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## Transferring learning into practice: Learning Notes

### Introduction

This document is based on the findings of the Evaluation of **sportscotland**'s support for coaches and coaching. It highlights the key findings and offers examples of what works and why in terms of transferring the learning achieved through **sportscotland** support into practice in the coaching workplace. Developing and applying the critical coaching behaviours required for high quality coaching will help to ensure a world class sporting system in Scotland.

### Objective

Through **sportscotland** support, coaches develop new skills and knowledge. They must be able to apply these to their coaching practice, from recruiting sport participants to planning and delivering coaching sessions. There should be no barriers to coaches applying their learning. All coaches should be able and encouraged to apply it across all sports, settings and at all coaching levels.

### The evidence

- **sportscotland** support has improved the technical coaching skills and abilities of coaches. It has developed more confident and capable coaches who are better able to motivate and engage sport participants.
- Coaches are better equipped to respond to the different needs of sport participants and are better equipped to make decisions and problem-solve.
- The majority of coaches are making lasting behaviours to their coaching behaviour.
- As a result of **sportscotland** support, most coaches have or intend to set short or long-term goals to improve their coaching.
- Coaches report that applying their learning in their coaching improves the skills, abilities and performance of sport participants.
- More coaches assess their skills more highly following **sportscotland** support.
- Some coaches report barriers to applying the new skills and knowledge in the workplace. The barriers include the need for additional support, being blocked by senior coaches and club members as well as lack of opportunity, mainly due to time constraints.

### What works

- Having a structured approach to supporting coaches to applying learning helps coaches to practice the application of what they have learnt in the 'classroom'.
- Buy-in from the wider coaching team, in particular senior coaches, smooths the way for coaches to apply their learning.
- Reflecting on practice helps coaches to embed and improve new skills and knowledge..
- Follow-up learning opportunities, through post-course materials, practical coaching aids and peer support helps to reinforce the learning and sustain the learning outcomes.

## Points to consider

- **Ensuring buy-in**  
Coaches are better able to apply their learning to their coaching where they have the support of senior coaches and colleagues. Involving the wider coaching team in decisions around which member will take part in what particular support helps to develop their buy-in. This can be best achieved through a team approach to Training Needs Analysis to understand the strengths and development needs of all members. Added to this, demonstrating the benefits of each training opportunity, to coaching and sports participants, helps secure and sustain buy-in.
- **Reflective practice**  
Consciously reflecting on what coaches have applied from their learning, and critically considering what happened as a result helps to continually develop and reinforce the new skills and abilities of coaches. Encouraging coaches to question how they plan and deliver coaching, and giving them the tools to do this constructively, helps them to take ownership of their own learning and drives improvement in coaching performance
- **Reinforcing the learning**  
Coaches can leave the learning environment with the full intention of applying their new skills, knowledge and abilities in the workplace. However, factors can work against this which diminish the impact of the support they have received.

Reinforcing the learning following the support means that coaches are reminded of what they have learnt and support them to test it out. Providing feedback or assessment of the impacts can give coaches additional confidence that they have understood and embedded practice.

- **Removing barriers**  
Ensuring buy-in from the wider coaching team helps to remove barriers but coaches can still find it difficult to apply their learning as fully as they might wish to. Following the support, giving coaches ring fenced time within the normal coaching schedule time will allow them to plan how they will put the learning in to practice. Coaches who are able apply their learning are more likely to stay in the workforce and so this approach is an investment in the future.
- **Cascading the learning**  
When coaches share their learning with other people in the coaching workforce, then the impact of the learning is broadened.. Approaches that encourage the cascade of learning can widen the reach of learning and support.