

One Year on...

An evaluation of the first year of Project 500

The seven South East County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) - Sport Hampshire & IOW (SHIOW), Oxfordshire Sport Partnership, Leap, Get Berkshire Active, Active Surrey, Active Sussex and Kent Sport – developed Project 500 to respond to the gender imbalance in the coaching workforce.

The project is supported by sports coach UK and aims to increase the number of female coaches, and in the process, create a more diverse coaching workforce while driving the growth of females playing sport.

Why

- Women make up more than half of the population, but only 25-30% of the coaching workforce is female, while only 18% of qualified coaches are female.
- Project 500 has been developed to respond to this gender imbalance in the workforce. Set to run for two years between April 2013 and April 2015, the first full year of the project has now been completed.

Aims of the project and evaluation

Project 500 set out four objectives:

1. Recruit, develop, deploy and/or retain 500 female coaches across the South East between April 2013 – April 2015
2. Establish a culture of support for female coaches including mentoring, co-coaching, communities of learning and coach observations to underpin coach development and deployment
3. Raise the profile of females in coaching through the development of a women's coaching network
4. Create clear guidelines and provide a body of evidence to encourage the roll out of this project nationally from April 2015 – Project 5000.

At this stage of the project, the development of the women's only network is ongoing therefore Objective 3 will be evaluated at the end of the second year. Objective 4 is progressing and sports coach UK are working in partnership with the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) to submit a joint proposal to Sport England for CSPs to run a national women's coaching project from 2014-2017. The findings presented focus on progress against Objectives 1 and 2

Objective 1: 500 Female Coaches – Where are we now?

At the half-way stage we are on course to achieve this objective. Over half (53%, 264 coaches) the total target of 500 coaches have been supported in the first year.

The types of support the coaches have received vary and are included in Table 1 below. Though smaller numbers have been mentored and deployed so far, these are two areas which will be developed further in the second year of the project.

Table 1 Types of support coaches have received

Type of Support	No. Coaches Supported
Recruited from a non-coaching role to P500	66
Upskilled (received formal coach education training)	70
Developed (attended formal or informal learning opportunities)	169
Mentored	37
Deployed (within a sport-specific or Sport England programme)	23

Note: numbers do not add up to 264 as approximately 45% (120) coaches have received more than one type of support. 198 of the 264 coaches are actively coaching, the figure of 23 deployed relates to coaches coaching that were not previously active.

Coaches have been supported across 37 sports in the first year. The top seven sports include, Rugby, Football, Athletics, Netball, Cricket, Cycling and Gymnastics. These account for almost two-thirds (63%) of the coaches supported so far.

- Over a third of the coaches supported so far (35%, 96 coaches) said they were unqualified when they first registered on the project. Of these, a quarter (24 coaches) are now qualified at either Level 1 (71%) or Level 2 (29%).
- 34 coaches who were qualified at registration have been upskilled to a higher qualification level. The majority (74%) have moved from Level 1 to Level 2

Objective 2: Establishing a Culture of Support – Where are we now?

After one year of the project we are also on course to achieve this objective. The information above shows, in numerical terms, that a culture of support exists and that female coaches have accessed it in a variety of ways. Crucially, coaches have also provided feedback which shows the culture of support is underpinning their development.

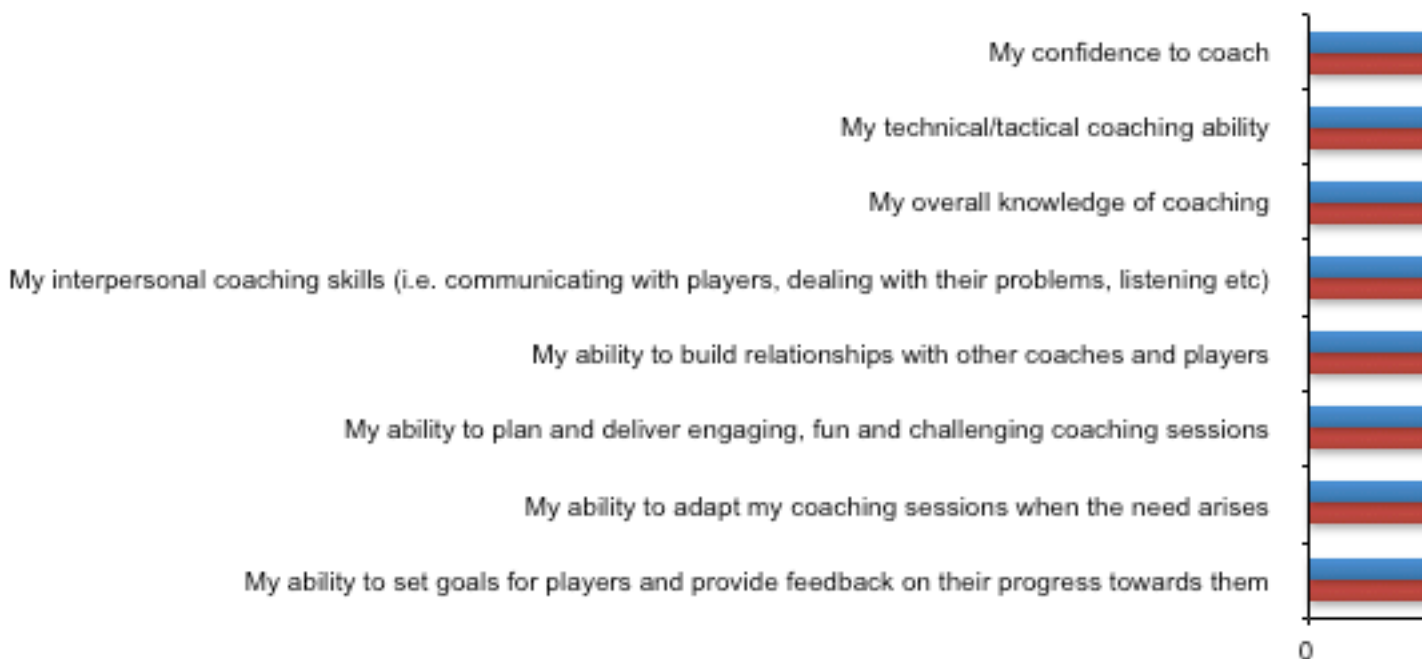
Coaches' experiences so far

Coaches responding to the online survey were asked to rate the things they had experienced so far on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent. As well as having very positive overall experiences so far, coaches are particularly positive about the initial registration process and the formal and informal learning opportunities provided (Figure 5).

Figure 1 Coach ratings for their experiences so far



Figure 2 – How coaches rated themselves before starting P500 and now



The culture of support also extends to a network of local and national ambassadors to support other Project 500 coaches. Ambassadors are present in each County and link in to regional networking events to support coach development.

“I think projects like project 500 are fantastic. The fact that they're driven to increase the number of women coaches across all sports, for me, is absolutely inspirational. I think programmes like this should be supported and endorsed more than ever, because they have identified that we do have a low percentage both across grass roots and elite levels. It's critical that we understand how we work with these kind of projects, to inspire, make connections to role models and give [female coaches] more opportunities.”

Anna Mayes, England Netball Head Coach

