needs. Adapt the plans and take into consideration maturation and social development" (Parent)

"I really want them to treat my children as individuals. I think that is really important. Look at what they want to achieve and try to support it. In some cases I know this is difficult as aspirations far outweigh what the child is capable of" (Parent)

"Make it fun and safe, and let children enjoy participating" (Parent)

"At the early ages, they must make sport enjoyable for the kids, as that is what will ensure they stay in sport" (Parent)

"I would like to see that the activities are fun and not monotonous" (Parent)

"Should let them play, then do some skills, then play some more as they get easily bored" (Parent)

The parents also identified the characteristics that they were looking for in a coach for their children. The main elements were suitable teaching skills (63 comments), child-friendly (58 comments), technical knowledge (35 comments), an ability to encourage children (33 comments); and a fun approach to teaching (27 comments) – highlighting that parents are looking for a broad array of skills:

“Someone who is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and can strike up a rapport with the children” (Parent)

“Someone who is fair, safe, knows their subject and is enthusiastic” (Parent)

“Can motivate, stimulate and be a role model for life, not just sport” (Parent)

“I make sure they are qualified, experienced and have the right personality” (Parent)

The athletes also provided a high volume of comments with regards to their ‘ideal’ coach. The most common response was in relation to a coach’s approach to teaching, including elements such as a coach’s ability to listen, be creative, friendly, have good communication skills, inspire/motivate, committed, professional, supporting, and trustworthy. Adult athletes were also interested in the coach’s technical knowledge (35 comments), understanding of an athlete’s requirements (14 comments), and having a good reputation / coaching experience (13 comments).

“Motivating, good experienced coach who has good knowledge of the game, friendly and approachable, spends time getting to know the performers and structures sessions based on their needs” (Adult athlete)

“Knowledgeable, technical expertise, qualifications, strength of character to deliver sport effectively” (Adult athlete)

“Someone I can bond with and who I can trust. Someone who takes the time to get to know me and the way in which I work best. Someone I can build a partnership with” (Adult athlete)

The adult athletes identified a number of elements in connection with the coaching system, such as an increased standard from coaches, greater access to coaches (and specific coaching areas / techniques), more appropriate times and locations of sessions, and access to more information about coaching sessions (these elements are covered in more detail in chapter 4).

“I suppose it would be better in our set up if there were more than one coach. If there was, there would be the chance to develop individuals further, as one coach cannot see everything that goes on” (Adult athlete)

“Working with a higher level coach would encourage me to get involved” (Adult athlete)

Although there are clearly a number of areas that could be improved, it is important to note that a large proportion of the adult athletes and the older children (12-15 year olds) stated that nothing needed to be done to improve coaching. In the cases of the older children, this was due to them being happy with the current approaches; for the adult athletes, the reasons surrounded time impacts and the fact that they already considered their coaching schedule to be sufficient.

"No, cos she's fun already" (Older child)

"No, it's great" (Older child)

In addition to 'nothing' needing to be done, the largest proportion of the adult athletes (37%) actually made comments with a personal dimension (i.e. issues that were unconnected to the coaches, and therefore could only be tackled by the individual themselves). This included elements such as needing more personal time, more money, their age, or if the sessions could provide a greater opportunity to socialise with friends.

"I'd love to get back into having coaching on a regular basis, but I don't have the time or the money to be able to" (Adult athlete)

"More days in the week, and not having to work" (Adult athlete)

"If I had a group of friends that wanted to do it as well – if it became a social activity" (Adult athlete)

4. The Coaching System

4.1. Introduction

This section focuses on the coaching system in the UK. It begins by looking at the difficulties people faced when trying to access coaching. It then focuses on the perceived importance of coaching qualifications, and the extent to which people would be prepared to pay more for coaching if it guaranteed that their coach was both qualified and experienced. It concludes by looking at the weaknesses of the coaching system, and the areas in need of improvement.

4.2. Accessing Coaching

If the UK public's use of coaching is to be increased to meet wider objectives such as increasing participation, it is important to understand the current difficulties that individuals face when trying to access coaching for themselves or their children.

For the parents, the main problems appeared to be in accessing classes (i.e. long waiting lists), or accessing coaches within their local area. The parents proposed solutions to these problems, which primarily fell into the following six categories:

- Provide parents with a greater level of information – advance notice of classes so children can be registered / better advertising / feedback from coaches on child development / details on external support, such as transport and work arrangements;
- Provide higher number of activities and coached sessions;
- More local facilities / venues;
- Opportunities to attend courses themselves (i.e. so the parent can coach the child themselves) – this was of particular interest for parents with disabled children;
- Provide higher incentives to encourage people to become coaches / offer more full-time coaching salaries; and
- More coaches in schools.

To address a number of these issues, there was a need for a greater level of information for both parents and athletes, so that they can understand the coaching system and know how to access it at a variety of different levels (for example locally, nationally, privately, non-competitively, and within specialist coaching fields).

Parents specifically identified the need to know more about potential coaches / coaching venues (specifically within their local area), professional bodies, how to develop their child's skills, the role of a parent within sport, and possible learning paths for parents.

“A directory of sports within the area which are quality assured” (Parent)

“Give parents a better understanding of club set-ups, expectations of a child and parent. It tends to be word of mouth” (Parent)

“More information on who, what, and where there is availability outside school” (Parent)

“I realise this would be difficult to achieve, but a one-stop access to information about courses and clubs available in the local area” (Parent)

For the adult athletes who experienced problems in receiving coaching, the main issues concerned accessing the correct level of coaching (partially due to the lack of information and support) and the actual expense of coaching.

"It's difficult finding group coaching pitched at the right level. There's lots of junior coaching at the clubs but less good coaching at senior club level" (Adult athlete)

"At club level it is not hard, but as I have progressed it's been hard to know who to approach and who is appropriate" (Adult athlete)

"Hockey and football clubs often struggle to maintain the same coaches from one season to another which can often be frustrating and difficult to keep commitment from players" (Adult athlete)

"Money is the main issue as I'm a student and I haven't got much money. It's not too bad if I get coached by [coach] because I normally just have to pay for petrol etc. But if I am looking for coaching privately, a Level 4 / 5 coach is after £200 per day! And that is expensive" (Adult athlete)

In addition to requesting more information, a number of other issues also concerned the parents and athletes. For example, the parents were concerned about funding support; and more time for sport. Meanwhile, the adult athletes were concerned about limited access to clubs / coaches; location of facilities / transport issues; personal reasons (lack of time / family commitments); external factors (session times / weather); and lack of input over the choice of coaches at their club.

The greatest proportion (almost a third - 31%) of the adult athletes reported that they had not experienced any problems, and therefore, there was no call for change. Twenty of the parents also stated that 'nothing' needed to be done, and no further support was required. This was either due to the parent feeling that they currently had the correct level of support, or because they did not feel that their child was at a level that required the parent to be supported.

"The sports are good at including the parents. I always stay and watch and am happy with what they do" (Parent)

"Nothing that could be achieved, she's not at a level that I could ask for financial support, so I'm happy with the way things are" (Parent)

Taking on board the perceived weaknesses of the current system the parents, athletes and coaches were asked to comment on how the current coaching system in the UK could be improved.

For both the parents and the adult athletes, the largest proportion of comments came with regards to providing a greater number of coaches (including more full-time coaches, more coaches in school, encouraging greater access to sport). A number of the partner organisations also highlighted this point:

"More full-time employed coaches working under one agency to ensure they are the right person with the right qualifications to work with a particular age group and within a particular sport" (Parent)

"More coaches in schools" (Parent)

"Give players access to more coaching and training sessions" (Parent)

“Easily accessible, qualified and experienced coaches, across the country in different sports” (Adult athlete)

“Have more one-to-one coaching rather than group, sounds selfish, but that’s what I think I need” (Adult athlete)

“More access to coaching in Volleyball in this area as I have to go to Wolverhampton to access my coach. Most top level coaches are based in London” (Adult athlete)

“More funding for generating more full-time coaches, across a broader range of sports” (Partner)

“More coaches at all levels” (Partner)

As previously mentioned in this report, there was also a call for more available information. Not only would this work as a source of information about coaches, their standards and qualification, but would also provide parents and athletes with a source for identifying local classes / training sessions, and providing parents with the necessary support.

“More literature to let you know what is available in the area. Not publicised much” (Parent)

“More information on what levels coaches are and what that actually means in terms of knowledge, experience and ability” (Parent)

“Website for parents with links to all sports and the qualified coaches that they have” (Parent)

“Some sort of central register of coaches” (Partner)

4.3. Coaching Qualifications

To produce and maintain a safe and successful coaching system, it is important that the general public are not only able to access coaching, but are guaranteed that their coaches will be professionally trained and qualified. Previous findings from the ‘Sports Coaching in the UK II’ study² suggests that half (50%) of coaches in the UK hold a formal qualification in the sport that they coached.

Although it is clear from these findings that there can be difficulties when trying to access coaching, the extent to which the adult athletes and parents actually checked that their coach was suitably qualified prior to commencing any coaching sessions was not particularly encouraging. The following section evaluates the extent to which qualification checks were made, as well as evaluating the importance of making such checks.

Of the 88 parents who took part in the research, almost half (47%) based their evaluation of a potential coach on personal factors, such as observation of classes, recommendations from friends and family, or previous awareness / reputation of a particular coach. Only 12 of them spontaneously mentioned that they had enquired about the coach’s qualifications as part of the evaluation process.

² Townend, R and North, J (2007) Sports Coaching in the UK II, sports coach UK, Leeds, November.

"The coach did an initial session with her [the child] and a few others and I thought it was good, he encouraged her, supported her, she enjoyed it. Really though, my daughter made the decision" (Parent)

"In good coaching, I look at the children's faces, I look at how much they are learning. I look at the equipment, I look at the coach – do they look the part? I look at time management and activity level - less talk, more coaching. If they [the children] look forward to going and cannot stop talking about how good it was on the way home, for me that is good coaching" (Parent)

When prompted about the process of making qualification checks, the vast majority of parents (78%) reported that they had not investigated whether their child's coach had an up-to-date coaching certificate prior to commencing any of the sessions. Just 15 of the parents said that either a check was made personally or the coach's credentials were publicly displayed within the club they attended, therefore allowing them to accurately evaluate whether a coach was suitably trained, and of a suitable level for their child, prior to commencing the coaching.

"I didn't do any checks – I'd expect the club to make sure the coach was qualified and checked" (Parent)

"No, because I associate coaching with 'performance' level not with elementary learning so don't really think about qualifications ...incorrect I know!!" (Parent)

"No, as long as the child is enjoying themselves, you have to go with what's available, little choice" (Parent)

Interestingly, a further third (32%) of the parents reported that they had not made any checks when evaluating a coach as they believed it was the responsibility of the coach's employer (i.e. the club or school) to ensure that all staff were suitably qualified. As a result, these parents were not actually checking qualifications directly with the coach or through their employer (i.e. the club).

"Not done anything about this. Just assumed the coaches are of the required standard when they were enrolled on the scheme" (Parent)

"I didn't really, our local club already had the coach in post, and we went to the club as it was convenient" (Parent)

Similar to parents, almost a quarter of the adult athletes (24%) reported that they did not make any checks to see whether their coach had a current coaching qualification prior to commencing sessions. Again, the main reason for not doing so was due to the belief that someone else would take responsibility for checking (i.e. their club or gym) or that it was better to observe the coach and make their own judgment, rather than evaluate the coach's ability according to a result on a piece of paper.

"No, I judge for myself if they are good or not" (Adult athlete)

"No, I just assumed that because my friends were being coached by this person, it would be ok" (Adult athlete)

"No, I just assume they do. If they are based at a club I would have expected the club to have done the check" (Adult athlete)

In terms of checking whether or not a coach was safe to work with children (i.e. had been CRB checked), approximately half of the parents simply 'assumed' that it would be ok or believed that someone else would have made this particular check. In fact, only a

quarter of the parents actually asked the club or their coach for confirmation of their CRB status.

"I assumed the school had carried out these checks ...I'll go back and ask the school if they have done this and seen the documents" (Parent)

"I naively assume they have been police checked" (Parent)

"Through literature they handed out; through meeting them and speaking to them; through observing them" (Parent)

These quotes illustrate that parents and athletes invest a high level of trust in their child's coach, especially if they are employed through a club or school environment. As such, it is important to raise awareness in the future so that parents and athletes understand that it should not be assumed that these checks are taking place. Alternatively, a system should be developed where coach employers are required to check coaches' credentials, for example, a licensing system.

Despite the fact that the majority of the parents and athletes did not check their coach's qualifications, the vast majority still believed that coaching qualifications were important. Nearly all of the parents (84%) agreed that such qualifications were important, with a further seven percent reporting that 'elements' of the coaching qualifications were important. Meanwhile, 79% of the adult athletes believed they were important, with a further 10% also agreeing that 'elements' were important.

"It is important to know that your child will be safe with a coach. If it takes coaching qualifications to prove that the coach is fit to work with children then they are important" (Parent)

"Yes and no, most important thing is interaction and communication with the kids" (Parent)

"Oh totally, when you go on coaching courses you gain so much more from working with other people - demonstrations, and how to coach people. Good players do not make good coaches" (Adult athlete)

"They can help you get a job but I am not always sure that they make you a good coach. That is something different" (Adult athlete)

Focusing away from the participants, it is possible to see that 85% of the coaches believed qualifications were important, with a further eight percent agreeing that 'elements' of the qualifications were important. In line with this, all the coaches, except one, had some level of coaching qualification. The coach who reported that they did not have a current qualification was due to complete their Level 1 coaching course.

"Yes, I think it is important, although I think more emphasis should be placed on learning outside coaching qualifications" (Coach)

"Yes, to ensure consistency in coaching methods and practices" (Coach)

"Yes, very important, as well as having experience. Also important for coaches to keep their qualifications up-to-date and go on regular CPD training" (Coach)

Ensuring quality of coaching was another key issue for both the parents and the partner organisations. Whilst the parents focused purely on the need to ensure coaches were suitably qualified, the partners took a much wider view point and stressed a number of elements such as ensuring coaches were trained to a high level, making courses readily

available and accessible, providing structured CPD programmes and ensuring a minimum quality standard from coaches across all sports.

“Make Level 1 harder, make all coaches paid, and enforce qualifications” (Parent)

“For me, the quality of coaches across sports is variable. A Level 2 in some sports is not the same as a Level 2 in others! As a parent this is difficult” (Parent)

“There should be a non-specific qualification, which covers all generic skills. Things like 1st Aid, Health and Safety, child protection, and also knowledge on about how to organise coaching ...like a basic generic Level 1 course, and then people could do sport specific bolt-ons” (Parent)

4.4. Paying For Coaching

On the basis that most of the respondents thought it was important that their coaches were qualified, it is important to understand how willing the athletes and parents would be to pay for coaching in the future if it guaranteed that coaches would be either more experienced or more qualified.

The results suggest that just fewer than half of the parents (49%) would be happy to pay more for coaching if it guaranteed that their coach had an up-to-date coaching qualification. Less than a third (27%) disagreed with this view, with the remainder of the parents reporting that it would ‘depend’ or ‘was not applicable’ for their child at this particular stage of their training.

“I don’t mind paying extra for qualified coaches as opposed to an activity session” (Parent)

“It’s recognition that if someone has gone down this route, they should be paid to an appropriate level” (Parent)

“If I’m paying for coaching then the coach should be qualified” (Parent)

In comparison, a greater proportion of the athletes (60%) reported that they would be happy to pay more for a coach if it guaranteed that they had up-to-date qualifications. Similar to the parents, a quarter (24%) disagreed with this view.

“Yes, I’d be happy to pay more if the person was good and qualified because not always the best players make the best coaches” (Adult athlete)

“I’d be disappointed that not all coaches have qualifications. It should be a requirement, NOT an added bonus of a coach” (Adult athlete)

Although fewer than half the parents were willing to pay more for a coach with guaranteed qualifications, a greater proportion (60%) were prepared to pay more for a coach with guaranteed experience. As a large proportion of the parents (84%) reported that qualifications were an important factor, these findings illustrate the ‘expectation’ that coaches should be qualified, however, their level of ‘experience’ is more of a beneficial trait worth paying extra for.

“I would pay extra if this was the case so that my child could have better quality coaching” (Parent)

"[Experience] more so than a qualification, you need to be able to play the sport to certain standard" (Parent)

In comparison, only 19% of the parents stated that they would not be happy to pay more for an experienced coach, and in many of these cases their opinion was a reflection on their child's age or level – i.e. they considered their child to be too young to benefit from such a level of coaching.

Similar to the parents, a greater proportion of the athletes would be prepared to pay more for experienced coaches (65%) - a slightly higher proportion than those who would pay for a coach with qualifications (60%).

"Yes, as you would expect to pay more with a coach with experience, however, you still need to get on with them otherwise you won't learn anything" (Adult athlete)

"Yes, definitely pay more for a better coach" (Adult athlete)

"I would pay more for knowledge and experience" (Adult athlete)

Interlinked with the 'quality' element, was the need to move towards a coaching profession. However, it was mainly the coaches who identified this as an area for improvement - i.e. those at the very centre of the coaching sphere. From the coaches' perspective this was defined as making coaching an 'acceptable' full-time job, with pay that reflects the hours, viable career paths, and the necessary support.

"Make coaching a recognised profession, some sort of awareness campaign of how important coaches are" (Coach)

"Coaching should be seen as a professional career with a decent wage so people can work as a coach and make a living from it rather than having to do it extra to another job" (Coach)

"Make it easier to find full-time positions, have a clear pathway from qualifying and obtaining a degree to finding a coaching post" (Coach)

From the perspective of both the partner organisations and the coaches, there was a call for improved structure to the coaching system (again, this to some extent includes elements such as the professionalism and quality of coaching as discussed above). By 'structure' the coaches were referring to the need for a collective point of view (*"Everyone singing from the same hymn sheet"* – Coach), and for greater standardisation between sports and regions. There was also a call for greater clarity in terms of pathways for coaches, and more consistency in the overall approach to coaching.

"A more standardised approach to coaching across all sports. More recognition for coaches and a clear path" (Coach)

"Coaching to be a profession with career structures and recognition of coaches at all levels" (Coach)

"The system is very difficult to get your head around with a great deal of organisations delivering courses. Very confusing. One organisation would be better" (Coach)

"Uniformity in coaching – benchmarking across sports, and sharing information across sports. UKCC is key to achieving this" (Coach)

4.5. The Coaching System: The Partners' Perspective

Sections 4.2-4.4 provided an overview of end users' experiences and opinions on the coaching system and not surprisingly accessing coaching, and the quality and regulation of coaches were the most significant issues. The following section presents results from partner organisations who, it could be argued, have a more strategic overview of the coaching system and/or directly manage the coaches themselves.

Partners were quick to point to early successes in coaching, in particular, the work associated with the Coaching Task Force: United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC), Coach Development Officers (CDOs) and Community Sports Coaches (CSCs). The value of volunteer coaches was also recognised. This consultation exercise, however, was about system building and therefore it is not surprising that the greatest number of comments reflected existing weaknesses and developmental areas.

Table 2 - Partner Organisations' Perspective on the Coaching System

Statement	Score
Provide direct and relevant resources and services to coaches	4.2
Develop a clear model of 'long term coach development' for the UK	4.2
Establish a more unified approach to the planning and funding of coaching	4.1
Enhance the capacity of sports' governing bodies to deliver coaching objectives	4.1
Map out a clear and transparent model for the UK coaching system	4.1
Establish a clear UK wide certification system for coaches	4.1
Provide high quality advice and support to GB's on coaching/coach education	4.1
Pay coaches appropriately for their work	4.0
Establish training, advice and support for sports coach mentors	3.9
Recruit more coaches	3.9
Establish a central register/licensing system for coaches	3.9
Clearly define the stages of athlete/player development, including the key capacities to be developed at each stage	3.8
Maintain close contact with emerging European and World best practice	3.7
Educate athlete, players and their parents on the issues associated with athlete/player development	3.7
Develop a specialist qualification for the coaches of talented young athletes	3.6
Establish the role to be played by coaching in changing wider government objectives	3.6
Develop a specialist qualification for the coaches of children	3.5
Provide services for coaches on-line	3.5
Conduct on-going research on athlete/coach development issues	3.4
Re-define the nature of the working relationship between sports coach UK, Coachwise and partner agencies	3.4
Other	3.9

The partners were asked to rate a number of statements about the coaching system from one (low importance) to five (high importance) according to their importance (Table 2). The results suggest that direct support to coaches was the main priority, receiving an average score of 4.2 out of 5. This is reassuring as it places the coach at the heart of the system. Below this aspect were a range of measures that emphasised strategic and funding issues and improvement for coaching, followed by more specific measures around the development, education, support, licencing and research of

coaches. These elements are now picked up on a thematic basis with partner quotations to back up the evidence.

Unified System and Resources:

The partners' endorsement of the need for a system overhaul and new approach to funding is outlined in Table 3. This thematic area had the highest average score (4.1 out of 5) and concerned the development of UK coaching system 'model', establishing a unified approach to planning and funding and providing partners with the capacity to deliver on this new system, particularly governing bodies.

Table 3 – Unified System and Resources

Statement	Score
Map out a clear and transparent model for the UK coaching system	4.1
Establish a more unified approach to the planning and funding of coaching	4.1
Enhance the capacity of sports' governing bodies to deliver coaching objectives	4.1
Average	4.1

In terms of the qualitative evidence, partners highlighted the need for improving the system of financial support for coaches and the coaching system. In total, 12 partners mentioned financial issues as a weakness with the current system...

"Central funding for all aspects of coaches work, training, recruitment, etc ..."
(Partner)

"Appropriate funding for education and development" (Partner)

Strategic Approach To Participant and Coach Development:

The next thematic area focuses on a strategic approach to participant and coach development. The partners were asked to rate two statements for importance, resulting in an average score of 4.0 for this area (Table 4). The highest scoring statement related to developing a clear model for long-term coach development (4.2). Defining the stages of athlete/player development was also seen as important (3.8).

Table 4 – Strategic Approach

Statement	Score
Develop a clear model of 'long term coach development' for the UK	4.2
Clearly define the stages of athlete/player development, including the key capacities to be developed at each stage	3.8
Average	4.0

These results were reinforced by the qualitative data, for example, the lack of clear strategic planning for coach education and CPD and the need for clear pathways came out strongly...

"Lack of strategic planning in terms of coach education and ongoing CPD"
(Partner)

“Need career pathways and qualification clarification” (Partner)

“Joint single system for coach education, planning and resource deployment based on needs of the player pathway” (Partner)

Quality Coaches Coaching:

Another important thematic area concerned ensuring an appropriate supply of high quality coaches to meet participants' needs. With an average importance score of 4.0, this area, which included aspects such as recruiting more coaches and paying them appropriately for the work they undertake, was seen as highly important.

Table 5 – Quality Coaches Coaching

Statement	Score
Pay coaches appropriately for their work	4.0
Recruit more coaches	3.9
Average	4.0

The existing system was described as being too reliant on volunteers who are less likely to seek to improve their coaching....

“The total reliance on volunteers” (Partner)

“Lack of high quality local coaches” (Partner)

“Non-availability of coaches to get schemes or teams moving in the right direction” (Partner)

“CPD is not second nature” (Partner)

“Too many older coaches are not willing to change and update their skills” (Partner)

Or, who do not have the time to improve given existing systems...

“Workload of coaches who wish to improve” (Partner)

“The time burden of doing the qualifications” (Partner)

Many partners placed the blame on the lack of appropriate funding opportunities for coaches...

“Lack of funding for full-time opportunities” (Partner)

“Lack of full-time or substantial part-time employment opportunities” (Partner)

“Better pay and conditions (for coaches rather than high profile ‘performance managers’)” (Partner)

“Get a pay structure in operation” (Partner)

However, it is clear that for some partners the need to address volunteer coach issues is still very important, not least because they make up, and will continue to make up, a significant majority of the coaching workforce.

“Recruitment policies and plans to engage more volunteers in coaching” (Partner)

Developing and Supporting Coaches:

The next thematic area concerned developing and supporting coaches (Table 6). The partners emphasised the provision of relevant services, high quality advice, formal development opportunities (qualifications) and informal opportunities (such as mentoring) as key elements of this area. There was also support for specialist coaching qualifications, for example, coaching children and young people.

Table 6 – Developing and Supporting Coaches

Statement	Score
Provide direct and relevant resources and services to coaches	4.2
Establish a clear UK wide certification system for coaches	4.1
Provide high quality advice and support to GB's on coaching/coach education	4.1
Establish training, advice and support for sports coach mentors	3.9
Develop a specialist qualification for the coaches of talented young athletes	3.6
Develop a specialist qualification for the coaches of children	3.5
Provide services for coaches on-line	3.5
Average	3.8

Not surprisingly, most of the qualitative evidence focused on perceived problems with the existing qualification systems. For example, questioning the link between coaching qualifications and the development of expert coaching practice; as well as the variability of qualification provision between sports

“Certificates don't relate to the really good, naturally competent coaches – too prescribed” (partner)

“Variation in quality of NGB courses” (Partner)

There were also concerns about moving from classroom based courses to *in situ* informal learning opportunities such as mentoring ...

“Simple ‘non academic’ type courses / support locally delivered” (Partner)

“Structured CPD programmes to include high quality mentoring” (Partner)

Increasing the relevance and consistency of coaching qualifications is a central philosophy of the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC), as this is placing greater emphasis on *in situ* learning. Research is currently underway to understand whether this has been achieved in practice.

Licensing Coaches:

The licensing of coaches was also largely supported by partner organisations (an average of 3.9 out of 5) (Table 7).

Table 7 – Licensing Coaches

Statement	Score
Establish a central register/licensing system for coaches	3.9
Average	3.9

This was seen as a method of regulating the coaching profession, addressing coaching quality issues, for example, through an integrated system which links licensing to development opportunities....

“Coaches appointed at the very highest level should be capable of delivering at that level, and not appointed through cronyism” (Partner)

“No coach licence system. Organisations all doing their own thing” (Partner)

“Get some sort of central register of coaches” (Partner)

“Constantly applied minimum quality standards for the recruitment, employment, training, and CPD of coaches” (Partner)

Better Information on Coaching:

The final thematic area focuses on the need to provide parents, participants and coaches with better information – a theme already discussed earlier in the Section. There was also support for understanding and applying best practice at home and overseas through a comprehensive research programme.

Table 8 – Better Information on Coaching

Statement	Score
Educate athlete, players and their parents on the issues associated with athlete/player development	3.7
Maintain close contact with emerging European and World best practice	3.7
Conduct on-going research on athlete/coach development issues	3.4
Average	3.6

Role of sports coach UK:

In terms of taking these actions forward, and developing a better coaching system, the vast majority of the partners believed that sports coach UK would be required to take a ‘guidance and leadership role’ (mentioned by 45 of the partners). This incorporated a wide range of elements including, providing advice and consulting with relevant parties on behalf of partners / coaches, providing guidance and support to relevant parties, co-

ordinating and enforcing quality coaching, and producing relevant tools and resources to coaches / partners.

Although this covers a vast range of activities, it is possible to see that the partners were shaping the role towards one that ensures quality coaching and providing expertise to support the wide range of partners within the coaching field.

“Should be a collective voice of sports coaches in the decision making process of Coach Education, Assessment, and Qualification” (Partner)

“Lead for coaching development, ensuring a quality coaching workforce is in place meeting needs at national, regional and sub-regional levels” (Partner)

“Provide a set of minimum standards for pay and conditions to help coaches avoid being exploited by sports governing bodies” (Partner)

“Always look to evolve courses – the good practice child protection course is the same as three years ago” (Partner)

“Provide tools, guidance and resources for demand and supply of coaching to happen” (Partner)

Appendix One – The Sample

Introduction

This initial section focuses on the sample, i.e. the respondents who took part in the consultation. As well as providing response rates for each group of respondents, it also looks at their frequency and level of participation, types of sports undertaken, and the location in which they took part in sport. This section also focuses on the extent to which people were encouraged to receive coaching.

As part of the research, sports coach UK consulted with a variety of audiences including children (consulted in small groups of 5-11 year olds and 12-15 year olds), adult athletes, parents, coaches, and partner organisations. The table below presents the total number of responses from each group at the end of the fieldwork period in March 2006.

Table A1 – Consultation Sample

Target group	Responses
Children (5–11 years)	229
Children (12–15 years)	74
Adult athletes / players	62
Parents	88
Coaches	105
Partner Organisations	258
Base	816

Frequency of sport participation

Table A2, below, presents a summary of participation levels for each group of respondents. Although the adult athletes were the most likely group to participate in frequent exercise (i.e. 5-6 times per week or more), it is the older children who have the highest average participation rate, standing at 4.6 times per week. The parents are the least likely group to participate in frequent exercise, and have an average participation level of just 2.5 times per week.

Table A2 – Frequency of participating in sport

	Younger children (5-11 yrs)	Older children (12-15 yrs)	Adult athletes	Parents
5–6 times per week or more	23	27	41	
3 to 5 times per week	42	60	28	30
2–3 times per week or less	36	6	32	70
Base	199	74	62	50
Average per week	3.5 times	4.6 times	4.0 times	2.5 times

* NB: Missing data is excluded from the table - base numbers reflect this

Types of sport undertaken

Table A3 identifies the 10 most commonly mentioned sports for each group of participant. The results illustrate that football was the most common sport undertaken by the younger children (5-11 year olds), the older children (12-15 year olds) and the adult athletes. In comparison, tennis was the most commonly mentioned sport by the parents. Within the top five places, football and tennis are mentioned by all four of the respondent groups, whilst swimming is undertaken by all groups except the older children (this falls into 6th place for this group).

These findings partially support those from the Sport England study conducted by MORI which indicated that the top three sports that young people participate in outside school are swimming, cycling and football ('Young People and Sport in England – Trends in Participation 1994-2002').

Table A3 – Most commonly mentioned sports undertaken by each group (unprompted response)

	Younger Children (5-11 years)	Older Children (12-15 years)	Adult Athletes	Parents
Most commonly mentioned Less commonly mentioned	Football (approx 24 grps)	Football (approx 10 grps)	Football (23 mentions)	Tennis (15 mentions)
	Rugby (approx 20 grps)	Basketball (approx 7 grps)	Tennis (22 mentions)	Gym (9 mentions)
	Tennis (approx 19 grps)	Tennis (approx 7 grps)	Netball (13 mentions)	Swimming (9 mentions)
	Swimming (approx 18 grps)	Netball (approx 6 grps)	Hockey (12 mentions)	Running (7 mentions)
	Gymnastics (approx 15 grps)	Rugby (approx 6 grps)	Swimming (12 mentions)	Football (6 mentions)
	Cricket (approx 14 grps)	Swimming (approx 5 grps)	Athletics (10 mentions)	Hockey (5 mentions)
	Hockey (approx 12 grps)	*	Rugby (10 mentions)	Netball (5 mentions)
	Netball (approx 12 grps)		Basketball (9 mentions)	Circuit / fitness (4 mentions)
	Basketball (approx 11 grps)		Running (9 mentions)	Golf (4 mentions)
	Dance (approx 10 grps)		**	Squash (4 mentions)

* Five sports received equal mentions in four focus groups (athletics, badminton, cricket, dance, gymnastics)

** Two sports received equal mentions by five athletes (badminton and golf)

NB: Due to the format in which the children's data was collected, it is not possible to provide an exact number of mentions per child; however, it is possible to identify the number of groups in which a sport was mentioned, and rank the data in that format.

Location of sports played

In terms of the locations where people participated in sporting activities, both the children's groups (5-11 years and 12-15 years) followed similar patterns, with the majority taking part in sport at school or in a local club. The vast majority of adult athletes (89%) also conducted some or all of their sport at a club, whilst approximately one-third (31%) took part at an educational venue (i.e. schools, colleges, sixth forms, or universities).

Table A4 – Most commonly mentioned locations for undertaking sport by each group (unprompted response)

	Younger Children (5-11 years)	Older Children (12-15 years)	Adult Athletes
Most commonly mentioned ↓ Less commonly mentioned	School / school club (approx 29 grps)	School / school club (approx 12 grps)	Club / local club (mentioned by 89%)
	Club (approx 26 grps)	Club (approx 10 grps)	School / 6 th Form (mentioned by 23%)
	Sport / leisure centre (approx 16 grps)	Sport / leisure centre (approx 3 grps)	Sport / leisure centre (mentioned by 18%)
	At home / on street (approx 14 grps)	At home / on street (approx 1 grp)	University (mentioned by 8%)
	Community centre (approx 4 grps)	Field / Astro turf (approx 1 grp)	Road running / the park (mentioned by 5%)
	Park (approx 4 grps)	Park (approx 1 grp)	Holiday (mentioned by 3%)
	Village / church hall (approx 4 grps)	* *	Private gym (mentioned by 3%)
	*		Privately (mentioned by 3%)

* Six locations received equal mentions in two of the focus groups – athletics stadium, dance school, golf course, private gym, riding stables, and skate park.

** The older children only provided six locations

NB: Due to the format in which the children's data was collected, it is not possible to provide an exact number of mentions per child; however, it is possible to identify the number of groups in which a location was mentioned, and rank the data in that format.

Consistent with the children and adults data, the coaches reported that they most commonly worked in clubs and educational facilities. Details of where the coaches worked were as follows (findings are given for 5% agreement or higher):

- Club / Academy / Private Swimming Pool (mentioned by 86%);
- Schools / Colleges (mentioned by 46%);
- Sport / Leisure Centres (mentioned by 9%);
- Community Clubs / Groups (mentioned by 7%);
- University (mentioned by 7%); and
- County venues / squads (mentioned by 7%).

Level of sport undertaken

Table A5, below, focuses on the level (i.e. beginner, regional, national etc.) at which the respondents participated in sport. The data suggests common patterns across all ages. For example, all the groups could be seen to be participating recreationally, as well as in schools and clubs, and at county, regional, national levels.

Table A5 – Level of sport undertaken by each group (unprompted response)

	Older Children (12-15 years)	Parents' children	Adult Athletes
Most commonly mentioned ↓ Less commonly mentioned	Club (approx 7 grps)	Club (mentioned by 51%)	Club (mentioned by 48%)
	County (approx 3 grps)	Beginners (mentioned by 34%)	County (mentioned by 27%)
	Beginners (approx 2 grps)	School (mentioned by 15%)	National (mentioned by 13%)
	Intermediate (approx 2 grps)	County (mentioned by 13%)	Recreationally / socially (mentioned by 13%)
	Recreationally (approx 2 grps)	Recreationally / fun (mentioned by 13%)	International (mentioned by 11%)
	Regional (approx 2 grps)	National (mentioned by 9%)	Professionally / semi (mentioned by 10%)
	District (approx 1 grp)	International (mentioned by 6%)	School / University (mentioned by 10%)
	National (approx 1 grp)	Regional (mentioned by 2%)	Regional (mentioned by 8%)
	School (approx 1 grp)	*	Local leagues (mentioned by 5%)

* Two levels received equal mentions from one parent each – district and novice

NB: Due to the format in which the children's data was collected, it is not possible to provide an exact number of mentions per child; however, it is possible to identify the number of groups in which a level was mentioned, and rank the data in that format.

Specifically in regards to adult athletes, it is possible to see that the largest proportion (32%) played at club level as their highest level, whilst a further 21% played up to county level. Exact details are presented in Table 6 below.

Table A6 – Highest level of sporting participation (adult athletes)

	Frequency	Percent
Club	20	32
Recreation	6	10
County	13	21
Regional	4	6
National	7	11
International	8	13
Professionally	4	6
Base	62	

* NB: Percents may not total 100% due to rounding

The data illustrates that the coaches also worked at a number of different levels, ranging from recreational sports to international performance. The coaches provided a total of 26 different responses with regards to the levels they coached. This illustrates both the vast range of terminology available, as well as a possible lack of clarity in terms of clear pathways for coaches to follow.

The levels can be grouped together into four categories, with some coaches working across all levels (for example, *“Playground to performance”* and *“All levels”* which were mentioned by 11% of the coaches). The four categories are as follows:

- **People based levels** (i.e. teenagers, adults, disability groups);
- **Skill based levels** (i.e. beginners, improvers);
- **Educational based levels** (i.e. Pre-school, University); and
- **Competitive based levels** (i.e. club, regional, international).

The list below provides details of the approximate number of coaches who work within each level. Please note that the figures are only approximate due to the large number of coaches who provided data in formats such as *“beginners to elite performance”*, whereby it is not known exactly which levels this included. In all cases, the percentage is calculated from the total coach base of 105, and not the base for that particular category.

- **Competitive levels:** (total of 110 mentions)
 - o Club / Community Club (mentioned by 42% of all coaches)
 - o County / minor county / Academy (mentioned by 24% of all coaches)
 - o Regional (mentioned by 11% of all coaches)
 - o National (mentioned by 11% of all coaches)
 - o International (mentioned by 7% of all coaches)
 - o Performance (mentioned by 5% of all coaches)
 - o Professional (mentioned by 3% of all coaches)
 - o District (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
 - o Satellite squads U16s (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
- **Skill based levels:** (total of 54 mentions)
 - o Beginners (mentioned by 35% of all coaches)
 - o Improvers (mentioned by 11% of all coaches)
 - o Intermediate (mentioned by 3% of all coaches)

- o Advanced (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
- o Masters (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
- **People based levels:** (total of 44 mentions)
 - o Children / elite children (mentioned by 20% of all coaches)
 - o Juniors (mentioned by 9% of all coaches)
 - o Disability groups (mentioned by 6% of all coaches)
 - o Seniors (mentioned by 3% of all coaches)
 - o Teenagers (mentioned by 2% of all coaches)
 - o Rehabilitation groups (mentioned by 2% of all coaches)
 - o Recreational (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
 - o Adults (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
 - o Able-bodied groups (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
- **Educational based levels:** (total of 28 mentions)
 - o School (including primary / secondary / sixth form / after school clubs) (mentioned by 16% of all coaches)
 - o University (mentioned by 4% of all coaches)
 - o Pre-school (mentioned by 4% of all coaches)
 - o Grassroots (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
 - o Fundamental (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)
 - o Levels 1-7 of national plan for teaching swimming (mentioned by 1% of all coaches)

Receiving coaching

The children and athletes who took part in this research were being coached in the majority of the sports they participated in. This finding was particularly true for the younger children (5-11 year olds), who were coached in nearly all the sports they participated in.

These findings are likely to be a reflection of the 'type' of respondents who took part in the research (i.e. identified by sports coach UK in club settings), rather than an accurate reflection of all sport participants within the UK. For example, findings from 1996 General Household Survey illustrated that 46% of the British population had participated in sport and physical activity (excluding walking) during a period of four weeks. Of these, just fewer than a quarter (23%) had received coaching, which equates to approximately 11% of the British population who were receiving coaching.

The sports for which all three groups (younger children / older children / adult athletes) received coaching included athletics, basketball, cricket, football, games / PE, gymnastics, hockey, netball, rugby, swimming, and tennis.

Although it is not possible to provide an exact quantitative figure against the children's data (the information was collected in groups rather than on a one-to-one basis), the most common sports that the athletes received coaching for were as follows:

- Football (15 adult athletes);
- Tennis (13 adult athletes);
- Hockey (11 adult athletes);
- Athletics (10 adult athletes);
- Rugby (mentioned by nine adult athletes); and
- Netball (mentioned by eight adult athletes).

In comparison, the following list provides details of the 10 most frequently mentioned sports in which the coaches were currently coaching athletes and children. As expected,

this list corresponds fairly closely to the most common sports in which the athletes participated.

- Football (mentioned by 28 coaches);
- Athletics (mentioned by 18 coaches);
- Tennis (mentioned by 18 coaches);
- Multi-skill sports or disability multi-skill (mentioned by 15 coaches);
- Rugby (mentioned by 15 coaches);
- Swimming (mentioned by 14 coaches);
- Hockey (mentioned by 13 coaches);
- Netball (mentioned by 10 coaches);
- Gymnastics or rhythmic gymnastics (mentioned by nine coaches); and
- Basketball or wheelchair basketball (mentioned by nine coaches).

Reasons for using coaching

The data suggests that the majority (90%) of parents encouraged their children to receive coaching for one or more of their sports. Whilst some of the parents introduced their child to a specific sport, others would only encourage attendance once their child had chosen a sport and shown some level of interest. However, it is interesting to see that for many, swimming lessons differed from the other sports, and was seen as a 'necessity' rather than a 'choice' sport. This sport was therefore encouraged by many of the parents.

"Swimming for safety reasons, and to keep them fit" (Parent)

"It's their choice ...except swimming which is a life skill and so a must-do" (Parent)

"Yes, I suppose I do. How can you expect to get better if they are not coached! It is a must in my opinion" (Parent)

"Yes, they receive coaching as part of the clubs they go to" (Parent)

The list below presents the five most commonly mentioned sports in which the parents encouraged their children to take part. It is possible to see from the response rates how swimming lessons were more likely to be seen as a 'necessity', and therefore more likely to be encouraged, than the other sports.

- Swimming (26 parents);
- Football (16 parents);
- Rugby (10 parents);
- Tennis (nine parents); and
- Gymnastics / rhythmic gymnastics (eight parents).

For many of the parents, it was a case of wanting their child to participate in a wide variety of sports, and for this reason they were happy for them to take part in any activities they were interested in. There was therefore less of a demand for their child to participate in a specific sport chosen by their parent, but rather a desire for them to be active.

"Just have a go at all sports" (Parent)

"Whatever they enjoy" (Parent)

Interestingly, this perspective was irrespective of whether the parent themselves was currently involved in sporting activities, as a similar proportion of the parents who were taking part in sport, as those who were not, wanted their child to experience a wide range of sporting activities.

Only four respondents had not actively encouraged their children to receive coaching. In each of these cases, however, the child was already receiving coaching, and therefore illustrates that these particular parents were not opposed to coaching, they just simply did not feel the need to actively encourage such level of support.

Of the remaining five parents (i.e. those who neither encouraged nor discouraged coaching), three highlighted that a level of commitment or skill was required from their child before they would invest in coaching. Another mentioned that 'enjoyment' was the major factor, and the final respondent was unsure what 'coaching' meant.

"I don't think it is essential at the beginning, but help and guidance needs to be given at an appropriate time for a child's development" (Parent)

"If they showed an interest. But I wouldn't know where to go to receive coaching sometimes" (Parent)

"Not until a spark of desire and commitment - he needs to be 'dead' interested" (Parent)

"It [coaching] hasn't been the main factor, the main consideration was that they enjoy the sports that they participate in" (Parent)

"Is the session he has just been in coaching, because I don't really know what coaching is?" (Parent)

The above quotations raise some interesting issues about the awareness, perception and value attached to coaching by parents. This is a recurring theme throughout the report and highlights the needs for clearer messages to be given to parents about coaching and the associated benefits of receiving coaching.