

Coach Advisor Impact Report 2020

With the support of the Swim England Talent Team, 16 Coach Advisors have provided support to 64 mentees, across all 8 regions. Advisors are required to provide reports on each of their 4 mentees quarterly regarding any meetings and discussions that have occurred. These are then discussed at quarterly meetings with the Swim England Coach Development Manager and a Swim England National Talent Officer.

Each coach advisor is paid £2000, split into 4 payments of £500. These payments are paid quarterly, on the basis that reports are uploaded and review meetings are attended. Swim England funds one advisor for each region, with regions able to match fund additional advisors. The following regions funded additional advisors:

North East – 4 (July to December 2020)
South West – 1
South East – 1
West Midlands – 1
East – 1

Advisor Reports

Each advisor creates a quarterly report which is uploaded to box and regional staff now have access to these. Quarterly meetings are also held with the Coach Development Manager and a Talent Officer to discuss work completed with mentees and provide any assistance that may be required. Regional officers were also invited to the final quarterly meeting in December.

Insight

All advisors and mentees were asked to complete a short survey regarding the benefits of the programme and identify areas of improvement.

It is evident that COVID had an impact on the programme, with a lot of recommendations for future improvements revolving around the need for face-to-face visits, which are usually part of the programme but could not happen in 2020. However, we have been very pleased with the adaptability of the advisors and mentees throughout the year in delivering what appears to have been a positive and valuable experience for all.

“So vital to see them coach and the environment that they are working in. Gives you a much better sense of their reality. It’s also good for them as the club and swimmers/parents “see” the process in action. Some feel great pride that their club and coach have been selected.”

Also of note is 100% of advisors and mentees would recommend the programme to other coaches.

“It has been a great experience, being able to learn from an Olympic Coach who has produced multiple International swimmers/national champions.

Learning from the best around has definitely helped my development in becoming a better coach and opened my eyes further into what has been possible.”

Actions

Moving forwards, the plan would be to align the programme with a typical swimming season, September – August, compared to the calendar year as it has been run in previous years. This would provide coaches with support throughout their entire season as opposed to coming in and leaving them in the middle of a season. Ideas and advice from advisors should be able to be implemented better this way.

In addition, we would like to provide better training and more social opportunities for all involved in the programme, in particular the advisors. This would include outlining Swim England’s expectations for both the advisors and mentees from the outset and would allow for an initial formal meeting between the two groups.

Many advisors also highlighted the want for periodic meetings between the advisors to discuss their methods and any issues they were having, these could coincide with the quarterly meetings with the Coach Development Manager and Talent Officers.

“I believe this is one of the most valuable project of coach education programme Swim England has. It provides coaches with an informal support and 1-2-1 private conversations where they can address issues they (possibly) would not in a group. It is much easier to build trust through bonding and understanding backgrounds better which helps when providing advice on different issues.”

In light of the ongoing COVID pandemic, Swim England are looking to re-engage our national team of Coach Advisors in August 2021 for initial training and would be looking to speak to regional officers during this time about appropriate mentees. We are also exploring the creation of a bespoke, internal training programme for these advisors, supported by UK Coaching.

The programme would then commence in September 2021, running alongside one of our ‘closed’ coach development programmes so that coaches selected to this would be priority recipients of mentor support. We would also invite any interest over the next few months from regions that do not currently match fund a coach advisor or would like to fund additional advisors for their region. This would include support for all aquatic disciplines not just swimming.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the regions for their incredible support towards making this programme a success and we look forward to working with even more closely in the future on this and other initiatives.