

Women in Coaching programme

Evaluation report

Putting sport first

sportscotland
the national agency for sport



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Executive summary

The Women in Coaching programme was a pilot programme aimed at retaining and increasing the quality of female coaches in sport. The programme offered support to female coaches to help them achieve their potential.

sportscotland invested in the Women in Coaching programme for three years, from 2009 to 2011.

In the first half of 2010, an interim evaluation examined the key successes and challenges of the programme to date and reviewed the direction. This process led to revised outcomes to drive the programme in its final stages.

A final evaluation of the programme was completed in year three. It has two aims:

- 1. To reassess key successes and challenges of the programme, citing changes and improvements since the interim evaluation was carried out.**
- 2. To derive key learning from the programme that can be used to develop future mentoring programmes.**

The key findings from the final evaluation are outlined in Table 1 on the following page.



Table 1: Key findings

Outcome	Summary of findings
Coaches achieve	<p>Coaches continued to achieve against their development plans.</p> <p>Many coaches increased the level of their coaching.</p> <p>A small number of coaches were unable to reach their potential and as a result left the programme either through their own choice, or based on a decision by the governing body.</p>
Coaches access training	<p>Coaches used over two thirds of their funding to access training opportunities. These opportunities varied between continuing professional development and coaching qualifications.</p>
Coaches coach and remain active	<p>Coaches continued to coach and many increased the number of hours they spent coaching.</p>
Coaches are supported	<p>Coaches felt supported by their mentor and through funded opportunities. This support has been crucial to success and achievements.</p>
Mentor support	<p>Coaches and mentors stayed in touch in a variety of ways and most coaches felt happy with the frequency of contact. Face to face contact is deemed to be the most beneficial.</p> <p>Mentors offered coaches a variety of support methods to help them achieve their goals.</p> <p>Some coaches and mentors were unable to have face to face meetings, which they would prefer.</p>
Mentors are supported	<p>Most mentors felt supported.</p> <p>Some mentors would like additional support in the form of networking and opportunities to be in touch with other mentors.</p>
sportscotland project team support	<p>The sportscotland project team led on the delivery of a number of recommendations from the interim evaluation. This ensured the functions of the steering group and the project team supported mentors and coaches in the final stages of the programme.</p>
Coaches are recruited	<p>Throughout the duration of the programme, coaches were recruited to replace coaches who had left the programme.</p> <p>In the final year, no new coaches were recruited as there was insufficient time for them to build a relationship with a mentor and gain the full benefits of the programme.</p>
Systems and procedures enable success	<p>A review of the personal development plan (PDP) template was completed. This process was successful for the majority of coaches.</p> <p>The steering group felt more could have been done to communicate changes.</p>
Leadership and direction	<p>Improved leadership from sportscotland in the final year of the programme included reviewing the role of the steering group and updating its functions to ensure this fully supported the programme.</p>
Clearly defined and shared programme outcomes	<p>Programme outcomes were revised as a result of the interim report, and these were communicated to all partners.</p>

The findings from this evaluation, combined with thoughts from the interim evaluation have resulted in key learning and recommendations that can be incorporated into the development of future mentoring programmes:

- Mentors require support and networking opportunities with other mentors.
- All roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined and shared at the outset of the programme.
- Clear guidelines on how funding can be spent. The aim of any spend should be to support the achievements of the coach.
- Some sport-specific mentoring is required and should be available in addition to ongoing mentor support for goal setting, signposting and so on.
- The coach selection process is critical to success. Ensuring that coaches are engaged and committed from the outset will ensure longevity and success.
- Coaches need to be matched with mentors that live within a reasonable geographical distance. The coach/mentor relationship is critical to success and a review process for this needs to be in built.
- Increased profile of the programme to raise awareness of women in coaching and encourage commitment and engagement for all partners.
- Incorporate the use of social networking for sharing information and development opportunities/events.

Overall the Women in Coaching programme was a success. The vast majority of coaches achieved success on the programme. For mentors, success was seen as their coach achieving. However, mentors felt they needed more support and more networking opportunities.

For coaches, funding was obviously important to their success, but for many coaches the support of their mentor was critical. Some coaches and mentors have developed relationships that will extend beyond the limits of the programme.

The programme demonstrated the strengths of a partnership approach, but also highlighted some weaknesses. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities at the development stage is key to success.

Future mentoring programmes could benefit from using the learning outlined in this report to ensure even greater success.

“Sport for me is a passion, it is a huge part of my life and I look for every opportunity now to develop it”

“It is the first time I have applied for something and been accepted through “CV” process. This was a massive boost, to be accepted onto the scholarship was a great motivator”

“I would never have believed I could gain the next level qualification but the programme gave me the confidence to go for it”

Introduction

The Women in Coaching programme was a pilot programme aimed at retaining and increasing the quality of female coaches in sport. The programme offered support to female coaches to help them achieve their potential.

sportscotland has invested in the Women in Coaching programme for a three year period, from 2009 to 2011.

In the first half of 2010, an interim evaluation of the programme was undertaken with the support of HelmePark. The evaluation examined the key successes and challenges of the programme to date and reviewed the direction of the programme. This established revised outcomes to drive the programme in its final stages.

The report outlined key recommendations for improving the programme in its final phase. A final evaluation of the programme was completed in year three. It has two aims:

- 1. To reassess key successes and challenges of the programme, citing changes and improvements since the interim evaluation was carried out.**
- 2. To develop key learning from the programme that can be used to develop future mentoring programmes.**

This report outlines the findings from the final evaluation of the programme focusing on:

- Impact of the programme on coaches and mentors
- Achievements and successes
- Key learning.

Background and context

The Women in Coaching programme was established in 2009 as a response to the under representation of qualified female coaches in Scotland. A pilot programme was developed which invested in female coaches, providing them with a mentor and opportunities for professional development and training.

Programme structure

A brief overview of the programme structure is provided below. For a detailed outline of the programme structure please see the interim evaluation report¹.

Coaches and mentors

The programme was targeted at five sports, in four local authority areas. The governing bodies were gymnastics, hockey, netball, swimming and tennis. The local authority areas were Edinburgh, Glasgow, Tayside and Fife and Scottish Borders.

Coaches were targeted and selected by the governing bodies, and each governing body put in place a selection and application process, with some fundamental elements incorporated consistently for all governing bodies. Selected coaches were required to sign an agreement which outlined what their responsibilities would be.

Governing bodies and local authorities identified mentors and each mentor was allocated a coach. In the vast majority of instances mentors were allocated one coach. Some mentors had two coaches to mentor.

Each mentor signed a contract which outlined their responsibilities. In the final year of the programme, these contracts were revised and new contracts were signed. Where mentors did not meet their expected responsibilities they were not paid. There was some movement of coaches and mentors on and off the programme over the three years.

Tennis and netball retained five out of the six coaches that were originally selected for the full three years of the programme. Swimming retained two out of three coaches. For hockey and gymnastics two of the original six coaches selected for the programme continued to year three. The reasons that coaches left the programme included a mixture of coach commitment and the approach taken by governing bodies for selecting coaches. All governing bodies continued to recruit coaches in year one and year two, keeping the numbers to their original as much as possible.

For mentors, a number left the programme in the first year, but participation remained relatively consistent for the remainder of the programme. A total of ten mentors left the programme for a variety of reasons including: lack of time to commit to the programme, personal circumstances, or because their mentee had left the programme. Two mentors were newly recruited in year two.

Programme management

A steering group led by **sportscotland** was established, with representatives for each participating governing body and local authority area. The group met approximately every two to three months throughout the duration of the programme and made decisions on delivery and implementation.

The programme was a partnership approach, between **sportscotland** and the participating local authorities and governing bodies. Partnership agreements were developed and signed.

¹For an outline of the development of this targeted approach and more detail please go to www.sportscotland.org.uk/womenincoaching

Research methodology

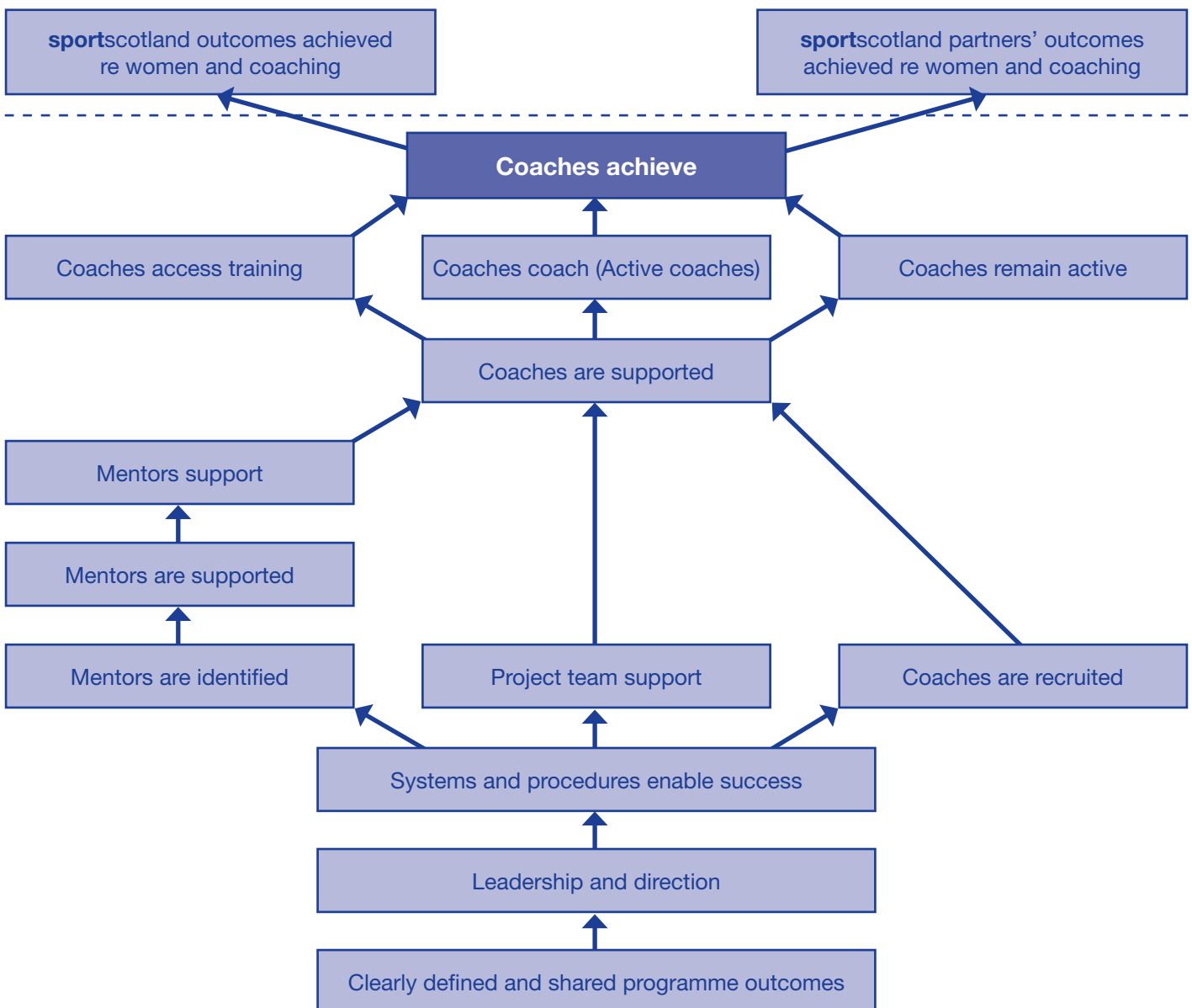
The interim evaluation of the Women in Coaching programme established an outcomes pathway and direction for this evaluation.

Outcomes

The diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the outcomes that the success of the programme was measured against. This outcomes pathway was developed by HelmePark for the interim evaluation.

This report will present findings based upon the outcomes presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Evaluation outcomes pathway



Data collection

Coach survey

Helmepark developed a survey and this was sent to 20 coaches. 15 coaches responded. The survey asked coaches about: success, challenges, training opportunities, the support of a mentor, overall experience of the programme and improvements for future mentoring programmes.

Coach interviews

Eight coaches were approached to be interviewed. Of these, three coaches participated in an interview with a researcher at Helmepark. Information collected from the three interviewees highlighted the pathway of these three coaches, from selection through to plans for the future. Although the number of interviewees was disappointing, the three coaches who were interviewed each had very different experiences and the information collected brings some of the survey data to life.

Mentor survey

A survey was sent out to all 18 mentors on the programme and 17 responded. One mentor was unable to respond due to personal commitments at the time of the survey.

Steering group session

A facilitated session was run with the steering group, representatives from **sportscotland**, one local authority area (Edinburgh) and one governing body (netball). Two governing bodies were unable to attend and provided feedback separately (gymnastics and hockey).

Feedback was not directly received from Scottish Borders, Tayside and Fife and Glasgow. However, three **sportscotland** regional coaching and volunteering managers, who had previously been representatives on the steering group for these three local authority areas attended the session and gave feedback as a member of the steering group, taking into account all of their experience of the programme.

Feedback was not received from swimming.

Scottish governing body (SGB) application and selection process

Each governing body was emailed five questions which related specifically to the success of the process they put in place to select coaches for the programme. This task was carried out after findings from the steering group session demonstrated that this was a key component of the programme which could impact upon success. Four of the five governing bodies responded. No feedback was received from swimming.

sportscotland summary of steering group actions

The interim evaluation provided a number of key recommendations for the steering group to implement in the final phase of the programme.

These recommendations were summarised in an action plan that was discussed at each steering group meeting. The project lead at **sportscotland**, who oversees the programme, pulled together a summary of this action plan for this report.

Limitations

The programme by its nature is small, data reported here refers only to the experience of a small sample of coaches and mentors. Not all coaches participated in the survey or the interview so the data is representative of the experiences only of those coaches who did participate.

Key findings

The key outcome for the Women in Coaching programme was that coaches achieve. Findings from the session with the steering group demonstrate that coaches have achieved and this has been a key success of the programme.

"We now have a group of better qualified female coaches with some moving on to coach at high performance level"

The findings from the survey of coaches and mentors, and from the interviews with three coaches, also demonstrate that coaches achieved, and these findings are highlighted below.

"It has been great to gather women together and it has encouraged more women to be involved in sport and find out about the others who are out there too along with them"

"[being a mentor] has opened my mind to mentoring and given me a greater understanding of what mentoring is, I think my coach [mentee] has definitely benefited from being involved in this programme with her confidence increasing and technical knowledge...increasing also"

Coaches achieve

Coach successes

For those coaches who responded to the survey, most agreed that the programme had a positive impact on their coaching, the people they coach and the place where they coach.

Coaches were asked to outline three key achievements which resulted from their involvement in the programme. It is clear that the number of opportunities the coaches were exposed to played a key role in what they felt where their key achievements. Key achievements outlined were:

- Reaching a higher level of coaching
- Developing a skill or new knowledge
- Opportunities such as attending an international event or conference, having sessions with a sports psychologist, developing skills in a different branch of their sport or setting up new opportunities for people to participate in their sport.

Other coaches mentioned their coaching qualification, their mentor relationship or the increased confidence they have gained from being part of the programme.

Mentor successes

"Helping [my] coach believe in themselves, building confidence, helping [my] coach look at [the] bigger picture of what is out there"

Many mentors responded to questions about their own success in terms of the achievements of the coaches they mentored. Key successes outlined by mentors included:

- Supporting the development of their coach and providing action planning and goal setting tools and support
- The achievements of their coach, including their level of coaching, the opportunities they had taken up, and their general development
- Building the confidence of their coach and encouraging them to further develop in their coaching career
- Providing opportunities for development and the coaches take up of these opportunities.

Coaches access training

Two thirds of funding given to coaches was used to access training opportunities; around half of this was spent on coaching qualifications and half on continuing professional development (CPD) training and workshops.

Almost all of the coaches achieved at least one level of their coaching qualification whilst on the programme. For the 15 coaches who responded to the survey, over half of them had increased their level of qualification, by at least one and sometimes two levels, since being involved in the programme.

Four of the coaches who responded to the survey had not attended any of the CPD training offered by their local authority or governing body. However, this may not represent all of the CPD opportunities that coaches may have attended.

For those coaches who attended any CPD training, almost all of them agreed that the training had a positive impact on their coaching.

For those coaches who did not attend a CPD training opportunity the reasons outlined for this were: work or coaching commitments, late application to the programme, the location of the training or being unaware that these opportunities were open to all coaches.

Coaches coach and remain active

A third of coaches involved in the programme had increased their coaching hours since being involved in the programme, by between 3 and 12 hours. Many coaches continued to coach the same number of hours and some had slightly decreased their coaching hours.

Two coaches had secured a coaching position as a direct result of being involved in the programme and a majority agreed that being involved in the programme would help them to secure work in the future.

Coaches were involved in coaching a variety of different groups including:

- Girls
- Mixed children and adults
- Women
- Community groups
- People with disabilities.

Coaches are supported

Coaches on the programme are supported in a number of different ways. When asked what they felt was the best thing about the programme, most coaches mentioned the funding or financial support they received and the support they received from their mentor. Other comments noted access to networking with other female coaches and mentors.

"I think we have both grown through it [mentor/mentee experience]. I am not sure that [the mentor] knows the value [they] have been to me!"

Mentor and coach contact

Mentors and coaches stayed in contact with each other in a variety of ways. Some coaches and mentors did not live or work near each other and for this reason a variety of methods for keeping in contact were used. For the most part, face to face contact, and at least one session where the mentor observed the coach in a coaching session, was the preferred method of contact.

16 mentors had some type of contact at least once per month, of these four used at least two different methods of contact and six used all three methods of contact.

For those mentors who had face to face meetings, these were found to be useful or very useful, as was email contact. Telephone contact was also considered useful by most, with one mentor who did not find this method useful.

11 mentors spent 30 minutes per month mentoring, and seven spent an hour with coaches. This time included all forms of contact with coaches. One coach spent three hours per month mentoring their coach.

For coaches, the majority were happy with the frequency of contact with their mentor. Coaches cited email and face to face meetings as the most common form of contact, with face to face meetings being rated as the most effective.

Support methods

Almost all mentors offered their coaches support setting goals and action planning and providing them with general support and reassurance. Other common types of support mentors offered coaches included: review framework², lifestyle choices, feedback and advice on courses.

One mentor offered technical advice and small numbers supported their coaches by analysis and observation.

Coaches cited advice and encouragement as the most common and helpful form of support they received from their mentor. Coaches also mentioned: career support, friendship and signposting.

Achieving success

When asked what helped them to be successful on the programme coaches rated finance towards a coaching qualification, for CPD training or to support general improvement to their coaching and guidance from their mentor as the most important factors. Other factors mentioned included guidance from a sporting mentor, support from their local club or place where they coach and the timing of the programme.

When asked to choose just one factor which they felt was the most important in helping them to achieve success, coaches chose finance to help them achieve the next level in their coaching qualification.

Table 3: Mentor and coach contact

Type of contact	Once per month	More than once per month	Once every two months
Face to face meeting	7	1	4
Telephone conversation	8	4	4
Email contact	1	0	5

²The review framework is a mentoring technique used and is review is spelt out as follows: R = reassure, E = establish focus, V = review, I = input, E = emphasise, W = what next.

Mentors are supported

Most mentors gained support through attendance at training workshops, via contact with **sportscotland** or networking with other mentors.

When asked what support would help them to improve their mentoring, most mentioned improved contact with other mentors. Improved contact included: attendance at training workshops and mentor forums or development of an online mentor forum. Some mentors admitted that they had not been able to attend mentor forums but knew these would have provided support.

Motivations

Helping and supporting a coach's development was the most important motivator for almost all of the mentors. Other motivations included raising awareness of the barriers facing female coaches and developing mentor skills.

Four mentors agreed that their mentoring payment was an important motivator, where as 14 mentors agreed that this was not important.

Continuing professional development

12 mentors undertook continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities as part of the programme. The sessions attended varied considerably between the mentors. Eleven mentors found the session(s) beneficial, one mentor did not find the session(s) beneficial.

For those who were unable to attend CPD opportunities, the main reason was lack of time. Others stated transport issues or opportunities not suiting their needs.

Challenges

The key challenge mentioned by mentors was finding the time for regular meetings. Sometimes this was a result of travel time, or mismatching, availability between the coach and mentor. If a good relationship was established early on, it tended to be easier to manage when contact could only be via email, as happened in a couple of instances.

Time was also a challenge for mentors more generally. Finding the time to meet coaches was mentioned but so too was generally finding time to 'mentor'.

Some mentors found the commitment of their coach a challenge, stating that they did not feel their coach was fully committed to the Women in Coaching programme.

Achieving success

"The strength of the programme has been to be able to think outside the box and look at coaching as part and parcel of the coaches' life"

11 mentors stated that they felt specific knowledge and skills helped them to achieve successes with their coaches. The kind of skills mentioned included: action and development planning, previous mentoring or coaching experience and softer skills such as listening and communication skills.

Mentors also mentioned that: resources such as training and mentor and coach resource packs, face to face meetings, a good relationship with their coach, having the right people involved and ensuring that both the coach and mentor dedicated time to development helping them to achieve success with their coach.

Some mentors also mentioned specific components, such as flexibility, signposting, sport specific guidance and coach's enthusiasm.

sportscotland project team support

The final evaluation gathered data on project team support in two ways.

- A session was held with steering group members who discussed how the programme had improved since the interim evaluation.
- The **sportscotland** project lead pulled together a review against the action plan that was developed based on the recommendations in the interim evaluation.

Findings from these methods are summarised in this section.

Personal development plans

Feedback from the interim report showed that the development of a good personal development plan (PDP) was a key success factor, however there was some feedback that the PDPs required review. Led by **sportscotland**, the PDPs were reviewed at two mentor forums. The outcome of these forums was that the current template should remain in place.

In the final year, 13 of 22 coaches submitted a PDP to **sportscotland** and partners. It appears that some coaches found the PDP process gave them a focus, but this did not appear to be true of all coaches. The key challenge was ensuring the coach was able to commit to completing a PDP and following through on the outlined actions.

There was some feedback from the steering group that the process for communicating changes to PDPs needs to be improved. They also agreed that as coaches and mentors gained experience coach PDPs improved.

Leadership and direction

A key finding from the interim evaluation was that the role of **sportscotland** as the programme manager who leads the steering group needed to be strengthened. In order to achieve this the action plan was used in conjunction with a standing agenda and meetings were more focused and productive. Unfortunately, one governing body ceased fulfilling its duties as a steering group member and hence, their input was not included.

The interim report more generally found that roles and responsibilities for all parties involved in the programme were unclear and this had created some confusion. Actions taken forward by the steering group included:

- Brainstorming sessions at steering group meetings
- Developing and implementing a revised mentor contract
- Putting in place a coach agreement and producing a logic model for the programme, which was presented at the Glasgow mentor forum and to the steering group.

The steering group overwhelmingly supported that roles and responsibilities were now clearly understood and the function of the steering group had improved. However, there were concerns about commitment to the steering group by some governing bodies.

Clearly defined and shared programme outcomes

Key actions developed following the interim evaluation and were successfully completed communicating the logic model to **sportscotland** staff, the steering group and other partners and mentors.

Coaches are recruited

In order to ensure the success of the programme it was key that coaches were recruited throughout the duration of the programme, with 20-25 coaches continually being supported throughout the duration of the programme. If a coach left the programme, a new coach was recruited on a sport by sport basis. In the final year of the programme, no new coaches were recruited. The steering group was agreed that one year was not a sufficient amount of time for coaches to establish a relationship with their mentor and access relevant training opportunities before the programme ended.

Coaches and mentors: what does the future look like?

Mentors, coaches and the steering group were asked what they would like to see included in any future mentoring programmes. A number of suggestions were raised and these are summarised below.

Key improvements: mentors

The most common key improvement mentioned by mentors was more opportunities to network with other mentors and coaches on the programme. Other key improvements mentioned were:

- improved commitment and understanding of responsibilities from coaches
- Providing coaches with an understanding of the role of their mentor
- A robust selection process which ensures that the right coaches engage with the programme
- Increased profile of women in coaching.

Other mentors mentioned key improvements such as:

- Ensuring that the matching of mentors and coaches is right from the start
- Providing more information for mentors such as online support and improved resources
- Ensuring all partners are fully committed to the programme.

Other comments included:

- More representation from the SGB central location for courses and events
- Regular support contact
- More coaches per mentor
- More training at the start and more ongoing training
- Make mentoring a profession
- Expand the programme to include more female coaches
- Produce a calendar of events.

Mentors were given the opportunity to provide any other comments. Comments received included:

- A shorter programme time frame might be more suitable for some coaches
- Selecting the right coaches is a key success factor
- Mentors need to be able to commit a lot of time to the programme
- Clear roles and responsibilities need to be set out from the very start
- Training and events should be delivered in a central location.

Addressing challenges

When asked what could have helped to address these challenges, mentors stated that they would have liked more support at the initial stages, with planning, the selection process and ensuring that guidelines which clearly established roles and responsibilities were available from the beginning.

Other comments included: support from the governing body or **sportscotland**, being geographically closer to the coach, ensuring coaches are fully committed and providing networking opportunities for coaches and mentors.

Two mentors said that there was nothing that could have helped them to address the challenges they faced and one was not sure.

Key improvements: coaches

Coaches were asked what additional support would help make a better programme in the future. Four coaches mentioned communication and structure from **sportscotland**, including increasing the profile of the programme, providing information about training and perhaps providing an online forum for coaches and mentors to share information. Sharing good practice was also considered an important improvement that could help a future programme.

Continuing after programme end

13 mentors would like to continue mentoring their coach. Mentors would continue to support their coaches through informal contact, and some would also consider continuing the formal mentoring relationship, or would keep in contact via friendship.

Six mentors said they would not continue to mentor their coach without the support of the programme. There was a mixture of reasons. Some mentors felt that their relationship had reached its natural end whilst one felt their coach no longer needed mentoring. Some mentors felt the relationship had not been successful.

Six coaches also agreed that they would like to continue working with a mentor in some capacity. Coaches also felt that they could continue to be supported through their governing body, through networking events and knowledge of opportunities to attend CPD or training. Ensuring that communication regarding training opportunities and so forth is continued was also mentioned by members of the steering group.

Key improvements: the steering group

Steering group members provided feedback regarding how they would structure a mentoring programme in the future. The key components which the steering group felt should be incorporated in a future programme were:

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all and from the very start
- A greater responsibility on the governing body and/or local authority to manage the selection and match process
- Funding tailored to the needs of coaches
- The partnership approach to programme management to provide support to the coach
- **sportscotland** leads by providing training opportunities and funding.

Learning

This section of the evaluation pulls together the key findings that can be taken forward to establish key learning for the development of future mentor based coaching development programmes.

Mentor support

The steering group commented on the support offered to mentors. Some comments included that roles and responsibilities need to be clarified and that the initial training session is an important success factor.

When asked about their overall experience of being involved in the Women in Coaching programme there was some inconsistency between mentors and coaches. On average, coaches rated their experience positively. In contrast, ten of the mentors said that their experience of being a mentor was good or very good and eight said that their experience was average or poor.

This finding, combined with the comments mentors made about additional support required, confirms that future programmes would do well to ensure the mentors feel connected and supported and have opportunities online or face to face, to keep in touch with other mentors and the programme lead.

Funding

The steering group commented that the current structure of allocating funding to coaches was not successful and clarity was required going forward. This action was taken by the steering group for the final year, but was not completed. Requests were managed on an ad hoc basis at steering group meetings. Guidance on what the funding can be used for and how it is distributed to coaches will be important for future mentoring programmes.

The steering group suggested:

- Funding should be targeted or ring fenced for female coaches in the future
- A mentoring programme for women should be targeted at sports that have a real need for women coaches
- A larger programme should be developed that has a greater impact.

Sport specific mentoring

For some of the coaches there were specific benefits for having a mentor that was not involved in their own sport, some of these included:

- Discussions focused on coaching practice rather than tactics
- Mentor was more objective and the relationship was more informal
- Sharing examples from a different sport/background
- Not involved in any sport or club related “politics”
- Mentor offered a fresh perspective.

When asked about the disadvantages, five coaches agreed that there were no disadvantages. A few coaches felt that the lack of understanding of their sport including the technical aspects was a disadvantage. A few also commented that their mentor was not able to connect them with the right people in their sport.

The steering group also commented on sport specific mentoring and supported the development of multiple support for coaches in the future. This means coaches could access a sport specific and a multi sport mentor.

Selection and matching

Comments from the mentors and coaches indicate the importance of the selection process and ensuring the coaches understand their responsibilities, the purpose of the programme and what the role of their mentor is. In addition the matching process was also seen as important, as getting the right mentor/mentee relationship was seen as crucial to success.

“With this mentee, the failure to fully engage in the process meant it was near to impossible to arrange face to face sessions”

“I live over an hour’s drive from my coach and we both have very busy lives so finding time to meet face to face was tough”

It also emerged from the steering group that the selection process is critical to success and must ensure that the right coaches are selected. In particular, it was agreed that the programme was an excellent opportunity for coaches who have a clear vision of their development.

The governing bodies gave feedback on the selection process that they used and were asked to comment on the success of this. A set of key selection criteria for coaches on future mentoring programmes emerged:

- Coaches should have a commitment to their own development (this was also mentioned by many of the mentors)
- Coaches should have a level 2 qualification and be looking to complete their level 3
- Coaches should be interviewed.

In some instances, sports had thorough and successful selection processes, with a high number of coaches remaining on the programme for the full three years. The selection process was important, but so too was the experience the coach had of the programme, including the commitment the governing body had to the coach and the programme. In some instances, coaches were not matched with the right mentor, and the mentor/mentee relationship did not flourish and as a result the coach’s full potential was not met.

“Selection of coach and mentor is key – putting the ‘right people together”

Conclusions

Overall the Women in Coaching programme has been a success. The vast majority of coaches achieved success on the programme. Through the support of a mentor, funding and developing a personal development plan, coaches were able to improve their knowledge, skills and qualifications. For some coaches, this resulted in increased coaching hours, a new coaching position, exposure at international events and competitions and new job opportunities.

For mentors, success was seen as their coach achieving. However, mentors felt they needed more support and more networking opportunities. For coaches, funding was obviously important to their achievement of success, but for many coaches, the support of their mentor was critical. Some coaches and mentors have developed relationships that will extend beyond the limits of the programme.

The Women in Coaching programme piloted a partnership approach to implementing a development programme for coaches. The programme demonstrated the strengths of this approach, but also highlighted some weaknesses. Establishment of clear roles and responsibilities at the development stage is key to success.

Future mentoring programmes could benefit from using the learning outlined in the report to ensure even greater success.

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