

UK Athletics - Coach Code of Practice

Introduction

Coaches and coaching are essential for the health and success of our sport; they are often rightly referred to as the lifeblood of the sport. Coaches are the key people who help ensure that those who take part in our sport have fun, as well as help them work towards and achieve their goals and aspirations.

Given their role, coaches frequently have positions of trust, influence and potential power with those they coach, the UK Athletics Code of Practice for coaches aims to provide clear guidance on the standards of professional conduct to which UK Athletics expects coaches to adhere, and volunteer coaches to aspire. It has been developed to help provide clarity of what 'good' looks and feels like in terms of coaching behaviours.

The Code ensures that our organisational values – integrity, communication, accountability, respect and quality performance are translated into action to help and protect coaches who not only perform such an integral role but also often have immense influence over athletes, who in turn may be young and vulnerable.

The UK Athletics Coaching Code of Practice:

- will become a core thread of the UK Athletics coach education curriculum;
- is fully aligned to the UK Athletics values;
- reflects best practice guidance regarding coach and athlete welfare;
- reflects current best practice guidance in terms of professional conduct for athletics coaches;
- is intended to apply to individuals with a coaching role/relationship with an athlete, regardless of whether they have a UKA coaching license (or indeed whether they reside/coach in the UK);
- represents the behaviours and values to which UK Athletics hope all coaches would aspire, regardless of their coaching level or status.

This Coach Code of Practice is supported by the Home Countries and reflects the values expressed in each organisational strategy.

The Coach Code of Practice will be introduced simultaneously to all levels of the coaching community and its contents should be aspirational for all coaches, regardless of their status. From the 1st June 2019, it will be a requirement for coaches employed/contracted by British Athletics AND/OR those coaches directly benefiting (financially or otherwise) from the World Class Programme (WCP) to adhere to the Code of Practice (though in the main, any coach supported by the WCP should already adhere to the vast majority of its contents).

UK Athletics will work closely with coaches involved with the WCP in the intervening time to ensure compliance with this code but in the meantime, reserve the right to withhold support (including accreditation for major championships) should coaches consistently and purposely demonstrate behaviours that are contrary to the spirit of this document.

1. Accountability

Coaches have a responsibility to:

- At all times work within the limits of your professional competence and area of expertise and refer to senior colleagues and/or other professionals when in doubt.
- Act to safeguard the reputation of the sport.

- Encourage and guide athletes to accept and take responsibility for their own behaviour and performance.
- Act to safeguard the health and safety of athletes and colleagues at all times in accordance with UKA's Welfare Policy and Code of Conduct and where relevant, Team Members Agreement – see the links below for any relevant policies:
<http://www.uka.org.uk/governance/policies/>
<http://www.uka.org.uk/governance/welfare-and-safeguarding/>
- Be aware of the current national and international regulations on anti-doping in sport. You should not assist, support or ignore practices, policies or procedures that contravene national or international anti-doping regulations.
- Seek consent from a parent or legal guardian when providing a service to an athlete under 16 years of age or where you believe the athlete may not have the capacity to consent either through maturity or mental capacity. It is recommended that coaches obtain written consent.
- If you consider an athlete's safety to be compromised by the facilities, equipment, access to medical care or organisational provision, report this using the appropriate procedures. IF these concerns cannot be addressed sufficiently, you should cease to use the service(s) and record your concerns and the steps you have taken to resolve them.
- Not allow an intimate personal relationship to develop with any athlete under the age of 18 who you coach or supervise, either directly or indirectly. UKA will support coaches and athletes to find alternative coaching provision should there be concerns over a relationship becoming too close. It is strongly recommended that coaches should not enter into an intimate relationship with any athlete they are coaching.
- Familiarise yourself with your employment contract where relevant, understanding all aspects of the role, and seeking clarification on areas of concern before signing.
- Get professional legal advice if your provision of service to an organisation suggests that you may be required to breach your professional code of ethics.
- At all times, observe all relevant national and international regulations regarding anti-corruption in sport. Specifically, guidance in this area is clear that you should refrain from gambling (through official or unofficial channels) on any athletic championships.
- Observe international regulations when travelling abroad with athletes and teams and comply with any Team Members Agreement which may be in place at the time.

2. Integrity

Coaches have a responsibility to:

- Develop working relationships with the athletes you coach (and others) based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect.
- Not exploit an athlete's vulnerability or lack of training knowledge when offering services.
- Work with colleagues in a way which best serves the interests of the athlete.
- Act ethically, professionally and with integrity, and take responsibility for your actions.
- Promote clean sport.
- Not abuse your professional position to make inappropriate financial, sexual or emotional demands on an athlete.

- Consider very carefully the inherent conflicts of interest associated with fulfilling the dual role of coach and agent, before agreeing to also act as an agent for any athlete you coach. As outlined elsewhere in this document, coaches should always work with the best interests of their athlete(s) in mind – operating as an agent makes this very challenging, and as such individuals are strongly advised against fulfilling the coach and agent role simultaneously.
- Not unreasonably deny an athlete’s request to see any paper or electronic records on them. By law everyone has the right to apply for access to records that contain their information under the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Strictly maintain the appropriate level of confidentiality.
- Unless specifically outlined as part of your role as a professional coach (for example, [but not limited to] NCAA university coaches or employed/contracted shoe company coaches), never try to proactively recruit, either overtly or covertly, athletes who are already receiving coaching from another personal coach. Coaches who are approached by an athlete to coach them are advised to keep a record of the contact and ensure the athlete informs his/her existing coach of his/her desire/exploration to change coaches. Coaches should also be mindful of the perception of ‘poaching’ when interacting with athletes not coached by them (particularly in relation to interactions at camps/competitions) and good practice suggests that attempts should be made to proactively communicate with an athlete’s personal coach before taking training sessions or offering technical advice. Facilitating a good hand over of an athlete’s current coaching status should he/she request to change coaches is also desirable.
- Familiarise yourself with the methods of escalating concerns about the health or welfare of athletes’, potential or real doping infringements, inappropriate conduct of others and sports rule violations.
- Raise through the appropriate channel(s) if you believe you face a circumstance that leads you to believe an athlete’s rights or ethics are being compromised.

3. Quality

Coaches have a responsibility to:

- Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date, be appropriately qualified and update your coach licence as and when required by UKA.
- Ensure that you have appropriate professional and/or institutional indemnity insurance, for example through UKA Licencing.
- Actively lead the monitoring, evaluation and progression of the programmes of the athletes that you coach.
- Maintain the highest standards of coaching provision including standards of conduct and appearance and behave in a manner that shows proper respect for athletes.
- Ensure that the activities you coach or advocate are appropriate for the age, maturity, experience and ability of the individual athlete.
- Seek feedback and challenge to your own performance, actions and behaviours.
- Be critically reflective, curious and have a thirst for personal development, continually seeking self-improvement.
- Be approachable and consistent.
- Endeavour to recognise when fatigue, stress, physical or mental illness may affect your duties. You should always seek advice and then comply with that advice.

4. Communication

Coaches have a responsibility to:

- When communicating with the media, provide information that is factually correct and balanced. Consent must be obtained beforehand if named athlete data is to be used.
- Explain clearly to an athlete the potential risks when testing an athlete to assess performance, or fitness to perform, in a language and manner that they understand.
- Where possible share any evidence on proposed training interventions with an athlete so far as it is currently understood.
- Discourage athletes from utilising unproven interventions, training methods or equipment if you believe it could cause them injury, illness or harm.
- Ensure effective and appropriate tools/facilities are employed to assist athletes you coach who may have a visual, hearing or learning disability.
- Be open and honest with athletes when things go wrong. You should act to put matters right as soon as possible and explain fully to all parties the circumstances leading up to the event.
- At the outset of a new coaching relationship, clarify with athletes (and where appropriate their parents or guardians) as to exactly what is expected of them and what athletes are entitled to expect from you.
- Be honest and objective when conducting or responding to appraisal information, where appropriate.
- Keep clear, accurate and legible records in the appropriate paper or electronic formats.
- Work collaboratively with all members of the multi-disciplinary team (where appropriate).
- Consistently promote positive aspects of the sport (e.g. fair play) and never condone rule violations or adopt or encourage the use of prohibited or age-inappropriate substances or techniques.

5. Respect

Coaches have a responsibility to:

- Provide coaching services without discrimination on grounds of age, gender, sexual, cultural, ethnic, disability or religious preference.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every athlete and treat everyone equally, regardless of background or ability.
- Respect interpersonal sensitivities.
- Make the athlete's health and welfare your primary and overriding concern.
- Respect the athlete's right to self-determination when deciding who they are coached by.
- Ensure that a decision to participate in an event or training activity, where that participation involves a high level of risk, is freely made by the athlete. You should however raise professional concerns when appropriate.
- Be aware that you are not obliged to provide a service if you believe this will not be in the best interest of the athletes you coach.
- Respect the views of other coaches and members of the support team in public and avoid unbalanced criticism of colleagues by impugning their professional or personal reputations.