

# Q&A with Hannah Bussey

Archery GB and Chair of the Insight Peer Networking Group



Conducted by Clare Freer  
UK Coaching

## SO HOW DID THE PEER NETWORKING GROUP BEGIN?

In 2018 UK Coaching held an event bringing partners (largely national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), Active Partnerships and Sport England-funded national organisations) together to discuss how they can measure the impact of coaching and coach learning. Of course, there wasn't a simple answer or any immediate solutions. Instead the event raised questions about what insight partners needed and what was the best way to approach this. Above all, it was clear that all partners wanted to be able to better articulate the impact

of coaching for their organisation. This presented an opportunity to learn and work together. As a result, partners got together to form a group to look further into this area collectively.

From the outset, the group decided that it would be a group for partners, run by partners. Although Sport England and UK Coaching are part of the group, they sit on it as peers. A group Chair was nominated soon after and since then it has rotated as people have left and new people joined.

## HANNAH, AS THE CURRENT CHAIR OF THE GROUP COULD YOU TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

I lead on coach development and coaching system design for Archery GB, and outside this have interests in sports science, strength and conditioning, and different roles in sport.

I joined the group because while we're making a lot of progress in understanding the factors and mechanisms involved in creating a successful coaching system at an organisational level, fully understanding and reporting our impact remains a challenge. This seems to be common among many organisations. Yet being able to clearly and accurately report what's going on in the coaching landscape is important to both individual organisations and also collectively,

particularly if we are to meet the increasing challenge presented by government policies, which are becoming more focussed on health, and illness prevention.

Given that coaching provision is dynamic and involves many people, there are many variables for the system or programmes that sit behind it to consider. Credible insight is crucial to ensure we're designing these programmes and systems as effectively as possible. By coming together to understand this, we're taking deliberate steps towards improvement, and becoming better at providing open and honest evaluation and reporting.

**WHICH PARTNERS WERE INVITED TO BE PART OF THIS GROUP AND WHAT IS THE SKILL SET REQUIRED TO BE PART OF THE GROUP?**

The group was open to any partner organisation that has an interest in measuring the impact of coaching. Initially, this mainly involved NGBs and Active Partnerships, but we're pleased to see it has since widened to community groups and Higher Education.

In terms of skill set, typically the group is made up of people that specialise in insight or are responsible for managing coaching programmes and want to better understand how to use insight as part of this. However, I would say a keen interest in progressing this area is the most valuable asset a partner can bring.

**YOUR FOCUS IS ON COACHING INSIGHT - WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE?**

When we use the term coaching, we mean coaching in the broadest sense. This incorporates coach developers, instructors, activators, and anyone who supports others to live the healthier, more active lifestyle they want.

**HOW DID YOU BEGIN TO TACKLE THIS VAST AREA AND WHAT DOES A TYPICAL MEETING LOOK LIKE?**

We started off by providing a forum for partners to share what coaching insight they're currently involved with and what insight they felt they were lacking. We wanted to find out what insight would help them to understand the difference their coaching programmes were having. We've since started to look at existing research, case studies, and research methods related to what people want to focus on.

We also wanted the group to be practical in terms of working together to tackle specific problems. For this we began an exercise whereby all partners submitted topic areas and/or a hypothesis they were testing or would like to test across their own organisation. These were collated and grouped into four themed areas:



A usual meeting will consist of several partners sharing details of specific projects they are involved with. Where possible, we also invite specialists from other organisations and academia, to share their knowledge and to help shape the conversation. Each meeting is informal and presents the opportunity for discussion. A key feature of the group is that everyone contributes and actively takes part, to share and learn together. It's not often you get the opportunity to share work in an informal setting with such varied organisations and get to develop ideas or share things that have gone well or not so well. On many occasions, this has led to partners going back to their own organisation and taking new ideas with them.

The group has since started to delve further into each of these themes, starting with a look at diversity in coaching. Attendance is determined by topic, with group members attending meetings when the topic is relevant to them. In addition, members might bring along colleagues to meetings dependent on the topic. For example, some insight or workforce leads brought members of their diversity and inclusion team for this topic.

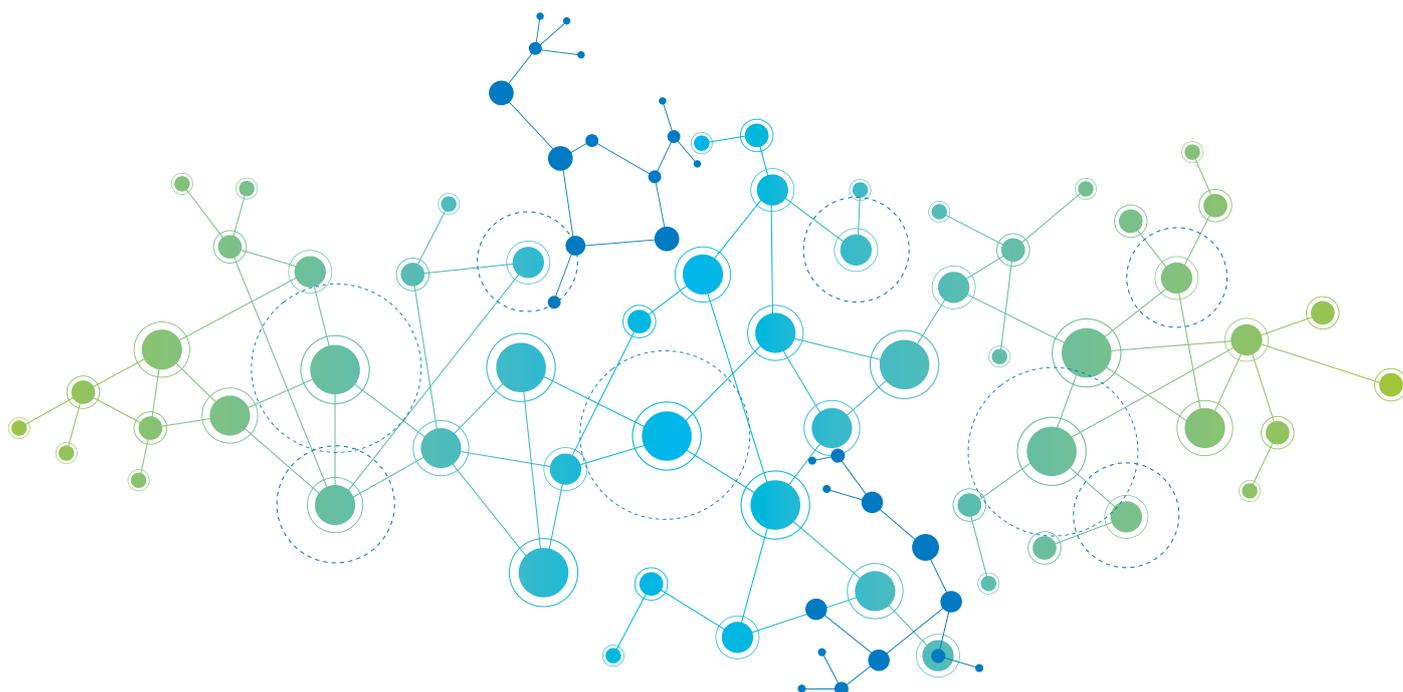
**WHICH EXTERNAL PARTNERS HAVE YOU ENGAGED ON THE GROUP?**

We have had a varied number of presenters come and share their work including:

- Professor Joan Duda from the University of Birmingham shared her research on theory-grounded and evidence-based assessments of coaching behaviours and coaching related outcomes.
- Clare Cooper from England Rugby talked through how Rugby are growing the game for disabled people and what kind of measures, systems and tools they are looking to use in relation to this key area.
- Matt Stevenson-Dodd from Trust Impact (former CEO of Street League) talked through his three golden rules for showing impact. Matt also demonstrated a live 'impact dashboard', which the group would like to investigate further in the future.
- Michelle Gent from the Royal Yachting Association presented how they have used new qualitative research software to present statistical data backed up by explanatory narrative, combining numbers and anecdotes to provide a powerful means of persuasion.

**NOW THE GROUP HAS BEEN UP AND RUNNING FOR OVER A YEAR, WHAT ARE ITS NEXT STEPS?**

Sharing details of our projects and experiences with each other has been invaluable and something everyone appreciates so this will certainly continue. There's often talk of a gap between sports development and academia, and in the next 12 months, I'm sure the group would like to continue looking at this as well. We have opportunity to learn both from the current body of evidence, and the experiences of organisations in applied settings, to help us become better informed about how to design effective programmes and report on the outcomes with clarity and credibility.



## WE ASKED FOUR OF OUR MEMBERS WHY THEY DECIDED TO JOIN THE PEER NETWORKING GROUP AND WHAT THEY GET OUT OF BEING PART OF THE GROUP.



### **Sophie Burton**

**Strategic Lead for Insight and Workforce for Energise Me, Active Partnership**

The diversity of the group holds appeal and presents a great opportunity to talk to a breadth of partner organisations who are passionate and understand the value of insight, and its application to the workforce arena. There is an openness and willingness to share thought, practice and challenges, which ultimately means we are exposed to new ways of thinking. It enables us to look at this area of work through different lenses.

The group presents an opportunity to test ideas and seek feedback, as well as challenge our own opinions. An appropriately skilled, developed and supported workforce is key to engaging and retaining inactive participants. What that workforce looks like, and how it is developed, is pivotal to supporting the inactivity agenda. As part of this, we are all seeking to change approaches and behaviour in new and innovative ways and at the same time, reassure ourselves and others that impact is evident and measurable. Exposure to this type of forum shapes and cultivates ideas, allows you to question and explore academic research and provides a safe space to be honest and reflective.

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### **Lucy Horne**

**Impact and Evaluation Officer for the Saints Foundation**

The peer network group was recommended to me by UK Coaching, and even though I'm a very new member, I've already gained a lot from being involved. Honest and reflective evaluations of projects are increasingly being recognised as a fundamental part of our landscape, but for many insight leads we're the only specialist within our organisation. For me, the chance to talk through ideas (the good, the bad and the weird) was really appealing - not only to hear great ideas from other organisations but also to have my own work informally peer reviewed.

I think it's important to be able to discuss ideas and challenges, particularly where best practice in research moves at an exciting, if fast, pace. It's great that members are from such a variety of sports (all with their own different contexts) as this means that we tackle issues from different perspectives. Internal evaluation in its current form still feels quite new, and this group provides a forum for us to really help shape how we can use it in the most effective way to demonstrate our impact. Beyond that, the group also reinforces the culture within sport for social change of evidence-based learning.



**Dr Ilona Berry**  
**Data and Insights Manager for British Triathlon**

In my role as Data and Insights Manager at British Triathlon, I undertake research in a variety of areas across the organisation. This includes work each year on coaching and volunteering. Being part of the peer network group is so valuable. It helps me to learn more about both research methods other organisations are using and also topics they are covering. It's also great to have a group of colleagues to be able to talk things through with and check and challenge each other's work. There are several subtle ways in which being part of the group has improved my research already. Conversely, I hope that I am also able to have a positive impact on other members of the group.

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**Sion Kitson**  
**Development Manager for Coaching and the Professional Workforce for Sport England**

On a personal level, I felt it was important to join this group as I strongly believe and recognise the difference great coaching can make to the sport and physical activity experience of a person. This is also made clear within The Coaching Plan for England, highlighting the need to improve the way we measure coaching and communicate its impact. As a sector, we need to better understand the coaching journey from how we can recruit a more diverse and representative workforce to develop bespoke support to enable coaches to progress. If we can start to evidence the positive impact of this understanding, we can create conditions to enable coaches to thrive and meet the needs of those they are seeking to engage. In doing so, evaluation will lead to better decision

making and maximum impact from investment into sport and physical activity.

Moving forward, not only within this group but across the sector, we would like to see a greater sense of joined-up thinking. This is where we are far clearer on what it is we want to understand collectively, and how this informs our individual contexts. In addition, we want to grow greater awareness and knowledge of the relevant approaches we should take to maximise learning, encompassing a climate of 'working together'. Sharing practice should become the norm at an organisation, programme and project level so we are learning together to implement new ideas and initiatives that continue to develop great coaches who can meet the motivations of the participants standing in front of them.



**IF PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE GROUP GOING FORWARD HANNAH, IS THIS POSSIBLE AND HOW WOULD THEY GO ABOUT IT?**

The simple answer is yes, it is possible! If you are interested, please get in touch with UK Coaching via [coachingsupport@ukcoaching.org](mailto:coachingsupport@ukcoaching.org) who will put you in touch with me.