

Netball Scotland WSLA High Performance Coaches

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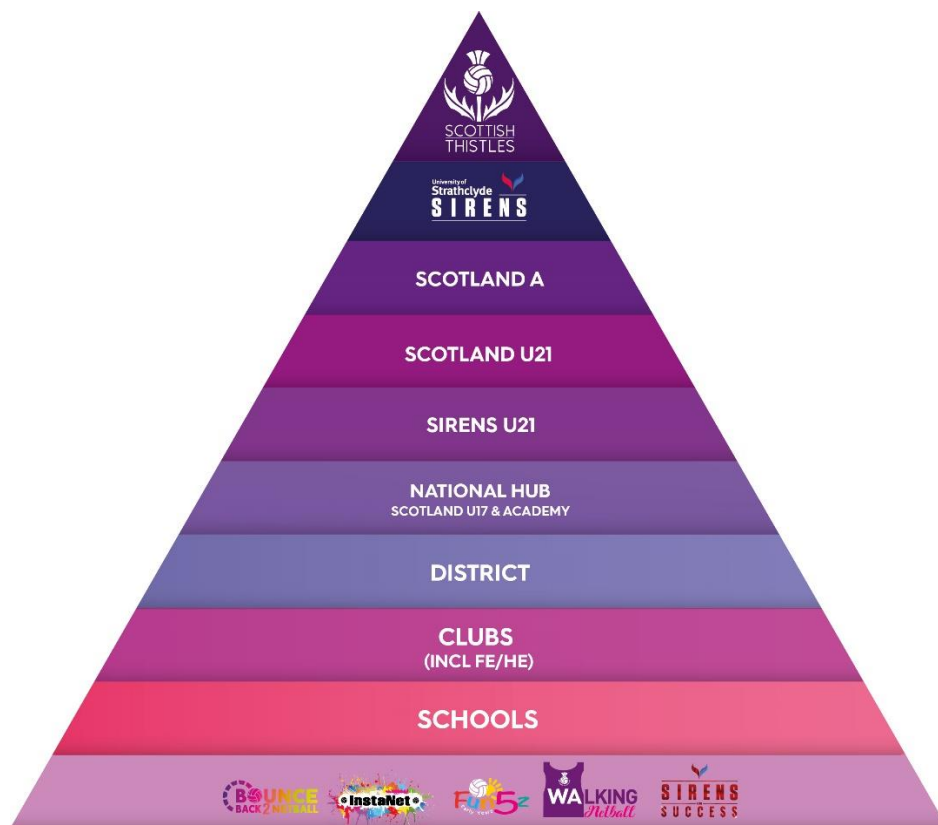
Introduction

Netball Scotland is building a world class, high performing and effective performance pathway system which produces and develops high-calibre, confident and appropriately qualified coaches who are empowered to lead and support our national teams and athletes to meet and surpass our long term strategic performance objectives as an organisation, as outlined in our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan: [*‘Realising Netball’s potential: A long term vision for success’*](#).

The Netball Scotland High Performance Coach Programme (HPCP) has been designed for developing coaches at the elite and high-performance end of the pathway and provides a clear vision and structure for improving the knowledge and delivery of Netball coaching. The overall goal of the programme is to develop and deploy more quality and confident coaches into our system in order to produce high performing national teams and athletes of the future.

The HPCs are expected to adopt and exemplify the six values and behaviours that underpin Netball Scotland’s organisational governance (inspiring, pioneering, professional, ambitious, connected, empowering). The HPCP encompasses our Performance pathway from National Hub to Thistles squad.

EMPOWERED BY



Netball Scotland has connected with a wide range of expertise to ensure coaches are best supported. These include:

- Utilising Expert High Performance Netball Coaches
- Women in Sport Leadership Academy (WSLA)
- **sportscotland** High Performance Coach Developer Programme
- Experienced mentors in developing leadership skills and coach specific skills

Women’s Sport Leadership Academy (WSLA)

The Netball Scotland WSLA High Performance Coach programme provided an opportunity and environment for learning that supported female high-performance coaches to further develop their:



- Coaching skills in a high-performance domain
- Leadership behaviours
- Confidence to progress their career path

Three key objectives for the programme supported the further development of the high-performance coach:

- **Sport-specific skills knowledge and experience** – supporting high performance coaches to identify their sport-specific needs and develop plans to address these to enhance their potential for success.
- **Leadership competencies** – supporting high performance coaches to further develop their leadership competencies or behaviours, consolidate their own leadership style, empower them to be who they want to be and navigate the challenges that are part of coaching at a high performance level.
- **Confidence** – encouraging high performance coaches to identify their strengths, pursue goals, take opportunities and progress their career path. They will be confident to champion themselves and others going forward.

Essential criteria for selection of participants included being a minimum Netball Level 2 coach with an aim to progress; being active within our performance pathway; aspiring to enhance our performance pathway, and; have the drive and ambition to be world class. The programme facilitators and participants were:

WSLA Mentors & Facilitators	Participants/role
Lucy Falkner	Lesley MacDonald – Sirens Head Coach
Carol Isherwood	Claire Maxwell – Sirens Assistant Coach
Jude Salmon	Rachel Cremin – U21 National Lead Coach
Linda Low	Gillian Crozier – U21 National Assistant Coach
	Ashley Taylor – U17 National Lead Coach
	Frances Ann Doyle – U17 National Assistant Coach
	Sandra Frame – National Specialist Coach

Summary of evaluation by participants (and any comments from facilitators)

The programme was a success for the participants and the facilitators. The facilitators had to be adaptable and embrace new technology to continue the programme through lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. They were successful in transferring the programme to a digital platform and providing high quality and high engagement throughout.

The participants enjoyed the programme and fed back the benefit of spending time developing their personal leadership skills off the court and spending time with the other coaches discussing their vision and where they want to develop moving forward. This different pace allowed more time for reflection and discussion, with all participants commenting on how beneficial they found the 1-2-1 session with one of the facilitators.

In terms of the delivery aspect of the programme, all candidates enjoyed the engagement online and found it beneficial during the period of lockdown and no netball activity happening. They all would prefer face to face sessions but understood that we made the most of the situation and still delivered quality across the 10-week programme.

Challenges posed and overcome by COVID-19

Although COVID-19 meant we had to completely relook at our delivery model and move to an online platform, everyone met the challenge with great enthusiasm, embracing the change and working through it all together. The opportunity COVID-19 presented was that there was now significant time with no netball activity and therefore it was much easier to bring all coaches together from across the performance pathway. This also meant that leading and developing leadership skills came at a time when all performance programmes required strong leadership and direction to navigate through this period and provide strong communication to performance athletes, as well as ensuring their was a programme to return to post lockdown. All coaches embraced this opportunity and put their newfound confidence in their own leadership abilities into action.

Future plans

We are continuing to work with the coaches and have provided more CPD opportunities, with the support of Scottish Thistles Head Coach, Tamsin Greenway, and Sirens Technical Director, Karen Atkinson. We also have had follow up 1-2-1s with the participants three months post the programme finishing.

I would like to thank the WSLA facilitators for their flexibility during this programme and the number of hours they put into planning and preparing for this programme. All participants have spoken so very highly of them all. I would especially like to thank Lucy Falkner for her drive and determination in making this happen and recruiting the other excellent facilitators. She really helped navigate all the changes and challenges we faced, especially when COVID-19 hit.

For me, it was a huge success having this programme run for our performance coaches. After spending years working with these individuals, it became clear that their focus was always leaning towards the development of their knowledge of the technical and tactical side of the sport and would be more reluctant in addressing their own personal learning and development.

This programme has provided the participants with valuable reflection time off the court and been facilitated excellently to prompt a deeper understanding of their leadership capabilities and how to utilise this. We still have ambitions to bring the group and the facilitators together, face to face. We hope to do this when netball returns, and spectators are allowed. Until then, we will have regular catch ups digitally.