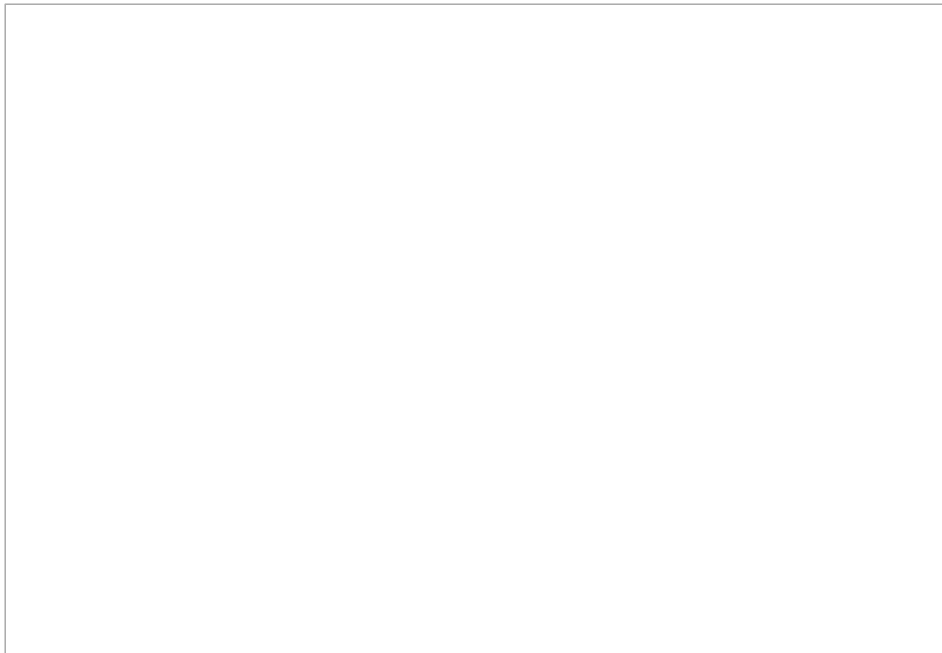


The Coaching Plan for England – Half-time report

Published 10/12/18 by [Blake Richardson](#)



Edited highlights of the second anniversary celebration of the Coaching Plan for England, hosted by Sport England and UK Coaching.

I was granted a front-row seat at America Square in London, where the Coaching Plan’s chief architect Stuart Armstrong and UK Coaching Head of Participation Heather Douglas gave an upbeat half-time ‘team-talk’ to partners, leaders, coaches and participants. In short, while the coaching sector has – to continue the sporting motif – taken an early lead, it is very much a game of two halves and we must all step up our efforts and continue to pull together as a team.

‘I love it when a plan comes together’, Colonel John ‘Hannibal’ Smith would remark at the end of every episode of *The A-Team*.

And while Sport England Head of Coaching Stuart Armstrong would not dream of being so presumptuous about the Coaching Plan for England, things certainly seem to be going to plan.

No victory speech just yet then, but there is reason for optimism at its halfway point.

Attendees received an update on the Plan’s progress before hearing some key strategic recommendations for the future. These were based on a comprehensive review of coach education conducted by Sport England, in association with the Sport & Recreation Alliance.

We were also given some deep-dive insight into the largest ever survey into coaches and coaching by YouGov, commissioned by UK Coaching, which is being used to address the challenges the industry faces in improving the diversity of its workforce.

To get the creative juices flowing, six VIPs were invited to speak. These ‘Voices of Incredible People’ delivered their own compelling coaching stories to small groups on a rotational basis. While their individual pathways into coaching were unique, the overriding message was abundantly clear: it is imperative that the industry finds a way to spread empowering stories like these so that they filter into the public consciousness, such is the emotional impact they can have on enforcing behaviour change.

Finally, before close of play, guests were asked to reflect on what we as a sector can collectively do to transform coaching and help our nation become more active.

Multiple choice for all is the answer

Each VIP spoke with raw emotion about their transformational journeys.

Hailing from traditionally under-represented groups, their routes into coaching involved having to overcome barriers because of their gender, disability, ethnicity or disadvantaged background.

‘Our VIP stories provoke an emotional connection with the issue of inclusion and diversity,’ said Heather, who feels passionately about the power of coaching to change lives, but is just as passionate that coaching should be accessible to the many and not the privileged and the few.

This is vital if we are to establish an open door, access to all model for the sector, rather than a ‘Sliding Doors’ model in which chance not choice determines people’s fate.

Heather explained: ‘If you don’t know it, the plot of the film *Sliding Doors* is based loosely around how, with some minor variables, people can take two or three very different paths in life.

‘I bet we can all plot a path of how we got to where we are today and the positions of influence we hold. Well, we want to help people avoid

the near misses, the what ifs and the almost was.’

Which means giving people the opportunity to choose their own path and be able to consider their options at the start of their journey and throughout – at these Sliding Doors moments.

To do this we need to remove elements such as unconscious bias, prejudice, lack of confidence and other long-established barriers – the variables Heather referred to above – that can send people either unwillingly or unwittingly down different paths.

Encouraging figures camouflage hidden problems

The 2017 UK Coaching survey explored the participant experience of receiving coaching and the experience of being a coach. It makes for fascinating reading.

It suggests that the coaching workforce is relatively diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity, and its findings have been laid out in two separate deeper-dive reports: [A Spotlight on Gender](#) and [A Spotlight on Ethnicity](#).

These will help inform a sector-wide plan for Inclusion and Diversity. However, Stuart advised caution when it comes to interpreting the results.

For example, in the 12 months prior to the survey, there were over 2.7 million active white coaches in the UK and over 700,000 active BAME coaches. This represents 6% and 10% of the UK population respectively, and suggests that there is a greater proportion of the adult BAME population involved in coaching than the adult white population.

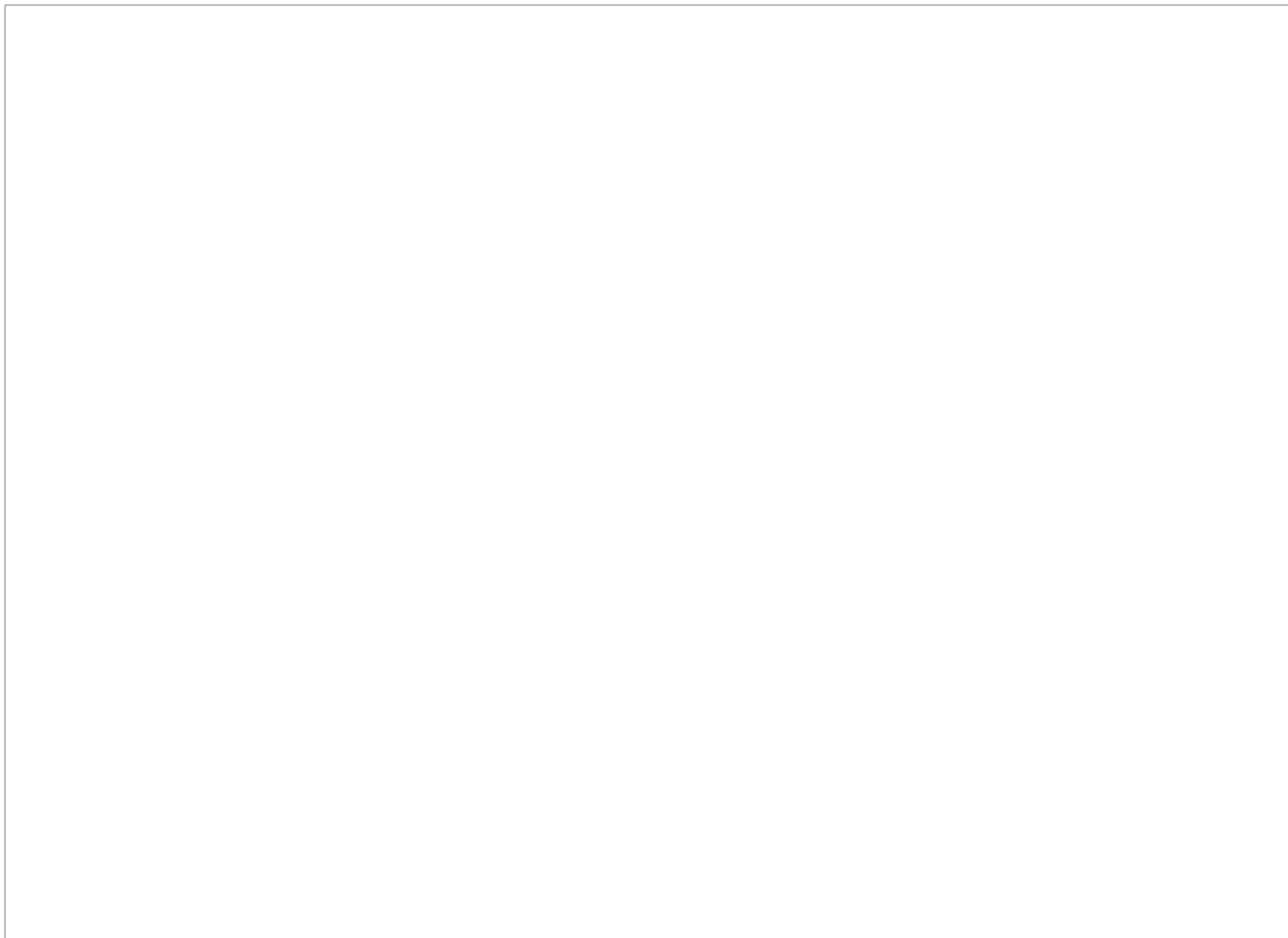
‘We’re not doing too badly in terms of the diversity profile but when you dig a bit deeper there are a few other issues,’ said Stuart. ‘So, while it’s great we are actually seeing more people from the BAME community coaching in the top level (Level 3 and Level 4) – more than other populations – what you find lower down [the coaching pyramid] is that the BAME community is underrepresented. That tells me, once we get them in, they stay in coaching, but that recruitment is the bigger issue.’

Another example involves the finding that significantly more women (5.8 million) than men (3.5 million) are in receipt of coaching, representing 21% and 14% of the adult population in the UK respectively. There is a discrepancy between these findings plotted against the results of previous surveys.

This is because previous research focused on coaching within traditional sports club settings and used a narrow role definition of a sports coach. The YouGov survey used the broader definition of coaching and so included female-dominated activities such as Zumba instructors working in private health clubs, dance teachers operating in church halls and keep-fit instructors operating in local community centres.

Heather agreed that those working in the sector must therefore scratch beneath the surface.

‘The figures in the baseline study are quite promising but we need to delve deeper into the stories and the narrative behind those figures to make sure we’ve got the absolute honesty and realism of what that data really is.’



Introducing... the new Professional Standards

Returning to the Coaching Plan. Good things come in small packages, so the saying goes, and this is certainly true of the [‘Coaching Plan for England: Two years on’](#) booklet produced by Sport England.

It provides a neat recap on the last two years and explains that the intention of the Coaching Plan is to act as a ‘lever for change’ across the coaching system.

‘We aim to build on this initial progress by working to increase cohesion and alignment of organisations across the sector by supporting them to align to the new framework of Professional Standards,’ it states.

The pages below summarise what has been happening behind the scenes over the course of the last two years.



In terms of the future, and coach education specifically, Sport England is looking to modernise the learning and development (L&D) landscape to make it easier for coaches to progress their careers and advance on their chosen learning pathway.

‘We are looking at new ways to roll out qualifications and get people trained and the new Professional Standards are the starting point of that,’ said Stuart, pictured below.

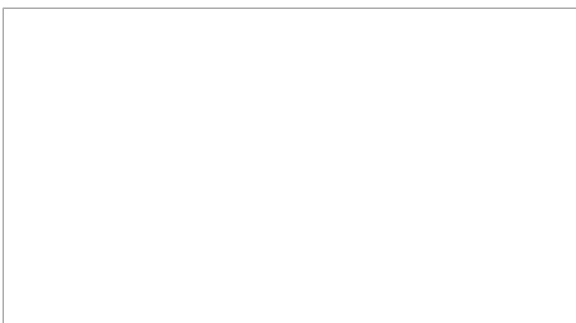
UK Coaching, Sport England, CIMSPA, governing bodies and a range of other organisations have been busy collaborating over what the Professional Standards should look like, including developing new entry level qualifications.

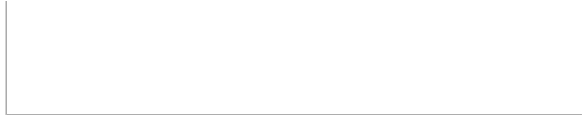
‘It is the design of those Professional Standards and the way they will be implemented – which includes working with training providers to bring them under the same umbrella, working towards the same aim – that will be our way of making the route for people to enter into the coaching family easier,’ added Stuart.

Ultimately, the sector must endeavour to provide both customer and coach a roadmap of expertise and best practice that upskills professionally and rewards personally.

The objective is to create a wider choice of flexible and informal L&D options (including online or e-learning) enabling people to build their own qualification route at their own speed and at a time and place of their choosing.

This expanded suite of learning methods and CPD opportunities needs to be moulded into an integrated plan, so there is an alignment of the diverse range of individual programmes and coach education frameworks out there to ensure customer and coach is getting everything they possibly need from the coaching system.





Implementing the game plan

The day certainly provoked our thinking to look at things differently and find a collaborative way forward.

Now the ball is back in our court. The second half is under way and talk and reflection must give way to more action. Game on.

Read the full stories of the six VIPs:

[Man on a Mission: Breaking the Vicious Cycle of Crime](#) (Marcellus Baz BEM)

[From Caught Up in to Beating Antisocial Behaviour](#) (David Walsh)

[Former Triple Jumper Now Putting Spring in Step of Young People in Need](#) (Michelle Griffith-Robinson). And read an in-depth ConnectedCoaches feature with Michelle on mentoring: Advice you can Trust: What makes a good mentor?

[Confident Workforce Key to Creating Culture of Inclusion](#) (Esther Jones)

[Coaching has Helped Me Build Life Skills Outside of Sport](#) (Khadra Ahmed)

[Coaching has Helped Parkour Enthusiast's Self-Confidence Take Giant Leap](#) (Fanuel Chivasa)

Further reading:

[The Coaching Plan for England launched: Better coaches, better experiences, better activity](#)

[Coaching in the UK, 2017: A Spotlight on Ethnicity](#)

[Coaching in the UK, 2017: A Spotlight on Gender](#)

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tags : coaching-plan-for-england, diversity, inclusive