

Coach Core Evaluation

Final report

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## Executive summary

Coach Core is a community coaching apprenticeship programme developed and funded by The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry. Launched in July 2012, it is designed to give NEET young people (not in education, employment or training) an employer-led entry into community coaching. Coach Core is currently being delivered in ten cities by consortiums of sporting organisations.

This evaluation was commissioned in May 2016 to focus on the first intake of apprentices across four consortiums in Nottingham, London, Essex and Manchester. The evaluation’s overall aim is to:

* Assess the effectiveness of the consortium model
* Assess the impact of the programme on its beneficiaries
* Test evaluation tools for use with other Coach Core programmes

The purpose of this final report is to provide an overview of the most recent evaluation findings – after two years of delivering the consortium model.

The consortium model

The Coach Core model includes a number of features that makes it unique as an apprenticeship scheme:

* A consortium of sports organisations working together to deliver the apprenticeship;
* Training, education and qualifications provided by a dedicated tutor to a cohort of apprentices;
* The provision of mentors in the workplace;
* A bespoke training package (Create Development) for both apprentices and their mentors;
* Extensive opportunities to take part in sporting events and experiences offered by consortium partners and The Royal Foundation.

Over the last few years the apprenticeship sector has undergone significant changes with regard to both education and funding. These structural changes have added substantial pressure and complexity to the overall management and development of the Coach Core programme. Despite these external challenges, The Royal Foundation has successfully expanded the programme and continued to support the delivery of established consortiums.

The evaluation found that consortium partners saw the consortium model as a valuable opportunity to network and develop stronger links with other partners in the sport and leisure industry. This together with the mutual support and shared responsibility for delivery were seen as great advantages of the model. However, each consortium is a complex and multi-layered entity that has brought together organisations of varying structure, size and focus. It is therefore important for Coach Core to reflect on and share learning between consortiums and to ensure new consortiums learn from past experiences.

Developing young people

Coach Core aims to work with NEET young people to develop them professionally and personally, and to give them opportunities to gain qualifications and progress as coaches. The evaluation has identified a high proportion of Coach Core apprentices as having additional support needs, due to their personal histories, mental health issues, disabilities, special educational needs or other difficulties. Coach Core and its partners have therefore been successful in attracting the target group of young people.

In the light of this, the high achievement rate is a great testament to the programme and to the support provided by tutors, employers, mentors and coordinators. Of the 79 apprentices who started across the four consortiums, 66 completed their apprenticeship – an impressive overall achievement rate of 87% - well above the national achievement rate for intermediate Level 2 apprenticeships (66.5% in 2015/16[[1]](#footnote-1)).

While apprentices’ individual progress and development have of course varied, all have gained important transferable skills and considerable work experience within the sport sector. Apprentices themselves are generally very positive about their apprenticeship and report considerable personal gains from their experience, including improved confidence, interpersonal communication skills and ability to lead groups.

The follow-up evaluation showed that six months after graduating from Coach Core, 98% of apprentices were in employment or further training, the majority working either full-time or part-time within the sport and leisure industry. This is a very promising finding for the programme. Looking back on their experience, 92% of apprentices interviewed consider their Coach Core apprenticeship to have had a very positive impact on their job prospects, mainly due to the qualifications they have gained and the broad range of work experience.

evaluation tools

The tools developed for this evaluation include an assessment pack completed by apprentices and employers twice during the apprenticeship. These tools have been found to be acceptable to young people and line managers / mentors, with a good response rate, and have enabled the evaluation to demonstrate detailed background information about apprentices’ education and work history, as well as more sensitive information about their physical and mental health, disabilities and other risk factors.

While qualitative interviews with young people and their line managers probably provides us with the best data on the context for different apprentices’ journeys, the development of a Coach Core assessment pact offers additional insight into the changes to young people’s self esteem and employability. We therefore recommend that Coach Core continue to collect baseline and follow-up data from new cohorts of apprentices.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Coach Core Programme

Coach Core is an apprenticeship programme developed and funded by The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry. Launched in July 2012, it is designed to give NEET young people (not in education, employment or training) an employer-led entry into community coaching.

Since the introduction of Coach Core in 2012, the apprenticeship sector has undergone significant changes with regard to both education and funding. Educational changes include the end of the apprenticeship framework[[2]](#footnote-2) and the introduction of new standards, which means that Coach Core apprentices will now graduate with a NVQ Level 2 *Community Activator Coach* qualification, instead of a level 2 in *Activity Leadership*. This means radical changes to both how the apprenticeship is delivered and how it is assessed, but as the new standard, approved in late 2017, is designed by employers it is anticipated that the Community Activator Coach qualification will better equip apprentices with the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to succeed in community coaching.

The introduction of an apprenticeship levy, and the extended duration of the apprenticeship from 12 to 15 months, has also significantly impacted how the Coach Core programme will be funded.

While these changes will mainly impact future cohorts of Coach Core apprentices, the structural changes within the apprenticeship sector have added substantial pressure on the overall management and development of the Coach Core programme. Despite these external challenges, The Royal Foundation has successfully expanded the programme to ten cities across the UK as planned, while also supporting existing consortiums to continue delivery to new cohorts of Coach Core apprentices.

## 1.2 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the most recent evaluation findings of the Coach Core programme – two years into the delivery of the consortium model.

Earlier evaluation reports have focused on the Coach Core apprenticeship model and the initial establishment of consortiums (Year 1 Report, February 2017), as well as an overview of apprentices’ profile and characteristics at recruitment and their progress during the one-year apprenticeship (Year 2 Interim Report, October 2017).

This report summarises the outcomes for young people at the end of their apprenticeship and follow them up six months after completing their apprenticeship.

# 2. The Evaluation

DMSS Research was commissioned by The Royal Foundation in May 2016 to carry out an independent evaluation of The Royal Foundation’s apprenticeship scheme in Nottingham. Since then, Coach Core consortiums in London, Essex and Manchester have been added to the evaluation as they became operational (London and Essex in autumn 2016, and Manchester in January 2017).

The following evaluation activities have been carried out since October 2017:

London:

* Telephone interviews with 7 previous apprentices (T3)
* Follow-up contact with line managers (T3)

Essex:

* Telephone interviews with 10 previous apprentices (T3)
* Follow-up contact with line managers (T3)

Manchester:

* Interview with programme coordinator (T2)
* Interviews with all 9 line managers based within different partner organisations (T2)
* Group interviews with 10 apprentices (T2)
* Follow-up assessments completed by 12 (out of 15) apprentices (T2)
* Follow-up assessment pack completed by line managers for 15 (out of 15) apprentices (T2)

Table 1 below shows the number of assessment forms completed by apprentices in all four consortiums at different points during their apprenticeship (T1 and T2).

Table 1: Data collected

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Start  (T1) | Completion (T2) |
| Nottingham | 17 | 17 |
| London | 16 | 12 |
| Essex | 20 | 18 |
| Manchester | 16 | 12 |
| Total | **69** | **59** |

The evaluation was designed to follow-up apprentices six months after the completion of their apprenticeship, with the purpose of documenting their progression route into employment, training or further education. So far, three cohorts have been followed up - the Nottingham cohort in summer 2017, and the London and Essex cohorts in February 2018 (Manchester apprentices will be followed up in summer 2018 and this report updated at that time). Not everyone gave their consent to be approached for the follow-up interview, but of the 44 apprentices who did give consent and were approached 25 proceeded to interview. This is a good response rate of 57% - especially considering that the phone numbers of 10 apprentices were unobtainable.

The evaluation team also contacted line managers who provided information about a further 15 apprentices. Hence, the progression route is known for 40 out of the 51 apprentices who completed their apprenticeship (78%)[[3]](#footnote-3).

# 3. Developing young people

One of the overarching aims of the Coach Core programme is to work with NEET young people to develop them professionally and personally, and to increase their chances of future meaningful employment within the sport sector or beyond.

We profiled the apprentices at baseline, in term of their educational background, employment history, health and disability, support needs and other risk factors and found that Coach Core and its partner consortiums have been successful in attracting (and retaining) their target group of young people. Across the four consortiums, tutors and employers also estimated that 50-70% of apprentices have additional needs due to their personal background, mental health issues, disabilities, special education needs or because they struggle with motivation. During their year-long apprenticeship, many apprentices experienced a range of other difficulties, including immigration issues, financial difficulties, coming out gay, teenage fatherhood, parental deaths and other family difficulties.

In the light of this, the achievement rate across the four consortiums is a great testament to the programme and specifically to the support provided by tutors, employers, mentors and coordinators. At the end of their first year in Nottingham, Essex, London and Manchester 66 apprentices out of the original 76 completed their apprenticeship – an impressive overall retention rate of 87%. The rates have varied between the consortiums (see Table 2.) but they are all well above the national achievement rate for intermediate level 2 apprenticeships (66.5% in 2015/16)[[4]](#footnote-4).

Table 2. Achievement rates

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Consortium | No. started | No. completed | Achievement rate |
| Nottingham | 20 | 17 | 85% |
| London | 17 | 15 | 88% |
| Essex | 20 | 19 | 95% |
| Manchester | 19 | 15 | 79% |
| Total | 76 | 66 | 87% |

Within this overall picture apprentices’ individual progress and development has of course varied considerably. Our previous evaluation report (Year 2 Interim, October 2017) described how apprentices in Nottingham, London and Essex were perceived as falling broadly into three groups – ‘the star’ apprentices, ‘the acceptables’ and ‘the disappointers’. Describing learning journeys using these categories demonstrated different apprentices’ progression routes and challenges during the year. But it also showed the significance of employers’ expectations, such as the importance of being reliable, showing initiative and commitment to their work – which were often valued above being a good coach. The learning journeys of the first cohort in Manchester were described in very similar terms, with some apprentices exceeding all expectations, while others fell short.

Nevertheless, regardless of their progress during the year, the Coach Core apprenticeship appears to have been an invaluable stepping-stone into a more professional work environment for all the young people. They have learnt important transferable skills and gained considerable work experience within a coaching environment. As one apprentice put it six months after completing his apprenticeship:

*To be honest it has gone really well. I uploaded my CV to a website, applied for five jobs and got interviews for all five jobs. After [accepting a full time job] I got loads of enquiries about other positions in London and abroad* (Apprentice, Essex, T3).

## 3.1 Coach Core and beyond

The follow-up interviews and information provided by line-managers means that we know the progression route of three-quarters of apprentices who completed their apprenticeship in Nottingham, London and Essex (40 out of 51 or 78%).

This shows that 98% of apprentices were either in employment or doing further training six months after completing their Coach Core apprenticeship. This is a very promising finding for the programme.

Of the 40 young people, 31 were working (78%) while 8 were doing another apprenticeship (20%). Only one ex-apprentice was unemployed and looking for work (having left another apprenticeship when it did not work out), although another two claimed Universal Credit while working part-time.

Of those working, 38% were in full-time and 28% in part-time employment. Another 12% were known to be in work (via their ex line managers), but their hours were unknown. This is a high proportion of apprentices in employment.

Figure 1.

Interviews with apprentices reveal that part-time hours vary markedly with some young people working, for example, 12 hours a week on a zero-hour contract while others worked 30 hours a week on a permanent contract. The majority of apprentices working part-time hours expressed a wish to work more hours.

Three-quarters of apprentices in employment (23 out of 31) were working in the sport and leisure industry, either as coaches, personal trainers or doing other jobs within the industry. Those that had left the sport sector had a variety of jobs, such as customer service, data analysis, waitering and in retail. A small group of apprentices across the three cohorts had been approached by the primary schools they worked with during their apprenticeship and offered full time employment either as mentors or as sports leaders.

The eight young people who have continued their education are all doing a new apprenticeship within the sport and leisure industry, mostly through their Coach Core employer. In Nottingham five were engaged in a NVQ Level 3 apprenticeship in ‘Physical education and school sport’ or the equivalent.

In terms of their plans for the future the majority of those interviewed clearly hope to stay in coaching and to build a sports focused career, coaching either in schools, in the community or abroad. Three mentioned plans to go to university to study for a degree.

All but two interviewees (92%) said that the Coach Core apprenticeship had had a positive impact on their job prospects, with the vast majority saying it had a ‘massive impact’. Apprentices were extremely positive about what they had gained, both in terms of tangible qualifications and a broad range of work experiences.

*I had no qualifications in sport when I started, and I have picked up loads of qualifications, done loads of different sports – they all give different options.* (Apprentice, Essex, T3)

*It has opened up different routes that I wasn't aware off beforehand. All the qualifications I have gained have also made a difference. I now have experience of working with a variety of children, adults and organisations. The impact is definitely positive.* (Apprentice, Essex, T3)

*Because of Coach Core I never had the biggest problem of getting my first job. I have applied for coaching jobs, and lack of experience wasn't a problem… I had a year’s worth of experience.* (Apprentice, London, T3)

Apprentices also highlighted how interpersonal skills, such as being able to work with other people, specifically gained through their Coach Core experiences have improved their job prospects.

*It has helped build my character, just being around people all the time, working as a team, my new job is very much in a team environment*. (Apprentice, London, T3)

*I am a lot more confident, I can speak to people, before if I didn't know people I found it hard to speak to them, I am more approachable, more confident, can do problem solving* (Apprentice, Nottingham, T3)

*For me it was the confidence thing. I was very shy, but I have learnt to speak to a crowd or go up to strangers and start a conversation. Even just to write emails, I couldn't do that before - the little life skills. I feel confident to coach, stand in front of a group, I used to get very nervous and could feel myself go red, I still do that a bit, but I am better at chilling out and enjoy it.* (Apprentice, Essex, T3)

In addition to the tangible qualifications and transferable softer interpersonal skills, some apprentices also highlighted how the apprenticeship had made them aware of new career options, which gave them new goals to strive for:

*It has had a massive impact, it has opened doors to things I didn't even know were available. Coach Core has been great, it set me up on the right path and given me a clearer view of what is possible.* (Apprentice, London, T3)

*It has given me a job, loads of experience, if I leave [my employer] I can go out and get another job. My future has completely changed – it has given me a career.* (Apprentice, Nottingham, T3)

When asked to reflect on the most important thing they had learnt during the year, many apprentices mentioned the key element of the Coach Core approach to coaching, namely being able to adapt sessions to be inclusive of different people, abilities and age groups, and to be patient with children as they all learn at different paces.

*Learning how every kid is different, about body and behaviour and how to adapt sessions when coaching to suit different situations and different children.* (Apprentice, London, T3)

*How to change a session to suit different people, like people with disabilities, some learn visually. How to adapt it, so all children and young people can take part.* (Apprentice, Nottingham, T3)

Others highlighted their improved social skills, teamwork, interpersonal and communication skills, such as explaining to people what they would be doing and why, rather than just doing it.

*It helped develop my communication skills, I can now communicate with different demographics, like disabled people, children or elderly residents. It has also made me more confident in general* (Apprentice, Essex, T3)

For some the most important things they had learnt during the year were more personal attributes, such as patience, confidence, develop their own style and perseverance.

To stick with it. If I hadn't stuck with it I don't know what I would be doing now. (Apprentice, Essex, T3)

Acknowledging that all Coach Core graduates may not develop a career within the sport sector, apprentices were also asked if they could see themselves volunteering as a coach in the future, to which all but four replied ‘yes’ and the majority ‘yes, definitely’. One apprentice had already done some sports focused charity work and had raised £600 for a cancer charity. Others could see themselves volunteering abroad, with their local football team or with disabled people in the future. This suggests that even if apprentices find employment outside the sport and leisure industry, they may still to be part the volunteering coaching workforce, and with their coaching qualifications and engagement skills would have plenty to offer.

*If I end up on a different path, I will definitely go out to share my skills and experiences as a volunteer* (Apprentice, London, T3)

# 4. Feedback on the programme

At the end of their apprenticeship, apprentices in the four consortiums were very positive about their experiences on the Coach Core programme. At the end of their apprenticeship 92% agreed with the statement ‘my time at Coach Core has made a positive difference to my life’ and 94% agreed that ‘my year as a Coach Core apprentice has improved my future job prospects’. Ninety-six per cent said that Coach Core has encouraged them to try out new things.

Figure 2.

Feedback also shows that only 1 out of 61 apprentices ‘disagreed’ with the statement ‘I feel listened to and treated with respect’ by their line manager; their coaching colleagues; their tutor; and by other apprentices. This continues to be very positive feedback.

Figure 3.

The vast majority of apprentices ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that they had learnt how to work well in a team (97%); explain things clearly (93%); and had been able to put their learning into practice (96%). Apprentice also agreed that they had gained confidence in expressing their ideas (96%) and in leading groups (95%).

Figure 4.

These are very positive findings at the end of their apprenticeship. However, apprentices also had some suggestions as to how the programme could be improved.

### 4.1 Qualifications

At the end of their apprenticeship, the majority of apprentices were pleased with the range of qualifications they had gained in addition to the NVQ Level 2 Certificate in Activity Leadership and Level 2 Fitness Instructor. While the qualifications varied depending on the consortium and the employer with which apprentices were based, all had gained at least a couple of Level 1 qualifications in for example fencing, tri-golf, archery and softball, as well as a Level 1 qualification in their specific sport, like football, rugby and cricket. Most had also started, or already gained, a Level 2 qualification in their specific sport.

Among those who had not yet gained a Level 2 qualification, feedback at the end of their apprenticeship (T2) focused on the need for employers to be more realistic at the recruitment day about what qualification they would achieve within the timeframe and funding available. Many were not aware of the challenges involved in gaining, for example, both a FA level 1 and a FA Level 2 qualification within 12 months, and hence felt somewhat disappointed when they did not achieve both.

Although many apprentices did not initially anticipate using their Fitness Instructor qualification, the follow-up interviews showed that five apprentices, mainly in Essex, had secured employment as personal trainers using this qualification.

### 4.2 The Education

Across all four consortiums, both apprentices and employers commented on the differences between learners, with some apprentices progressing quickly while others struggled with the educational side of the apprenticeship. These differences in age, ability and commitment challenged the Coach Core tutors and encouraged them to devise different ways of organising the education to suit different learners. This is especially important as apprentices often have high support needs and rely on additional help from their tutor in order to complete the educational requirements.

However, in retrospective feed back on their educational experiences many apprentices mentioned the support of their tutor and how instrumental they had been in getting them through the year and in gaining the final qualification.

*The education was really good. I was new to sport, I hadn't even done a GCSE in PE, so it was hard, but with [my tutor’s] help I passed, I’m not sure I would have done without* (Apprentice, Essex, T3)

Many apprentices also mentioned their dislike of the NVQ workbooks, finding them repetitive and somewhat irrelevant to their actual work with employers. While they recognised that the education was an important part of their apprenticeship many struggled with the workbook format and found that it did not support their preferred learning style.

*When you have spent a whole day in the office trying to smash out some booklets, you can’t remember what you read or what you wrote. So it is not going in, so I am just doing it to get it done* (Apprentice, Manchester, T2).

A few also asked for more work to be done online, to avoid the risk of workbooks getting lost.

Interviewees reported having enjoyed the more practical side of the education – practicing, adapting and sharing games, warm ups, drills and sessions with each other – and apprentices generally asked for more practical activities.

### 4.3 Communication

The structure of the apprenticeship, with 20 hours a week based with an employer and 10 hours a week spent away from the workplace with a tutor, has the potential of making the programme feel fragmented. While this is the intrinsic nature of all apprenticeships it was nevertheless an issue regularly mentioned by both employers and apprentices. Employers would often describe how they felt ‘in the dark’ about what their apprentices were leaning (and why), while apprentices frequently felt that education days were unrelated to the type of work they did in the workplace.

Across the four consortiums, this feeling of disconnection between education and work was stronger at the beginning of the year, as all involved were less familiar with the curriculum and the structure of individual organisations. During the year, consortiums developed communication mechanisms, such as tutors sending monthly progress reports to employers, which made employers feel better equipped to support apprentices with their workbooks. It nevertheless emphasises the importance of having structures in place to ensure good communication channels, especially between tutors and employers, but also between coordinators, The Royal Foundation, tutors, employers and apprentices.

In Manchester, at the end of their apprenticeship, apprentices highlighted their frustration when communication was less than optimal.

*I think the communication could be better between our mentors and our tutor – we got told [by mentors] ‘this hasn’t been done, this hasn’t been done’, but when we went through it, actually it has been done it just hadn’t been marked. Because they haven’t been communicating, it shines badly on us, so yeah the communication could better.* (Apprentice, Manchester, T3)

These apprentices also mentioned occasions, both with regard to their workplace and the education, where they had received emails or text messages after 10pm, informing them where they had to be the following morning. These are clearly unsatisfactory work practices, but also potential causes of work related stress and anxiety.

Towards the end of their apprenticeship, it was evident during focus groups that the majority of apprentices hoped to be kept on by their employer following their qualification. Both the Nottingham and Manchester apprentices were interviewed in early December with their contracts coming to an end around New Year, but most had not yet discussed future job opportunities with their line managers. The follow-up interviews also highlighted that some apprentices had experienced a period of uncertainty following their apprenticeship, as they had not applied for other jobs or looked into educational opportunities, but instead held out for a job within their organisation.

*During the course I was expecting a full time role at the end. I had done everything right, but then one week before [completing] I was told there was no role, it was very upsetting… Because I was told so late, I didn't have any work for 1 month, it was a struggle* (Apprentice, London, T3)

While we recognise that there are often external factors beyond the control of individual line managers that can affect or delay decisions about employment opportunities, the programme as a whole would benefit from providing more structured career advice and encouraging employers to discuss the options ahead of apprentices much earlier in the process.

### 4.4 Consortium Partnership

One of the objectives of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the consortium model in delivering the Coach Core programme, including how effective the model is in providing positive outcomes for apprentices, as well as any benefits of the programme to the partners involved.

The evaluation has identified a number of benefits to partner organisations as a result of delivering the apprenticeship through a consortium model:

* The opportunity to network and develop stronger link with other partners – including the possibility of developing new avenues of work;
* Having the educational side of the apprenticeship delivered by an external provider;
* The potential of having access to a whole group of extra ‘bodies on the ground’ to assist with partner events;
* The support available to partners via the consortium meetings, the coordinator, the tutor, and The Royal Foundation.

The four consortiums involved in this evaluation clearly show that The Royal Foundation has been successful in bringing a range of partners together and supporting consortiums in building strong partnerships capable of, and committed to, delivering the Coach Core apprenticeship programme. Partners’ ongoing commitment to Year 2 of the Coach Core programme, despite reduced funding, is also impressive. While most partners have reduced the number of apprentices they are hosting in Year 2, only two partners have left their consortium altogether. Together with consortium partners, The Royal Foundation has recruited replacement partners to ensure that each consortium can accommodate 20 new apprentices.

The previous evaluation report (Year 2 Interim, October 2017) showed that individual consortiums have been given a great deal of flexibility and autonomy to develop independently within the Coach Core model and to make decisions based on local partners’ priorities and context, rather than programme specifications. This was described as a positive feature that partners valued. However, the report also highlighted that different consortiums have grappled with many of the same issues, such as the mentoring aspects of the Coach Core model or partners’ ongoing request to frontload training. In this final evaluation report, which also includes interviews with Manchester partners at the conclusion of their 1st cohort’s apprenticeships, this is a finding that needs reiterating.

From the partners’ perspective there appear to have been limited communication, and shared learning *between* the four consortiums. Partners from all four consortiums have, for example, mentioned during interviews an initially communication issue between the tutor and line managers about apprentices’ attendance on education days. Each consortium has had to identify this as an issue and to develop individual solutions. While this is a relatively small example, it highlights the benefit of sharing learning more widely between different consortiums and of having overall structures that can be adopted by new consortiums as they become operational. This is especially important as the number of consortiums continues to grow.

Across the four consortiums, the position – and consequently the role – of the programme coordinator has varied. In Essex and (initially) in Nottingham the programme coordinators were hosted independently of consortium partners (in Essex by Active Essex, the County Sports partnership, and in Nottingham by City of Football). In London and Manchester the coordinators were based within one of the partner organisations (in London by Greenhouse Sport and in Manchester by Manchester City in the Community). This structural difference appears to have had a direct influence on the level of support being offered by the programme. In both London and Manchester, for example, the coordinator had no direct contact with the Coach Core apprentices as group, and hence was not described by apprentices as a supportive figure (except by their own apprentices, who seem to have benefitted from the coordinator’s greater understanding of the Coach Core programme).

On the other hand, the coordinators direct contact with apprentices in Nottingham and Essex clearly provided an additional layer of support for apprentices, as well as their employers and tutor. In Nottingham the coordinator had, for example, been known to drive an apprentice struggling with anxiety to coaching sessions, while in Essex the mother of a disabled apprentice praised the supportive relationship she had developed with the coordinator. The possibility of moving between partner organisations, a feature the evaluation has described as a benefit of the consortium model, has also only taken place in Nottingham and Essex (by five apprentices at risk of leaving the apprenticeship prematurely) and in each case was facilitated by the coordinator on the basis of her knowledge of all the parties involved.

This suggests that while there may be financial or organisational benefits of situating the Coach Core coordinator within one of the consortium partners, a coordinator in direct and regular contact with the apprentices, employers and tutors may provide an additional layer of practical assistance and emotional encouragement.

## APPENDIX 1. Coach Core Consortiums

Since 2016, four Coach Core consortiums have been established in Nottingham, London, Essex and Manchester. These four consortiums are included in this evaluation. Another four consortiums (in Birmingham, Middlesbrough, Bristol, and South Devon) are also operational.

Coach Core Nottingham

Coach Core Nottingham welcomed their first intake of 20 young apprentices in January 2016, supported by a full time coordinator and a dedicated Lifetime tutor[[5]](#footnote-5).

Coach Core in Nottingham is delivered by *Team Nottingham*, an existing consortium of professional and semi-professional sporting organisations in Nottinghamshire. The Team Nottingham partnership includes:

* Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club and its charity:
* The Trent Bridge Community Trust
* Notts County Football in the Community
* Nottingham Forest Football in the Community
* National Ice Arena (National Ice Centre)
* Nottingham Rugby

In addition to the Team Nottingham partners another two organisations were co-opted into the consortium for this specific project:

* Epic Partners
* Nottingham City of Football

The partners worked together to deliver the Coach Core programme and in December 2016, 17 young people completed their apprenticeship. Since then a second cohort of apprentices started in April 2017. However, this newest cohort is not included in the evaluation.

Coach Core London

The London consortium, led by Greenhouse Sports, is a new partnership of organisations that have not previously worked together as a group. Partners were invited to join the consortium by The Royal Foundation and the consortium consists of:

* West Ham United Foundation
* Fulham FC Foundation
* London Youth Rowing
* Marylebone Cricket Club
* London Rugby League Foundation
* Greenhouse Sports

Seventeen apprentices started in August 2016, receiving their educational input from a dedicated Lifetime tutor. The consortium’s strategic group is managed by Greenhouse Sports, but unlike the programme coordinators in Nottingham and Essex, the London coordinator has no day-to-day contact with the cohort of apprentices. In August 2017, 15 of the initial cohort completed their apprenticeship. A second cohort started in September 2017.

Coach Core Essex

Active Essex, the local County Sports Partnership in Essex manages the Essex consortium and hosts the part-time Coach Core Coordinator. Active Essex initially approached the partners who make up the consortium about taking part in the Coach Core programme:

* Brentwood Leisure Trust
* Chelmsford Athletics Club – Chelmsford City Council
* Colchester United FC in the Community
* Fusion Lifestyle
* Hadleigh Park –Active Essex
* Sport for Confidence
* Volleyball England
* Essex County Cricket Club
* Prestige Sports
* West Ham United Foundation
* South Essex Gymnastics Club

Twenty apprentices began their 12 months’ apprenticeship in October 2016, with 19 completing in October 2017.

Coach Core Manchester

The project coordinator of the Manchester consortium is based within Manchester City in the Community. As with the London consortium, the coordinator has no regular contact with apprentices, but their Lifetime tutor facilitates their education. The Manchester consortium includes a broad mix of partners, who have come together specifically to collaborate on the Coach Core programme:

* Manchester Metropolitan University
* Manchester United Foundation
* Lancashire County Cricket Club Foundation
* Eastlands Trust
* Manchester City in the Community
* Diane Modhal Sports Foundation
* Sports Group Ltd
* Sale Sharks Community Trust

Nineteen apprentices started in January 2017. In December 2017, 15 of the initial cohort completed the programme.

## APPENDIX 2. The Methodology

The evaluation of Coach Core included the following elements of data collection in each consortium:

* Profile and assessment data on apprentices (assessment pack completed by apprentices and employers at baseline and follow-up);
* Interviews with line managers / mentors in partnership organisations;
* Interviews with strategic leads in partnership organisations, programme coordinators and tutors;
* Focus groups with apprentices;
* Follow-up telephone interviews with apprentices;
* Ongoing monitoring data.

Each method is described in more detail below.

##### Profile and assessment data on apprentices (assessment pack)

As part of the evaluation we developed and piloted a set of evaluation tools with the aim that such tools can be used with other Coach Core programmes. As part of this process we obtained feedback from apprentices and line mangers / mentors and tutors about the suitability, language and sensitivity of evaluation tools. By the end of this evaluation process the assessment pack included the following tools.

Apprentice pack:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Baseline (T1) | Follow-up (T2) |
| * Apprentice profile * Strength and Difficulty questionnaire (SDQ) * GRIT scale * Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale * Soft Employability Skills and Attitudes (SESA) | * GRIT scale * Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale * Soft Employability Skills and Attitudes (SESA) * Service feedback |

Line manager / mentor pack:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Baseline (T1) | Follow-up (T2) |
| * Strength and Difficulty questionnaire (SDQ) * Soft Employability Skills and Attitudes (SESA) | * Soft Employability Skills and Attitudes (SESA) |

All information collected used a system of unique identifier numbers to ensure that data was confidentially stored.

A. The ‘New Apprentice Profile’ form

Background data on apprentices was gathered from the young people using a New Apprentice Profile at baseline. The form asks for demographic information (e.g. gender, age and ethnicity), as well as specific individual information about the apprentices’ situation, in areas such as their living situation, education and employment history, health issues and other risk factors (e.g. history of offending, being looked after). Apprentices showed willingness to contribute more sensitive information and consequently, this data therefore offered an important insight into why some apprentices struggled more than others with different aspects of the apprenticeship.

B. Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people used for a range of purposes, including outcome evaluations. As well as assessing the young person’s overall strengths and difficulties, the SDQ is also designed to highlight the most common emotional or behavioural issues among children and young people, such as:

* Conduct – e.g. aggression, rule breaking
* Hyperactivity – e.g. poor concentration, over-activity
* Emotional – e.g. depression, anxiety
* Peer-relationship – e.g. friendships,
* Pro-social behaviour – e.g. kindness, empathy for others

The SDQ was useful in profiling the apprentices and confirming that most scores fall within the normal range for young people. However, it also showed the potential to identify the nature of difficulties for those young people with elevated scores.

As Coach Core does not provide interventions specifically addressing emotional or behavour difficulties it was unlikely that SDQ scores would change over time. Hence, for the purpose of this evaluation, apprentices and their line managers only completed the SDQ questionnaire once during the apprenticeship.

c. Rosenberg self-esteem scale

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is a self-esteem measure widely used in social-science research and evaluation, and it is considered to be a reliable and valid quantitative measure for self-esteem assessments. Apprentices completed the 10-question scale twice during their apprenticeship. Comparing baseline self-esteem measures with the follow-up scores, demonstrated that self-esteem improved for over half of the apprentices over the duration their apprenticeship.

d. The GRIT Scale

The 8-item GRIT scale was developed as a concise tool to assess respondents’ ‘perseverance and passion for long-term goals’, which has been linked to positive educational and career outcomes. However, while the GRIT scale can help account for success outcomes, over and beyond that explained by IQ (Duckworth et al. 2007), the language used is complex (e.g. ‘I am diligent’). We therefore tested the scale and clarified some wording to make it more accessible.

However, overall the GRIT scale was less beneficial than anticipated, in ‘predicting’ the perseverance of individual apprentices – e.g. who was more likely to do well and complete their apprenticeship and who was not.

E. Soft Employability Skills and Attitudes (SESA)

Our experience in the Nottingham pilot led us to design a bespoke repeat measure to assess changes in apprentices’ employability skills as a result of their Coach Core experiences. The SESA (Soft Employability Skills and Attitudes) questionnaire builds on skills and attitudes shown to be important for young people’s employability as identified by the research literature[[6]](#footnote-6). Focusing on five categories it concentrates on attitudes towards work and transferable skills for the workplace:

* Personal – confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy
* Interpersonal – communication, interaction, team work
* Self-management – reliability, self control
* Initiative – planning, prioritising, problem solving
* Basic numeracy, literacy and ICT

The questionnaire was tested at baseline with the apprentices, their line managers and tutors in London and Essex in autumn 2016, and with the same informants in Nottingham at the end of the Nottingham apprenticeship (December 2016). In both cases scores were higher than anticipated, especially at baseline, which offers very little potential for growth (e.g. in Essex one line manger gave their apprentices top scores for all questions). This learning led to some wordings being changed, to ensure that the true nature of apprentices’ soft employability and attitudes were being recorded.

F. Feedback form (How are we doing?)

This brief feedback form asked apprentices a range of evaluation and self-assessment questions about their experiences of the training, their line manager / mentors / colleagues, work placements and any perceived impact in relation to confidence and team-working abilities.

Apprentices completed the form at the end of their apprenticeship.

##### Interviews with line managers / Mentors

Lead coaches / line managers in partner organisations were interviewed twice for the evaluation. These interviews addressed apprentices’ professional and personal development, and the distance travelled in terms of employability skills during their involvement with the programme. Interviews also focused on any needs identified as a result of employing NEET young people, and steps taken to support such additional needs.

The overall aim of the interviews was to produce a more detailed and contextual understanding of outcomes within different contexts and with different delivery partners, and thereby enhance the evaluation findings derived using other methods (e.g. the assessment pack). The interviews also addressed line managers / mentors’ opinions and experiences of using the evaluation tools, in order to refine tools based on user feedback.

###### Interviews with other stakeholders

The perspective of other stakeholders, such as strategic leads within partner organisations, the programme coordinators and Coach Core tutors, provided an important element of this evaluation. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were arranged with key stakeholders inviting them to reflect on their dealing with Coach Core apprentices and their perceived impact of the programme on partner organisation and local communities more widely. Questions also examined topics such as partnership working, work practices, impact of work, and their view of the programme’ overall achievement and challenges.

###### evaluation work with apprentices

The experiences of apprentices were sought via two different methods (in addition to the repeated assessment pack), namely focus groups and follow-up telephone interviews.

The apprentices participated in focus groups twice during their apprenticeship. Focus groups were a useful tool to explore apprentices’ overall experiences of being involved with the Coach Core programme, their education and work with different partner organisations, as well as their perceptions of any impact on their future employment prospects.

The final focus group also served as an introduction to the follow-up telephone interviews, as apprentices were asked to give their written consent to be contacted six months after completing their apprenticeship – which the majority did.

The follow-up of apprentices was considerably more difficult and time consuming than anticipated. It was, for example, remarkable how many had changed their phone numbers and/or email addresses during the intervening period. However, when reached the majority agreed to be interviewed and provided very honest and detailed feedback about their experiences of Coach Core and their current activities.

1. Department of Education: Further education and skills: November 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The last cohort to study under the old framework started in xxx 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A thorough account of using telephone interviews as a method to follow-up apprentices was provided in the last evaluation report (Year 2 interim, October 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Department of Education: Further education and skills: November 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Lifetime Training*, a training provider that specialises in apprenticeships, delivers the educational side of the Coach Core apprenticeship through a fulltime dedicated Coach Core tutor. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. National Children’s Bureau (2012) ‘Measuring Employability Skills: a rapid review to inform development of tools for project evaluation’, http://www.partners4value.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Measuring-Employability-Skills.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-6)