

Care for Coaches

Mixed experiences, varied needs,
and care ‘infrastructure’ to
support the coaching ‘workforce’

School of Sport & Exercise Sciences,
Liverpool John Moores University

UK Coaching

Colum Cronin¹, Francesca Champ, Matthew Gherardi, Amy Hardwick, Tabo Huntley, Colin Lewis,
Fieke Rongen (Leeds Beckett University), Gus Ryrie, David Tod (Lancaster University), Amy Whitehead.

¹ For enquiries, please contact lead author Dr Colum Cronin c.j.cronin@ljmu.ac.uk



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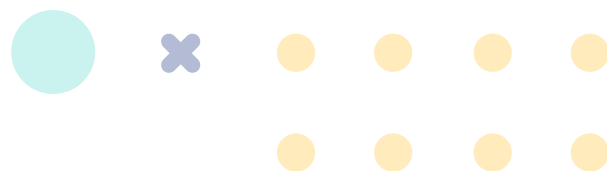
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Background

The volunteer and paid sport coaching ‘workforce’ is an essential pillar of the UK’s sport and physical activity system. Yet, many coaches report experiencing mental illness (44%) (Smith, et al., 2020), a variety of individual, interpersonal and organisational stressors (Norris, Didymus, & Kaiseler, 2017), and challenges such as facility access, interaction with athletes, and limits on their own skills (North, Piggott, Rankin-Wright, & Ashford, 2020). Indeed, academic literature has recently reported stories of coaches in need of care. For instance, Roberts et al. (2019) detail a coach struggling with mental health and addiction, which were exacerbated by the demands of their coaching role. Cronin and Armour (2018) also describe how coaches may be burdened with emotional labour, experience exhaustion, and burnout as they seek to support athletes. Related to this, coaches are tasked with difficult challenges such as meeting performance outcomes, achieving a wide variety of social aims, and / or supporting athletes. Here, the coach is positioned as a carer who understands and meets the sporting and personal needs of athletes. For this to be sustainable however, coaches should not only be caregivers, but they themselves, should be well cared-for. Thus, there are both ethical and performance imperatives to ensure that coaches are well supported. In spite of this, our existing understanding of care in coaching is athlete centric and we know little of coaches’ care experiences. Accordingly, UK Coaching commissioned Liverpool John Moores University to research UK coaches’ perceptions of care.

During the research a broad definition of coaching was adopted that recognises coaches as those who deliver activity in traditional organised sports, physical activity, sport for health, and sport for development settings. Across these contexts, coaches provided survey (N=388) and interview data (N=12) (see appendix 1 for demographic details). Analysis of this data reveals coaches’ perceptions of care, how ‘cared for’ coaches feel, what challenges coaches face, and who coaches go to for help. This report provides a summary of these findings.



Key Findings

Across both the survey and interviews, seven key findings were identified. These are identified below and further explored in the remainder of the report.

1

For coaches in sport, physical activity, health, and sport development settings, care is associated with: **“A relationship with a carer who understands the coach’s needs, and who seeks to support”**

2

Coaches highlighted a range of **pragmatic** (e.g., equipment, time-off and cover for coaching sessions, improved pay and conditions) and **social-emotional needs** (e.g., dialogue, recognition and reward).

3

To access support for their needs, coaches predominantly reported using their own **personal network** of sport and physical activity contacts e.g., assistant coaches, coach developers from external agencies, or peers in other organisations.

4

Outside of their own sport and physical activity network, coaches accessed support through **family or partners**, and at rare critical moments, other professionals with specific skills and knowledge relevant to their needs e.g., legal or medical knowledge.

5

A majority of coaches felt **respected** (72.1%), **safe** (68.7%), and cared about by a leader (65.9%) in their coaching context.

6

However, a large minority of coaches did not agree that they were treated fairly by organisations (44.4%), **did not agree that leaders listened to them** (43.6%), and did not agree that leaders in their organisation want to get to know them (45.4%).

7

Sporting organisations such as employers were **not always perceived to offer care for coaches** as individuals, or support during critical moments including litigation, accessing CPD, redundancy, and retirement.

These findings recognise that there is much care experienced by coaches in the UK sport system. Yet coaches predominantly reported accessing this care through informal personal networks rather than systemic processes enabled by sporting organisations. Additionally, coaches reported a range of social and pragmatic needs, and also identified critical moments when care was needed. To illustrate these findings, the following section provides four case studies of coaches’ care experiences across different sport and physical activity settings. Subsequent to this, data are presented that further explain coaches’ perceptions of care, how ‘cared for’ coaches feel, what challenges coaches face, and who coaches go to for help. This data highlights a need to establish further care infrastructure that ensures coaches are supported by a relational ‘web of care’. Consequently, the report concludes with explicit recommendations focused on developing caring relationships for sport and physical activity coaches in the UK.

² Across coaching contexts, leaders may include head coaches, performance directors, line managers and employers, those who deploy coaches, committee members as well as National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and lead agencies.



Narratives of Care:

Coaches' experiences of care in sport and physical activity settings

This section contains four narratives constructed from 12 interviews with coaches (see appendix 1 Table 4 Demographic details). The narratives represent coaches' experiences of care and prompt coaches, coach developers, and leaders in sporting organisations to consider the needs of coaches. Each narrative consists of data from across the sample, and represents a collective experience rather than a single coach or interview participant. This composite approach to narratives ensures confidentiality for participants, while situating insights in realistic contexts and events (Armour & Chen, 2012; Smith & Sparkes, 2009; Potts, Didymus, & Kaiseler, 2022). To assist with this, the narratives are set within different domains of coaching including high performance coaching (Steve's Career), adult participation coaching (Dave's Day), child performance coaching (Lara's Journey), and community sport coaching (Nourah's Network). This is a significant step forward because it means that the narratives are an ethical, evidence-based and relevant resource that coaches, coach mentors, coach developers, coach managers and coach employers could use to enhance the care infrastructure surrounding coaches.



Narrative 1:

Caring for the high performance coach; Steve's Career

Part 1: Victorious

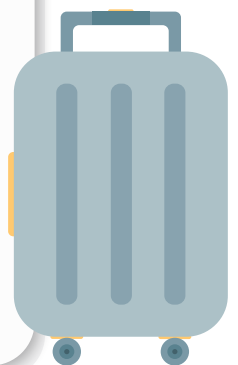
His physical presence stalked the touchline. Steve was their leader. His 6ft 4in and 19 stone frame saw him through an athletic career, a flourishing coaching career, and now it controlled the coaching box. His knowledge and passion for the sport was evident in piercing instructions and pronouncements. Guidance was followed without question. The final whistle blew. Steve fist-pumped the air, before embracing awkward hugs and celebratory gestures from his players. A third shot at a major trophy in less than 12 months loomed and he was a cult hero at the club. The team's celebrations continued into the dressing room and then onto the bus. Steve was absent. He was busy on the phone to the sporting director documenting his 'to-do-list' to ensure the club was ready for the final. Only 12 days to prepare and in Steve's words "his work was never done". 45-minutes later, his frame emerged and clambered onto the coach. Luggage in one hand, a phone, a banana and a bag of crisps crumpled in the other. Slumped into his seat, he sent a goodnight text to his kids. Another to his wife to let her know that he would not be home until the early hours.



Part 2: The Unravelling

24 months on and two new trophies were in the clubhouse. However, this season, a third one had not disturbed them. In fact, results had taken a turn for the worse in recent weeks. Steve attempted to combat this with a ruthless and relentless pursuit. Longer training sessions, and extra ones. Additional analysis meetings and more structured reviews of players' individual programmes. 12+ hour days to understand and rectify where the team was going wrong. It was not quite working and little did he know that his attempts to solve one problem, were only creating another. 'Absent dad' was increasingly resented, and the gifts he brought back from trips and tournaments were having little impact. They simply wanted Steve, a husband and father, to be 'the present'. Nearly a year to the day from his last trophy, he returned from training. Entering the hallway, he left the light off to avoid waking anyone, but he stumbled over something. He recognised the suitcase. Attached, a note asking him to leave, that evening. Nobody was in, just him. To reduce the heartbreak of seeing their dad move out, his wife had taken the kids to her parents. Days later, a second devastating blow. A text relieving him of his duties. Before he had the chance to contact his staff, headline news announced his replacement - a less experienced professional, a younger model.

Embarrassed, lonely, lost and full of regret. Recent events had stolen all of Steve's self-worth. Once the spearhead of a successful sports club; now a frail man, Steve struggled to organise his daily routine. His increasingly dishevelled figure struggled to figure out its next steps. Swapping exercise for alcohol, Steve avoided contact with all. His peers heard of his struggles but felt helpless. They only had time for an occasional phone call, and were fearful of appearing distracted or absent. If either were perceived their fate would inevitably be the same as Steve. This was high performance sport; there was no time to switch off, and no resources to support coaches beyond their professional qualifications.



Part 3: Picking up the Pieces

Over time, Steve lifted his head again. His 'fight' somewhat returned. A long way from the pressures of his high performance world, he now cherished his morning walk, stopping to talk to neighbours, and playing in the park with his kids. Steve was learning and beginning to strive again. Striving for balance, learning to take the time to decompress. Striving to develop a network and learning to confide in an 'inner circle' of support both in and outside the game. He was on the lookout for a new and healthier relationship with coaching. Through bitter experience and with a clearer support network, he felt better placed for his next coaching role;

'I have a lot to offer, I am not being used. I have so much to share. I could help someone, work alongside them'.



Narrative 1: Analysis and Considerations

Steve's story highlights the positive and challenging aspects of a career in high performance sport. Indeed, some sporting cultures can be characterised by a low tolerance for admitting weakness and an emphasis on 'toughness', which means coaches may be reluctant to seek help from organisations (Roberts, et al., 2019; Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002). In such contexts, there is a danger that many coaches will receive ad-hoc, reactionary, isolated or no access to qualified and contextually specific support. Thus, coaches need support with developing their own self-care processes (see recommendation 1), and access to support at critical moments (see recommendation 2 and 8).

Furthermore, Steve's story raises the following questions and we ask readers to consider:



How can coaches such as Steve be educated and supported to achieve a **healthy integration of career and family**?

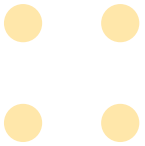


What support can be provided to coaches such as Steve to pre-emptively build their own **support network** i.e., a personal web of care outside of their immediate organisation?



How can coaches be supported to develop a '**safety net**' **career plan** that can be developed prior to, and actioned when, coaches lose their position?

Readers may also want to consider if Steve's story resonates with them and whether they can learn any lessons relevant to their own world?



Narrative 2:

Caring for the adult participation coach; Dave's Day

On your marks! Get set! Go! No this is not a race.
This is just a normal Tuesday for me...

6:00am

An action-packed day ahead. A chocolate bar and a can of coke to help fuel my day. Best not forget my two session plans; these are the key to Monday night's entertainment. Once I wrestled my way past the equipment in my hallway, I make it to the front door.

6:30am

My car welcomes me with the smell of damp leather and mud humming from the three bags of balls spread across the back seat; a smell of wet training bibs radiate from the boot. These are totems of my time running the women's teams and leading the women's section of the club. Hard graft over the past few weeks, months, and six years, since we set up the first team. I take one last look at the house. The bathroom light has been left on. No time for that! Off to the office I go!



Busy day at work as usual. Thanks to the cutbacks, it is only me and Suzie in the phone shop. I took this job because school coaching was not paying enough. I loved it, but I needed a steady wage and I needed more than the minimum wage. Now, I am paid better, but I try to get my work done as soon as possible – I need to beat the traffic.

5:13pm

All done. I zoom out of the car park. Time to check-in and visit Grandad Norman. I cannot stay long. The first session of the night is drawing ever closer. Time to leave already. I have only spent 7 minutes with him, but the u16 team awaits. A speed camera approaches. Brakes on! The speedometer reduces just in time. I open up the chocolate bar. Once I pass the last horizontal white line, lets go!



5:24pm

Traffic was not so kind! I need time to set up before the 6 o'clock session. My original plans are in a bit of chaos!

7:30pm

Session done. I am a bit late leaving. It just takes so damn long to pack up. Some assistance would be nice!

7:40pm

I have had the can of coke. A 5-mile journey through the city centre to do the university women's team awaits. Message from Lucy, a player. Star player in fact! Her car has broken down. Big part of our plans for Wednesday's game. I will have to go pick her up. Another speed camera – more reluctant slowing down! Red light, after red light! Session starts in twenty minutes. Will we make it?

We race through the gates, the lush green fields in sight! The crunch of the gravel resonates against the tyres of my car. Weaving in and out of people carrying their boots and water bottles, we arrive. I turn the engine off. Looks circulate when Lucy departs my car. Probably should not have given her a lift. Better record how that happened and why in the diary, just in case anybody sees it the wrong way. That is not the only chatter; *"Have you booked the ref?"* *"I have an injury"*. *"I am not sure I will make Wednesday because I have an exam"*. All taken on board and somewhat addressed.



8.08pm

I take a deep breath as I start the session. Full steam ahead for the next two hours.

9.23pm

Dripping wet, I drag myself off the pitch, back into the car park. There are three cars waiting. I've been collared. *"Lack of game time"*! *"Rumblings of favouritism"*! *"We should be working on this and that"*! Just a few of the topics for tonight's post-training debrief. Or should that be post-training critiques. It is only me dealing with this! No sign of the university staff or other officials! There rarely is.

9.55pm

The sport centre caretaker appears and glares at us as he lingers by the gates, hoping to lock up. Now I am slumped in my car seat, tummy rumbling. This time I do not zoom. I do not have the energy. I merely drive. Takeaway on the way home. Sluggishly, I reverse onto the drive. I enter the house in a weary state. Wet bib bag over my right shoulder. A match kit over my left shoulder. I have forgotten to wash it. The girls need it clean for Wednesday. First job for tomorrow (Wednesday) morning. Get up earlier and get it done before work. But I should have already learned that lesson by now. I know that I need to get the kit washed at the weekend, otherwise there is even less time with the little one before school! **Only four weeks to half term – and a week off.**



Narrative 2: Analysis and Considerations

Dave's story highlights the frantic challenge of combining voluntary or part-time coaching work with a full-time job and family commitments. It challenges the viability of coaching careers, and the sustainability of coaching labour. The precariousness of such work can mean that some coaches find a career in coaching is not sustainable (Ives, Gale, Potrac, & Nelson, 2021) (see recommendation 8 and 9). Dave's story also highlights his concern about litigation, and how his well-intentioned act of providing a lift to Lucy might be perceived. More broadly, this reflects coaches' desires for independent support in this area (see recommendation 8).

In response, we ask readers to consider the following questions:



What changes to pay, conditions and career paths are required to support coaches such as Dave to **maintain careers coaching** in schools?



How can coaches such as Dave secure **pragmatic support** for critical issues such as safeguarding?



Who can provide **social and emotional support** for busy coaches such as Dave?

Readers may also want to consider if Dave's story resonates with them or those they know, and whether they can learn any lessons relevant to their own world?



Narrative 3:

Caring for the child performance coach; Lara's Journey

Scene 1: The realisation

"Phew...and that's a wrap for another week". Sat down in the hotel bar on a Sunday evening the racing was finally done, athletes were safely on their way home, and Lara was really proud of her squad. Many of them had met their individual targets and seemed on track to peak at the nationals later in the season. But this was the first break she had all weekend, if not all week! The 4th competition weekend had come on the back of a week filled with 4 days of late afternoon and evening training sessions, then travelling late on Friday night to get to the venue. Then the competition weekend itself. Of course, Lara had been present at all the races and helped with warm-ups, cool-downs and general logistics. Any other potentially free moment had also been filled. Early morning breathing practice with Grace to settle her nerves. A quick debrief with James after his race did not go to plan, working out some goals to help him have a better experience the next day. A chat to John's parents about managing the small niggle he picked up towards the end of a race. The 'pep talk' on Sunday morning when everyone was looking positively shattered. Even though Lara had felt the same – she could not show it then, morale needed to be boosted! She did all this lovingly, as she cared deeply about providing the athletes with the best possible developmental experience, but sitting down now – finally stopping – she realised "I am tired". She had really wanted to go home and spend some time with Thomas – her boyfriend. Did he still remember what she looked like? Maybe he remembers their last interaction; she was a little 'snappy' with him, whilst rushing out the door on Friday morning. Monday was her only 'coaching free' day, but she decided not to go home. She had promised to help Luke – a local community coach working with some of her pathway athletes. Luke was struggling to make sure his programme aligned to what they were trying to do on her programme. It also made little sense to travel home and then back up again tomorrow night. By the time she would get home, Thomas would be in bed anyway, and then he would be off to work early in the morning. It is not as if they would get to spend any actual time together! Instead, she reluctantly agreed to spend the day helping Luke. She did not feel much enthusiasm for the rest of the week either. An awareness that came during her first break of the weekend, a lonesome cup of tea.



Scene 2: The resolution

16 weeks later, Sunday afternoon, standing in front of the hotel entrance, Lara waved off her athletes as they all got in the cars with their parents. A big smile on her face. Buzzing with energy, she just finished another intense competition weekend. Despite the usual pressures and responsibilities, this one was different. Peter, her new co-coach, had provided help with practical logistics and shared the load of supporting athletes. His presence meant there was someone to switch off with at the end of the day. Decompress over a - not so lonesome - cup of tea. While he was on duty, there had even been time to take a shower and enjoy a minute of peace and quiet away from the competition. She opened her phone and sent Peter a quick WhatsApp: *"Thanks so much for this weekend, really enjoyed working together! Oh and thanks again for taking my Tuesday sessions this week. You are a star!"* She was really comfortable with Peter taking her session. He was close to retirement, but had so much coaching experience to pass on. It seemed like he appreciated being involved. Then her smile widened and she started waving giddily - she could not help herself - as she saw Thomas's red fiesta drive into the hotel's parking lot. She hurried over and gave him a big hug as soon as he got out of the car. Excited for the two days of walking in the countryside, pub lunches, and time together. Two whole days of bliss, and then another exciting week with her squad - life felt good!



Scene 3: Paying it forward - the journey there

All the programme staff and associated community coaches have been invited. Lara could hear the gentle humming in the room, coffee and teas being poured. Biscuit packets rustling. She forced a couple of deep breaths before her presentation on the 'season planning' day. Her title; 'Achieving a balance - caring for yourself whilst providing the best experience for your athletes'. First on the agenda! She was pleasantly surprised with how important her manager had found her story. The agenda prompted her to remember that particular day. Empowered by her family and boyfriend she recognised how she had been feeling; *"out of love with her job, exhausted, down, snappy, angry"*. She had sought help from her GP and counsellor. Instead of being seen as 'weak', her manager had said he had been there too. The memory of his acceptance and empathy brought her a warm feeling. Now five months later, she had benefitted from a support network outside (family, Thomas, GP) and inside the sport (her manager, Peter, and her new coach mentor). She had taken steps to look after herself by finding out what made her feel good, exercise, getting outside and prioritising time for herself, family and friends. She now planned these into her periodization. Her name was now called, and it was time to share her story today. Would people think less of her for saying this? It does not matter; other people need to learn from her experience. Time to start; title slide - **'Take the Monday off - even if it's the boring day! Take it off and be you'.**





Narrative 3: Analysis and Considerations

Lara's story highlights the challenge of a full-time coaching role, which involves unsociable hours. For Lara, the role became somewhat consuming as she provided lots of care for athletes. During this time, other aspects of her identity suffered, and she experienced a critical moment that required support from managers and colleagues inside her sport (see recommendation 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) and outside of her sport (see recommendation 8). The story raises many important concerns such as how vulnerable coaches are, who coaches can seek support from, and how leaders and employers can accept and support coaches who are struggling.

In response, we ask readers to consider:



How can systems, processes, and schedules be revised to help coaches such as Lara **repair and recover**?



How can coaches be encouraged and supported to embrace **co-coaching** and **team coaching**?



How can managers be supported to notice coaches' needs, develop **confidential conversations** and **signpost coaches** to qualified support?

Readers may also want to consider if Lara's story resonates with them or those they know, and whether they can learn any lessons relevant to their own world?

Narrative 4:

Caring for the community sport coach; Nourah's Network

It is now quarter to ten! And the car park is nearly deserted. Nourah didn't really need the extended conversation with Carl about Abbi (age 8). But needs must, and Abbi has been struggling to make friends with the girls at the club. She promises Carl she will get some ideas on teambuilding that he can use with the juniors to help. *"I'll run it by Harry (coach mentor). He will have lots of ideas on how you can get the kids working together. You don't have to do this by yourself Carl. We can use Harry's experience, and he might even take some of a session for you"*. Juggling her keys and the kit, she finally opens the boot with some pulling, pushing and shoving; she dispatches the bags into the abyss. Getting into the car, she looks at her reflection in the rear-view mirror. She looks, and feels, tired. She has been *"at the coal face"*, since seven this morning. Thursdays are always hectic, but today felt worse than normal! *"Don't get down, you really love what you do and it makes a difference to all the kids"*. The positive self-talk subsides, *"I could do with being listened too and given more support!"*

She sets off home. Car into autopilot because the route is etched in her mind. She finally has a chance to "catch her breath" and continues to reflect on the day. Working for 'The Active Group' has its benefits; she has been with them since she was a student. Not just a coach now, but also someone responsible for CPD and the development of others. These last few months have been hard though. A quick call to Dad. Better to make the call in the car, he will be asleep by the time I get home.

They don't quite get it Dad. They need to retain good staff, support ongoing development, and value all their people! The people on the ground are not actually 'cared for'. This doesn't fit with their mantra of being a 'forward thinking and progressive' company. To them, it is just a number. 'I get it, but listening and supporting people has significant benefits'. We should be all over this!



Rant over and she says “goodnight” as she pulls into the driveway. “Not sure Dad got much of say in that conversation, and I forgot to ask about his check up at the GP!” The working day had taken over the call again. Nourah’s mind was on breakfast clubs, curriculum PE, and then after-school provision. ‘Wrap around care’ they call it, but there was not much care for the coach in her schedule. She reflected some more. “It had also been hard work finding somewhere to pray”, but she made it happen. Some schools are a dream, supportive, efficient and helpful. Others, not so much. A real mix. Today the teaching location changed at the last minute at St Bedes, from the hall to outside. Lots of dissatisfied year 9s! No reason, explanation or communication. Session plan right out the window, and unfortunately not an isolated problem! Then a corporate session to finish. The company wants to tick a human resource box, and some of the employees are keen on circuit training. They are making progress and it is a good laugh. Today, five different locations, mostly primary, but also a secondary, and one business conference room.

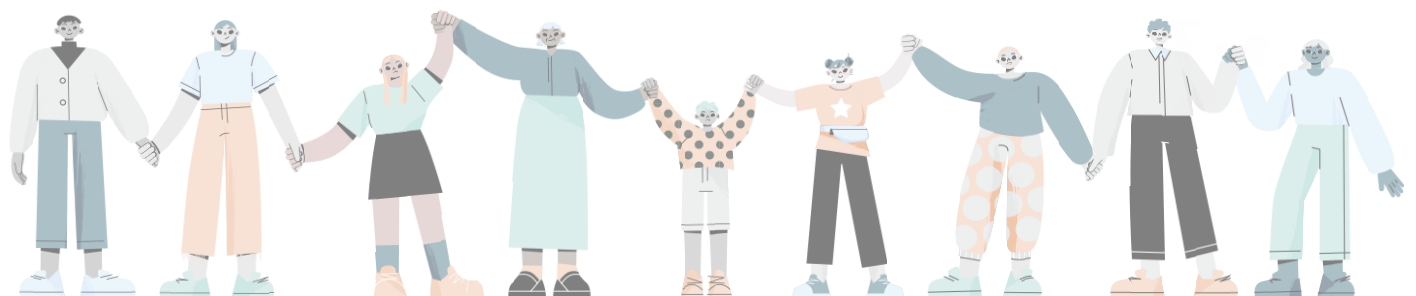
Then there is the club, Nourah has been there all her life; as a player, as a member of the coaching team and now at the helm. A fantastic set-up developed over the past forty-five years. It started in the 1970’s with a clear ethos to support the community, give people a chance to play, and connect. These values still hold true today. It is even better now that Nourah is in charge. The board listen to her. The players, coaches, other volunteers and the parents all support each other.

So, this is Nourah’s position. Engrossed fully in sport coaching as a professional and as a volunteer. It totally fills her days.

A great place to volunteer, it’s such an important part of my life. I could never give it up. I am so passionate about it, but it is all consuming.

It is my life. It is me. I am lucky; there are many people I can turn to for support; my housemates, other coaches, Harry my coach mentor (from a different sport), Julie who was my line manager at the Active Group before she left, and in particular my Dad, who founded the club nearly 50 years ago. All sounding boards, keen to listen, support, and sometimes step in and help on the ground, when I need a break.

The challenge is to make this situation the same for others. How can we better support and care for younger coaches? So much to think about and consider!





Narrative 4: Analysis and Considerations

Nourah's story highlights the challenge of holding multiple coaching roles in a variety of community settings. The story highlights how isolated coaches may be when they move from one setting to another (see recommendation 2, 5, 6), how coaching can consume one's identity (see recommendation 4), and how coaches can access sources of support (see recommendation 8).

We ask readers to consider:



During Nourah's blend of paid full-time and volunteer coaching, who can be a **constant source of support**?



Who is **advocating for changes** in policy and employment practices to ensure processes, systems, and schedules are suitable to retain coaches such as Nourah?



How can coaches and organisations access **best practices** examples of 'care for coaches'?

Readers may also want to consider if Nourah's story resonates with them or those they know, and whether they can learn any lessons relevant to their own world?



Survey Methodology

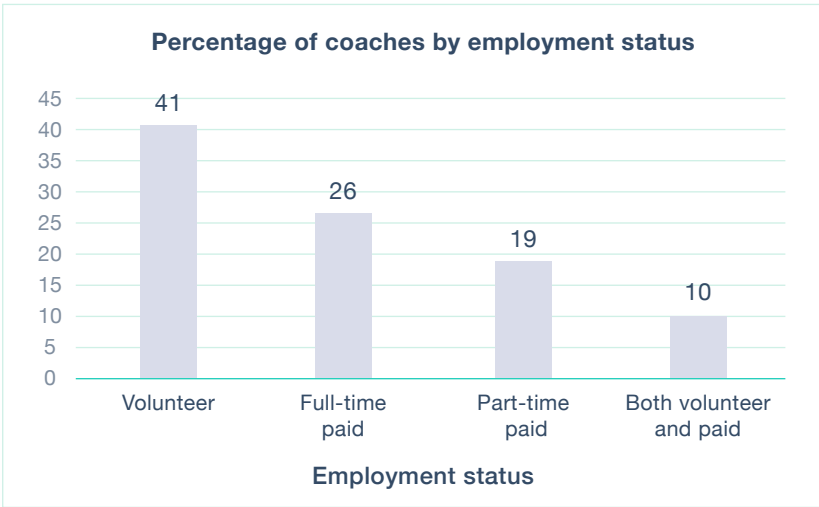
To explore the state of care across the coaching workforce, coaches were asked to complete an online survey that consisted of two parts. The first part included demographic and open-end questions exploring experiences of care. In the second part, participants were asked to complete a modified 'Care Climate Scale Questionnaire', which is a tool used to measure perceptions of care within a specific sporting context (Newton et al. 2007).



Demographic overview of the survey sample

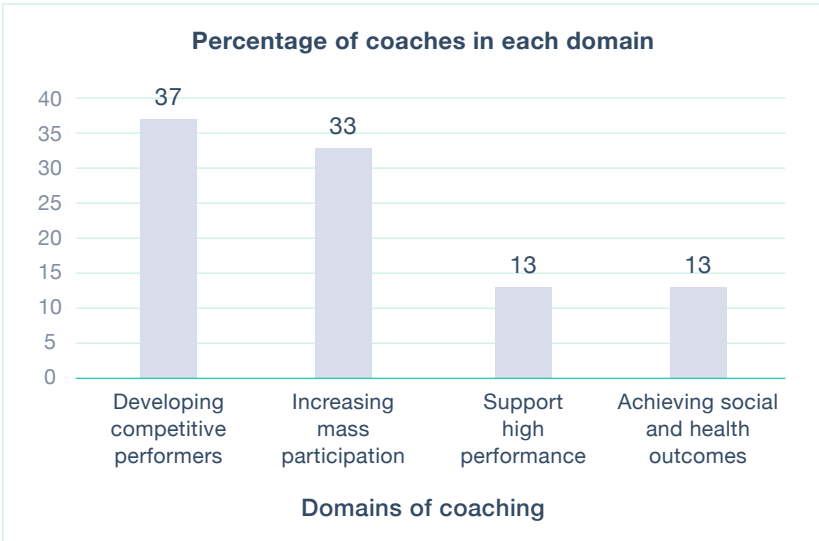
A total of 388 coaches completed the survey that explored their perceptions and experiences of care. The majority of participants identified themselves as men (64.50%), with approximately a third identifying as women (29.10%) and 5.40% stating no preference. Mean age for the sample was male (M=47.25, SD +/- 13.41), and female (M=45.93, SD +/- 13.47). Coaches were predominately white (87%) and non-disabled (78%). Coaches in this study coached across 42 different sports and physical activities (see appendix 1). Coaches were mostly volunteers although part-time, and full-time paid coaches were also represented (see Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Employment status of the sample.



A greater proportion of the participants reported that they held a position of 'head coach' (42%), with 35% and 7% aligning their role with 'coach' and 'assistant coach' respectively. Coaches reported a range of objectives including enhancing performance, enhancing high performance, increasing participation and achieving social and health outcomes (See Figure 2.). This sample provides a broad overview of coaches across various domains e.g., high performance sport, recreation sport and physical activity. For more details, on demographic information please see appendix one.

Figure 2. Objectives of the sample.



State of Care for Coaches

What is care for sport and physical activity coaches?

Reflecting their own role and the care labour that they undertake, coaches described providing care for athletes, such as ensuring “all participants taking part enjoy, feel safe, and don’t feel uncomfortable in the environment” (Coach 51).

Coaches also identified how they, themselves, were “supported” and “looked after” by individuals. The basis for this care was a relationship with someone who showed interest and concern. This attention enabled others to understand their particular needs and provide support. Coaches identified 64 diverse needs.

The most prominent of these included the need to:

1. Feel that someone understands their needs (n=60).
2. Feel safe, comfortable, and trusted (n=54).
3. Receive support with their own wellbeing (n=46).
4. Experience feelings including ‘compassion’, ‘empathy’, ‘encouragement’, ‘sympathy and ‘affection’ (n=34).

These social-emotional needs were accompanied by pragmatic coaching needs including;

1. Additional coaching support, usually in the form of assistant coaches (n=98).
2. Access to further coach education through mentoring and observing (n=53).
3. Access to facilities and equipment (n=25).

This analysis suggests that a universal care need does not exist for coaches across this sample. Rather caring is conceived as:

A relationship with a carer who understands the coach’s needs, and who seeks to support them in a social-emotional and / or a pragmatic fashion.

Care then is situational and needs based. It requires relationships with an individual who is attentive, willing to respond, has competence to support, and does so with the coach. Accordingly, coaches can benefit from access to a network of supportive, willing and competent individuals (see recommendation 2, 5, 7).

How ‘cared for’ do coaches feel?

Across 13 items on the modified Caring Climate Scale administered as part of the survey, analysis of the data suggested that the majority of coaches perceived that their climate was caring (see Table 1 below). Specifically, 72.1% of coaches agreed or strongly agreed that they are treated with respect, 68.7% of coaches felt safe, and 65.9% perceived that the leaders in their organisations cared about coaches. There were no significant differences between groups of coaches in these areas ($p < .001$).

Table 1. % Agreement with factors in the Caring Climate Scale (Newton et al. 2007).

Item	Agree and strongly agree (%)	Disagree and strongly disagree (%)
The leaders (within your coaching context) respect coaches	72.9	10.3
Coaches are treated with respect	72.1	16.1
The leaders are kind to coaches	71.4	8.3
Coaches feel safe	68.7	12.7
The leaders care about coaches	65.9	15.7
The leaders try to help coaches	65.3	16.0
The leaders accept coaches for who they are	63.5	16.4
Coaches feel welcomed every day	60.8	18.1
Coaches feel comfortable	60.5	16.3
The leaders listen to coaches	56.4	22.5
Coaches feel that they are treated fairly	55.6	18.6
The leaders want to get to know all the coaches	54.6	27.5
Everyone likes coaches for who they are	50.5	21.3
Mean	62.94	16.90
SD	7.30	5.05

While positive, it is important to note that many coaches did not feel that their climate was caring. For instance, only 55.6% of coaches agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated fairly, only 56.4% agreed or strongly agreed that leaders listened to coaches, and only 54.6% agreed or strongly agreed that leaders in their organisation want to get to know all the coaches. Additionally, 27.5% participants disagreed that leaders wanted to get to know coaches, 18.1% disagreed that coaches felt welcome every day, and 16.0% disagreed that leaders try to help coaches. Across the coaches’ contexts, leaders included performance directors, head coaches, managers, line managers, committee officers, club officers e.g., chair, directors, CEOs, NGB members, senior administrators. The capability and capacity of these individuals to provide attention is crucial because listening, dialogue, and empathy are key elements that enable the carer to 1) understand, and 2) respond to the needs of a coach.

In sum, while many coaches experienced their climate as caring, there is educational and facilitative work to be done to ensure that *all* coaches are supported through dialogue with understanding, competent and willing leaders (see recommendation 3, 4, 7 8).

What challenges do coaches face?

Caring climates and relationships are based on meeting the needs of an individual e.g., the coach. Caring relationships also recognise the value of listening to the carer express their needs (Cronin & Armour, 2018).

To understand coaches' needs, Table 2. ranks the challenges that the coaches perceived on a scale of 1 to 5 (I strongly agree that it is challenging to...)

Table 2: Ranking of the perceived challenges coaches face by % agreement

In my coaching, I find it challenging to...	Agree and Strongly Agree (%)
Meet needs of all players	64.9
Find time for continuous professional development	64.8
Manage workload and time	60
Manage athletes/players/participants' mentality	57.8
Maintain a work-life balance	50.4
Have time for family	48.8
Hold multiple roles	47.9
Deal with the perception of my own competency	47.8
Plan for the future	44.1
Deal with different views and values	41.2
Deal with politics with non-participating staff	40.7
Deal with external perception of coach/team performance	38.7
Balance coach philosophy and short-term results	37.5
Manage upwards e.g., committee, board, chief executive, line manager	31
Prepare for competition	29.6
Deal with poor results	27.6
Find time to put sessions on	25.9
Deal with match day or competition expectations	23.8
Gain acceptance from athletes/participants/players	22.9
Get positive results	22.1
Job security	22
Have a relationship with new owners/management/other staff	19.2
Deal with media attention surrounding oneself, club or organisation	10.8
Deal with media obligations	9.7

Table 2. (above), which is informed by Baldock et al. (2021), shows that 65.9% of coaches agreed or strongly agreed that meeting the needs of all players/athletes/participants was a challenge. In response, coaches emphasised the need for assistant or co-coaches who could:

Assist with training sessions, provide mental break for coaches within training session, assistance with variation of activities, assistance with implementation of activities, assistance on match day, assistance with parents/guardians, communication.

Provide another set of eyes/ears to bounce ideas off to make more informed decisions during the course of a training session/match.

Relieve some of the demand of the sessions, especially considering the 1-1 time that participants with disabilities may need.

Coaches also reported day-to-day challenges such as finding time for professional development (64.8%), balancing workload and time (60%), and holding multiple roles (47.9%). These challenges manifested in difficult experiences both professionally and personally for coaches. For example, one coach described their difficulty accessing professional development qualifications. The coach perceived the qualification to be important for future employment, yet it was restricted from them via a mutually conflicting dilemma i.e., a 'catch 22'.

To get into those jobs you need a Level 3 qualification. But I can't get on the level 3 course, because I don't have the experience required. The problem is, I cannot get a job that will give me the required experience, without having the level 3 qualification!

Another coach outlined how it is difficult to develop a coaching career due to low income and that coaches have to accept alternative employment.

We've seen it in terms of turnover this year or so. I had a conversation with the head of the company yesterday about the fact that our coaching turnover this year has been quite high. There's a lot of university students in part-time roles but why would you work three hours a day for us on that wage when you could go and have another job on minimum wage for eight hours a day.

For another coach, the challenge of multiple roles and a demanding workload affected their family, and for another coach, these challenges impacted their health.

The first realization was when my wife left me. It was purely based on the sport. There was no animosity. I got a phone call when I was at a competition, 'you need to come home now'. So I am in the middle of competition and say 'no'. You know yourself with the nature of the sport unsociable hours, and stuff like that, so I said, 'look soon as we're finished I'll get in the car and be home'. Two hours later, I drove home and she was gone. House was more or less empty.

I honestly believe coaches do not receive enough care. Many don't say anything and carry the burden until they burnout. Often abused by parents, players and other coaches. Many of the face-to-face ways coaches would network and get support have moved online and coach mentors have been removed. There are narrow channels of support available and too many coaches are left dealing with issues by themselves. This has a huge negative effect on them. I have just handed my notice in. I have burnt out. Mentally I have been having talking therapy from the NHS and am on anti-depressants due to anxiety and depression. I have just been awarded Personal Independence Payments. I have worked myself into the ground juggling family and coaching. Something had to give and it was my physical and mental health. There simply is not enough support or care. Hopefully, I will recover enough to go back to coaching and complete the level 4 qualification I am almost finished doing. But right now, I simply don't know if I will be able to. The sad part is this could and should have been avoided with the right care.

It is also noteworthy that only 22% of participants agree or strongly agree that 'getting positive results' is a challenge. Coaches of disability sport reported even less challenges with getting positive results. These perceptions may reflect the variety of domains that coaches work in and the broad sample of the research e.g., sport for development, sport for health. Further domain specific research e.g., in high performance sport, may add more insights on this.

In sum, across the sample, coaches reported domain specific needs but also challenges of supporting athletes (see recommendation 5, 7), accessing continuous professional development (see recommendation 8), and balancing workload (see recommendation 4). Moreover, the coaches implied that working with peers as part of coaching teams with assistants or co-coaches may be key to addressing many of these challenges (see recommendation 2, 5, 6, 7).



Who do coaches go to for help (day-to-day and critical moments)?

To address the above challenges, coaches described using a network of individuals as a means of support. During qualitative interviews, coaches described how other head coaches, mentors, and assistant coaches were valued sources of both social-emotional (e.g., a listener for reflective conversations) and pragmatic (e.g., covering a session) support.

It's knowing someone is there if needed, to listen, allow you to vent in a safe space. I also think as a volunteer you become trapped in the commitment and you either do it all or leave. I see many people leave. People need support and cover so that people can meet their family and work commitments. Balance, balance, balance.

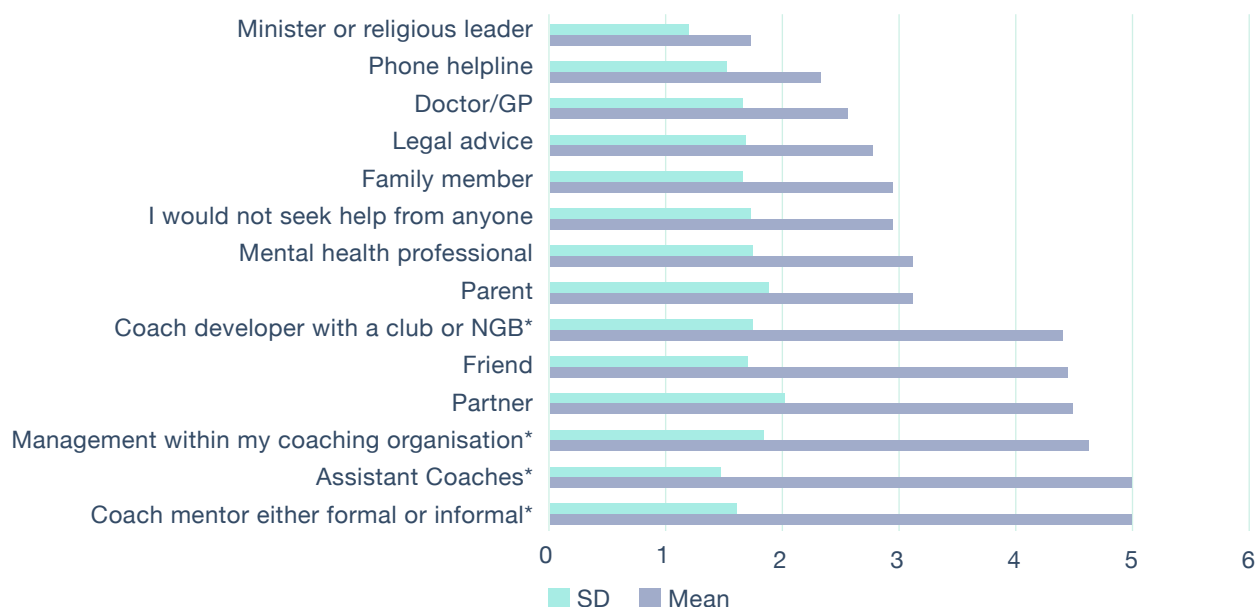
Again, coaches suggested the desire to connect with peers in the sport, in coaching teams, with assistant coaches, or co-coaches and to address these challenges.

The ability to discuss things with someone who understands, provides perspective, and offers advice.

It's having the right access, to the right people, at the right time. People talk about mentors and so forth, but some of them don't really understand the realities that you're facing in real time and that's not discrediting anybody's experience or discrediting anybody else's path, but sometimes they've got an unrealistic view of who you are, what you're going through, and what you're truly experiencing. And that's why I think it's important to have your peers because they get who you are and what you're going through.

These perspectives emphasise the need for an 'infrastructure' of caring individuals to understand and support the challenges that coaches face. Indeed, coaches are most likely to seek help from a coach mentor, followed by assistant coaches, and management within a sporting organisation.

Figure 3. Ranking of whom coaches are most likely to get help from (1 = extremely unlikely, 2 = very unlikely, 3 = unlikely, 4 = neutral, 5 likely, 6 very likely and 7 extremely likely).



Interestingly, coaches are significantly more likely to seek support from those involved in sport than outside sport (Inside sport Mean 4.77: SD 1.29 and Outside sport Mean 3.05: SD 1.00; sig $p < .001$). These individuals may be well placed to understand the coaching context and to support coaches with the pragmatic challenges mentioned above e.g., accessing CPD.

Outside of sport, coaches are most likely to access support from a partner or friend and less likely to access support from mental health professionals, legal advice, or GP. Although coaches are less likely to access support from these sources, they do still need support at crucial times. At these times, coaches need support from individuals with competence that may not be available from their peers or personal contacts. For instance, one coach described how she was...

In a bad place ... then I phoned the doctors and was like "I don't know what's going on". Like I never thought I had mental health sort of issues, so I phoned the doctors and just said, I wanted to speak to someone, so they transferred me to someone in mental health and so I spoke to people and yeah they were like "sounds like you've got depression and anxiety". It was sort of that phase where I was like, "this is real! Okay! I need to sort myself out" and normally I am quite a happy person, but I was at the point where I just felt like I could cry all the time. I was like "this isn't normal" and so yeah I spoke to them and then I went through some treatments, with the doctors and yes, I have ways to deal with it and it helps me feel a lot better I think it all stemmed from potentially doing too much (coaching) and burning out. I know a lot of people in my job, have said to me when I first came "Be careful. Don't do too much because the job will just ask you to do more and more, and it will never say you are doing too much. Have a break". It's up to you to do that, and I think I was quite good with it until this period.

Coaches also recognised the need for employers, managers and leaders in their sport system to support them. Two different experiences from coaches highlight this. The first illustrates a coach who felt their employer did not provide 'authentic care' for them.

Some of the companies we work for, they just want figures. Do you know what I mean? So they will be like, 'How many people engaged in this and how many people attended this event?' It is never, 'How did your event go? Did people enjoy you? How did you get on?' It is always just like, 'you're a performer, and you know you need numbers, and you've got to do a good job'.

In contrast to this, another coach explained how managers within their organisation were attentive, noticed their needs, and competently acted on their behalf:

I was on a yearly rolling contract and that was just a bit stressful when you have a mortgage and stuff like that. So our managers within the council did fight for us all to get on permanent contracts, which was nice.

Many coaches also recognised their own role in caring for themselves. Coaches stressed the need for breaks to recover:

I think it's about trying to plan in proper breaks throughout the year. But it took me a long time to learn that. The season has the busy periods, but I'd certainly encourage coaches to plan those breaks in through the season. Plan them in. Not be ad-hoc. So you know, "this is when I'm going to be off this week and nothing's going to get in the way of it".

You know we have to look after ourselves as much as our athletes. We kind of preach all this stuff to the athletes about well-being and care. Whereas coaches are like, 'well, we've got to be there. So we'll just fight through and drink coffee'. We don't practice any of this ourselves.

Coaches were also concerned about litigation and accusations. Specifically coaches were not always sure where to turn for support should they need help. For instance, three individual coaches declared:

Thinking about it, I don't know the specific route (for help with litigation) that I would need to take.

I would encourage any person starting to join the 'coaches association' (their own sport specific association) because a lot of clubs are run by committees. Committees are volunteers generally and if somebody takes a dislike to you, they can accuse a coach of anything. So it's best to be part of a professional organization that can give you some protection and that's what I would encourage everybody to do.

There is an athletes' commission but no coaches' commission. ...The British Athletes' Commission provide legal and mentoring advice free to athletes however coaches are left unprotected. The services of UK coaching...need to be more widely known in the coaching community so coaches are not left in very vulnerable positions.

Thus, on a day-to-day basis, coaches benefit from relationships with those in sport who understand their context (see recommendation 2, 3, 5, 6). Coaches also recognised the need to care for themselves (see recommendation 1) and for leaders in sport organisations to support them (see recommendation 3, 4). Additionally, at various critical moments, there is a need for competent support from professionals outside of the coaches' immediate sporting network that matches the coaches specific need e.g., medical or legal support (see recommendation 8).

Recommendations

Informed by the findings above, the recommendations below seek to develop a care infrastructure that supports coaches. This care infrastructure is rooted in relationships with individuals who can respond to coaches' needs. Such relationships are necessary because coaches' needs are situational, and temporal i.e., change over time. A 'one sized' approach will not meet the needs of all coaches, at all times. Rather a 'bottom up' approach, grounded in relationships with attentive, willing and competent individuals could support coaches with a web of care, particular to their needs. To develop this relationship infrastructure, it is necessary that individuals (e.g., assistant coaches, mentors, managers, independent agencies) adopt an ethic of care, have competent care skills such as active listening, and be educated as to their responsibilities and boundaries of expertise e.g., confidentiality and signposting. Additionally, it is important that leaders in coaching contexts model, and reward care because in some contexts it can often be difficult to show weakness and ask for support (Roberts et al. 2019). Addressing this 'stigma' could contribute to the development of more caring cultures for coaches (Hickey & Cronin, 2021). To that end, the recommendations below provide direction for coaches, organisations, and researchers to further develop a care infrastructure for coaches.

For sport and physical activity coaches

1

Provision of an evidenced based '**coach flourishing and thriving**' education package that shares knowledge of 'self-care' (e.g., psychological skills), and domain specific means of accessing 'sources of support'.

2

Explicit and formalised **support networks** for every sport and physical activity coach through the provision of named mentors, assistant coaches, and peer support.

These recommendations reflect the opportunity for self-care (Quartioli et al. 2019) and relationships as a means of social support (Norris, Didymus, & Kaiseler, 2020). Doing so could support coaches to 'repair' and 'self-repair', through a process of regular collaborative dialogue (Corsby, Jones, Thomas, & Edwards, 2022). These repair and self-repair opportunities may enable coaches to make sense of their experiences, to receive affirmation, and build resilience as part of their everyday activity. The above two recommendations could be universally embedded into coach registration and education systems. Organisations that represent coaches could explicitly advocate for these recommendations as a means to a sustainable and effective coaching workforce.

For organisations who deploy sport and physical activity coaches

3

Ensure those who manage coaches **access education and development programmes** that support them to willingly provide attentive and competent care.

This programme could be aligned with CIMPSA coach system manager standards including sharing knowledge on developing caring institutions (e.g., Tronto, 2010), the existing evidence base on how to support coaches (e.g., Breslin et al. 2022), and skills that enable caring (e.g. active listening).

4

Conduct impact assessments of policies, systems and practices on the health and wellbeing of coaches e.g., competition schedules, training camps, equipment provision, facility access, travel between roles.

These impact assessments should explicitly embed opportunities for recovery in coaches' schedules (Olusoga & Kentta, 2017; Olusoga, Butt, Maynard, & Hays, 2010). Scheduled time and space away from coaching can provide coaches with opportunities for distraction that enables them to cope with stressors. Organisations who deploy sport and physical activity coaches should ensure that coaches' recovery is systematically embedded in schedules to support a sustainable and effective coaching workforce. Organisations that represent coaches could advocate for these recommendations.

Assisting the coach

5

Embrace and enable the concept of coaching teams (mentor, coach, assistant, and apprentice) through **education and advocacy** such that no coach is isolated. Rather coaches are part of a caring community including assistant coaches, mentor and peer coaches.

6

Reconceptualise the role of the assistant coach as more than an entry-level role.

Reposition the role as one which explicitly focuses on assisting the coach as a performer and a person. In doing so, care could be codified as part of the role.

Here a distinction is to be made between assistant and apprentice coach. This will require a revisiting of standards and education of assistant coaches.

7

Offer large scale **professional development opportunities** for assistant coaches including access to care knowledge, skills and domain specific professional development focused on how to 'assist' the coach as a performer and a person.

This education should support assistant coaches, mentors, critical friends and coaching teams to develop the skills necessary to notice, willingly support, and where appropriate signpost coaches to sources of support. Such education and repositioning of coaching teams is necessary because relationships between coaching teams can suffer from micro-political tensions (Norman & Simpson, 2022; Potrac & Jones, 2012).

'Coaches' association'

Coaches, employers and deployers, and coaching teams will have natural limits on the care that they can competently provide. At various times, coaches will need help beyond their coaching teams expertise. They will need access to independent care that has specific skills and knowledge (Roberts et al., 2019). To aid this, it is recommended that all coaches have access to a:

8

'Coaching Association' that is explicitly recognised as a provider of support for all registered sport and physical activity coaches. This support should include;

- Workplace representation including legal support.
- Access to medical support and in particular mental health support for sport coaches.
- Career development support including long-term career plans, and support accessing education pathways, contingency planning for redundancy.
- Financial advice including indemnity, operating as private business, & pension support.
- Public advocacy for improved coaching conditions.

This 'Coaches' Association' should be a recognisable source of confidential and competent care for coaches at critical moments of their career.

For coaching researchers

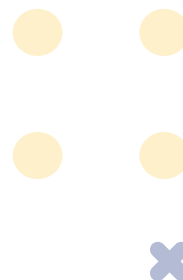
Sport and physical activity coaching in the UK is well served by access to world leading coaching research within its higher education institutions. To benefit from this:

9

Future research on care for coaches should be conducted to understand:

- a. The mal-employment of sport and physical activity coaches i.e., employment practices that may not benefit the coach (low pay, zero hours, poor conditions, limited professional development).
- b. The care experiences of domain and population specific coaches e.g., those who practice in deprived areas, female coaches, coaches from marginalised communities.
- c. Evidenced informed interventions aimed at developing caring cultures in sport organisations.
- d. The development and dissemination of domain specific case studies of good care for coaches.
- e. Regular domain specific assessment of coaches' care experiences

Organisations that represent coaches should advocate and support this research as a means to a better understanding the needs and care experiences of the coaching workforce.





Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank those who supported the production of this report including Heather Douglas, Dr Lauren Downham, Ian Braid and the UK Coaching ‘duty to care’ steering group. Thanks also to those agencies and individuals who promoted the research, and to all those coaches who provided insights via the survey and interviews.

For further information on the report, please contact principal investigator
Dr Colum Cronin c.j.cronin@ljmu.ac.uk

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Appendix 1:

Demographic Details

Online survey data was collected from a sample of coaches (N=388), with 64.50% identifying as male, 29.10% as female with 5.40% giving no preference. Mean age for the sample was reported as male (M=47.25, SD +/- 13.41), female (M=45.93, SD +/- 13.47). Ethnicity statistics for the sample are detailed in the table below:

Table 3. Identified ethnic group

Ethnic Group	Number	Sample (%)
White	338	87.1%
Indian	5	1.3%
White and Asian	4	1.0%
African	3	0.8%
Multiple ethnic group	3	0.8%
White and Black Caribbean	2	0.6%
White and Black African	2	0.6%
Chinese	2	0.6%
Arab	1	0.3%
Multiple ethnic group	3	0.8%
Prefer not to say	28	7.2%

Of the sample, 78.35% declared they did not have a physical or mental disability, 14.70% declared that they had, with 6.95% preferring not to say.

When asked about their role, 40.7% of the respondents described themselves as volunteers, 26.5% as full-time paid coaches, 19% were part-time paid coaches, 9.8% had a mixture of paid and voluntary positions and 3.9% did not declare their status. 41.5% of the respondents described their role as a head coach, 34.8% as a coach, and 6.7% as an assistant coach. 3.35% were sessional coaches, 6.7% had multiple coaching roles, 2.83% had other coach related roles (e.g. coach developer) and 4.12% did not express a preference.

When asked about their 'main coaching focus', 37.1% highlighted the aim to develop individuals as competitive performers, 32.7% highlighted an aim to increase or provide participation opportunities in sport or physical activity, 12.6% stated their aim was to provide social and/or health benefits for participants, with 13.4% aiming to support high performance in formal competitive settings. 4.4% gave no preference. The respondents declared that they coach forty-two different activities.

Sports coached

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Aikido | 15. Fencing | 29. Rugby League |
| 2. Archery | 16. Field Hockey | 30. Rugby Union |
| 3. Athletics | 17. Football/Soccer | 31. Sailing |
| 4. American Football | 18. Gaelic Football | 32. Shooting |
| 5. Badminton | 19. Golf | 33. Strength and Conditioning |
| 6. Basketball | 20. Gymnastics | 34. Squash |
| 7. Boccia | 21. Handball | 35. Swimming |
| 8. Boxing | 22. Inline Hockey | 36. Taekwondo |
| 9. Bowls | 23. Judo | 37. Table Tennis |
| 10. Carriage Driving | 24. Kayaking | 38. Tennis |
| 11. Canoe Slalom | 25. Mixed Martial Arts | 39. Ten pin bowling |
| 12. Cricket | 26. Netball | 40. Triathlon |
| 13. Cycling | 27. Paddle sports | 41. Trampolining |
| 14. Equestrian | 28. Rowing | 42. Volleyball |

Interview data were collected from 12 coaches

Table 4. Sample Characteristics from Interviewees

	Domain	Coaching Experience	Gender	Ethnicity	Age Range	Disability
Coach 1	Adult High Performance	National coach for a team sport	Male	White British	60-70	no
Coach 2	Child High Performance	Club coach for an individual sport	Male	White British	50-60	no
Coach 3	Adult High Performance	Club coach for a team sport	Male	White British	40-50	no
Coach 4	Child Recreation	Club coach for team sport	Male	White British	20-30	no
Coach 5	Child High Performance	National coach for individual sport	Female	White British	20-30	no
Coach 6	Child High Performance	Academy coach for individual sport	Female	British	50-60	no
Coach 7	Adult Recreation	Club coach for team sport	Female	White British	30-40	no
Coach 8	Adult Recreation	Club coach for team sport	Female	White British	30-40	no
Coach 9	Adult High Performance	Head coach for individual sport	Male	White British	20-30	Wheelchair User
Coach 10	Child Recreation	Head club coach for individual sport	Female	White British	30-40	No
Coach 11	Child Recreation	Club coach for team sport	Male	White British	20-30	Cerebral Palsy
Coach 12	Child Recreation	Club coach for team sport	Male	White British	20-30	No

Appendix 2:

Quantitative Data

Table 5. Overall composite score for 13 items of a modified Caring Climate Scale (Newton et al. 2007) by employment status (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 strongly agree).

Employment status	Mean	SD
Part time, unpaid	3.72	0.73
Part time, paid	3.63	0.91
Full time, paid	3.60	0.92
Volunteer	3.33	1.16
Full time, unpaid	3.32	1.01
A Mixture	3.62	0.90

Table 6. Overall composite score for 13 factors in the modified Caring Climate Scale (Newton et al. 2007) by main coaching role (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 strongly agree).

Main coaching role	Mean	SD
Coach	3.68	0.88
Assistant Coach	3.63	1.05
Head coach	3.60	0.87
Sessional Coach	3.39	0.34
Other	3.39	0.25

Table 7. Ranking of those coaches are most likely to get help from (1 = extremely unlikely, 2 = very unlikely, 3 = unlikely, 4 = neutral, 5 likely, 6 very likely and 7 extremely likely).

Item	Mean	SD
Coach mentor either formal or informal*	5.04	1.60
Assistant Coaches*	5.00	1.47
Management within my coaching organisation*	4.64	1.83
Partner	4.49	2.03
Friend	4.44	1.69
Coach developer with a club or NGB*	4.41	1.74
Parent	3.12	1.88
Mental health professional	3.11	1.74
I would not seek help from anyone	2.96	1.73
Family member	2.94	1.65
Legal advice	2.77	1.68
Doctor/GP	2.55	1.65
Phone helpline	2.32	1.51
Minister or religious leader	1.72	1.18

* = inside of sport

Table 8. Mean and standard deviation of who coaches are likely to seek help from inside and outside of sport (1 = extremely unlikely, 2 = very unlikely, 3 = unlikely, 4 = neutral, 5 likely, 6 very likely and 7 extremely likely).

Sources of help	Mean	SD
Inside sport	4.77	1.29
Outside sport	3.05	1.00

There is a significant difference between these two $p < .001$ - therefore, participants are significantly more likely to seek help from inside of their sport than outside.



Appendix 3:

Interview Schedule for Care Interviews

Confirm informed consent/right to withdraw/anonymity.

Icebreaker introductory questions (circa 10 mins)

1. **Can you tell me about your coaching (where, who, how you coach)?**
2. **How did you come to your coaching role**
3. **What is a typical coaching week like?**

Care narratives (3 x 10 min storied conversations)

4. **Can you tell me about the first time you realised care was important for coaches? (10 min conversation).**
Follow up prompts and probes: Who was there, what happened, why, what were your thoughts about that, how did that impact you, can you tell me more about that.
5. **Can you tell me a moment that you thought coaches were well cared for?**
Follow up prompts and probes: Who was there, what happened, why, what were thoughts about that, how did that impact you, can you tell me more about that. Why was this caring?
6. **Can you tell me about a moment where you felt care was missing for a coach?**
Follow up prompts and probes: who was there, what happened, why, what were thoughts about that, how did that affect you, can you tell me more about that. What was missing? What was needed? What should have happened? Isolation? Controlling?

Additional 'menu' questions. Participants choose 2/3 to explore (10-30 mins)

7. **Can you tell me about your career pathway (past and future) and what support you need?**
Follow up prompts and probes: (What has been your career path so far? What help did you need, and what help did you have, what do you need now to support your future career, work-life balance, job security, finance)
8. **From a coach's perspective, do you have any worries about litigation and what that might mean for you as a coach? In particular, we are thinking about coaches who are wrongly accused of abuse and the support you might need.**
Follow up prompts and probes: Do you have any thoughts about safeguarding coaches and the risks to them?
9. **Do you have thoughts on caring for coaches as individuals and not just performers?**
Follow up prompts and probes: What is genuine care? What support do you need as a person, not just as a coach?

Questions informed by the survey (3 x 5 mins) – if not covered from earlier questions

10. **Who provides care for you?**
Follow up prompts and probes: Who do you 'lean on'? What support do they provide, when, where, and how?
11. **Can you tell me about how you care for yourself?**
Follow up prompts and probes: e.g., Physical and mental wellbeing, professional development
12. **Our survey suggested the need for assistant coaches. What do you understand the assistant coach to be? How might they provide care?**



Care for Coaches

Mixed experiences, varied needs, and care ‘infrastructure’
to support the coaching ‘workforce’

For further information on the report, please contact principal investigator
Dr Colum Cronin c.j.cronin@ljmu.ac.uk