



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: CHELSEA WARR

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF PERFORMANCE – UK SPORT

Keynote – Performance Pathways – 45 minutes

Title: Building Sustainable Performance Pathways – underwriting your medal ambitions

Understanding the defining features of a highly effective ‘Performance Pathway’ and the relationship to success in an elite sport environment.

How does a system construct sport specific performance pathways while considering the key principles that make these pathways effective?

- What can we learn from parallel industries that identify, confirm and develop exceptional talent robustly and accurately?
- How can you measure the effectiveness of performance pathways and support continuous improvement in doing so?
- Looking back to look forward– how has research into the biographies of serial gold medallists helped us to understand the phenomena of talent, its origins and its journey to sustained excellence?
- How do we institutionalise and systematise these insights, to create seamless pathways within sports, which underwrite a successful HP system?

Workshop – 75 mins

11:15 am – 12:30pm – Lunch – Breakout sessions – Athlete Pathways

This break out session involved a number of short key topic presentations delivered by Chelsea to stimulate small group collaboration and discussion. Each session will be based the topics as below:

Task 1

20 minutes
Groups of 8 - 10

As a group define what ‘talent’ is? (Group consensus)

Define the top 5 elements that will accelerate an athlete’s progression towards future Podium performance?





Some of the keywords that groups used to brainstorm talent before developing talent statements/definitions:

Skill	Various interests	Learning
Ability	Risk taker	Self-awareness
Willingness	Motivated	Competence
Coachable	Can have fun	Confidence
Passion	Accountable	Intellectual
Drive	Sport specific intel	Behaviours
Genetics	Healthy athlete	Mental strength
Ability to perform	Potential	Trainability
Ability to focus	Skilled (Exceptional)	Right body/ Right mind
Ability to respond to training load	Attitude	Special ability
Engaged	Special ability	Natural exceptional ability
Courage	Intelligence	

- Talent is the combination of physical, mental (EQ) and emotional attributes required for success
- Talent is defined as an individual who displays exceptional abilities in the following areas:
 - o Physical
 - o Psychological (Behaviour and intellectual)
- Talent is potential condition of physical and mental excellence
- A highly motivated athlete with a drive to succeed, that possesses specific characteristics that will enable the athlete to perform at the highest level over a sustained period of time
- Special natural ability and robustness across performance components (Physical, technical, emotional etc.)

Task 2

20 minutes
Groups of 8 - 10

How do you know it is working?



Group 1:

- Quality coaching
- Supportive environment
- Appropriate training and competition opportunities
- Health and wellness
- Belief is success

Group 2:

- Discipline, desire
- Coaching
- Training and social environment
- Sporting experience
- Synergy of the sport system (admin)

Group 3:

- Improved personal performance
- Sustainable and repeatable
- Identified markers being met
- Increased athlete pool
- Increased commitment and engagement (internal and external)

Group 4:

- Results (Sustainable)
- Return on investment
- Sports participation growth
- Conversion rate (progression)
- Performance management system
- Performance planning



Group 5:

- Clear structure (pathways, processes etc.)
- Coaching
- Support (SSM, family, school etc.)
- DTE (Daily training environment)
- \$

Group 6:

- Discipline
- Education
- Entourage (Support team)
- Sport science
- Coaching

Group 7:

- Coaching (individualised)
- Performance markers throughout the pathway
- Quality of daily training environment including support
- Sport specific curriculum and monitoring process
- Challenges and opportunities to succeed/fail
- \$
- How many athletes stay on progression to hit performance markers
- What is the attrition rate? Is it decreasing?
- % of athletes hitting KPIs
- Is there an acceleration of athletes getting to the end goal?
- Results achieved by design vs by chance (outside of the pathways)
- Continuous learning and evolution

Group 8:

- Competition results (medals)
- Testing/Monitoring, tracking/trending – Qualitative measures
- Progression (Performance funnels)
- Strong support
- Talent pool
- Sustainable and repeatable
- KPIs – Evaluation toll metrics
- Benchmarking
- Flexibility with plan
- Multiple entry and exit points



Reflection: Where is your system? This was the activity done in pairs at the end of the session.

Task 3 - Building a Performance Pathway



With the person beside you take 5/10 minutes to reflect and answer these two questions:

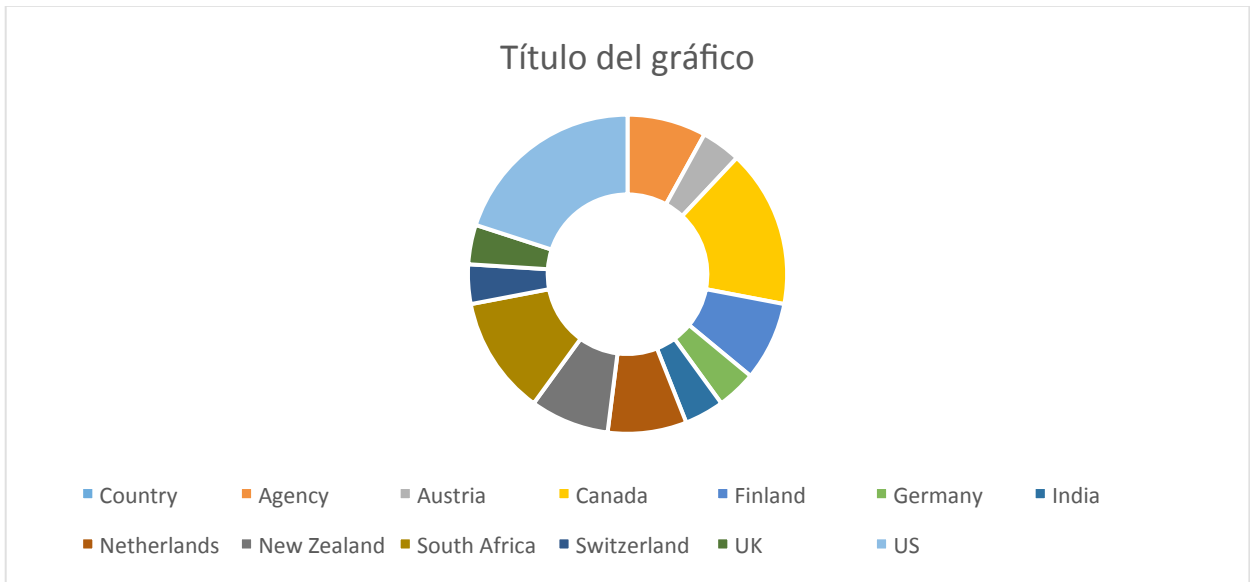
1. Reflecting on your sports, how matured are each of these stages? Where do you see super strengths & where are you vulnerable?
2. Where is there a noticeable difference in sports with a track record of sustained success?



Prior to the session delegates were invited to complete a survey related to the session to get a feel for what the perception of the area was and how well systems were developed. Below is a brief snapshot of the key elements of that summary information. This was drawn together for the purpose of the session and has not been through the any type of validation process.

Question 1:

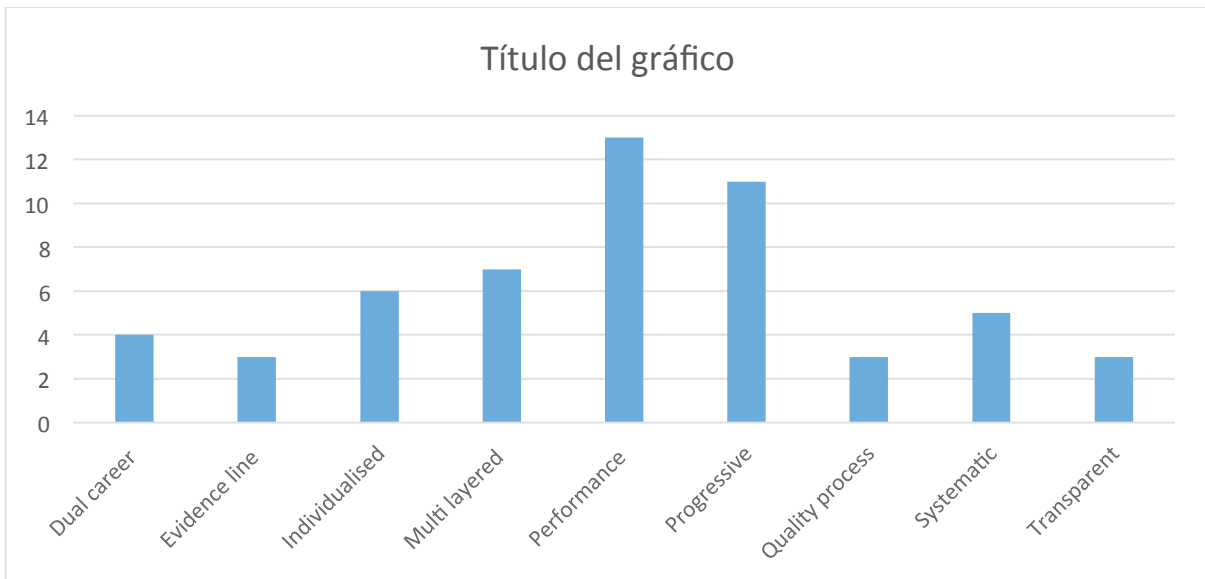
Countries that completed the survey:



Question 2:

How would you define athlete performance pathways?

Key elements interpreted that respondents suggested defined an athlete performance pathway.



Potential Group definition: A systematic approach that outlines a transparent individualised, multi layered and progressive route to senior performance that is based on evidence and considers quality process and athlete welfare.



Other areas identified:

Area	Number of mentions
Integrated with coaching	1
Defined	2
Enhance ability	1
Integrated with coaching	2
Investment	1
Opportunities	1
Performance focus	1
Preparation	1
Specialisation	2
Sport specific	2
Sustainability	1
TiD	1

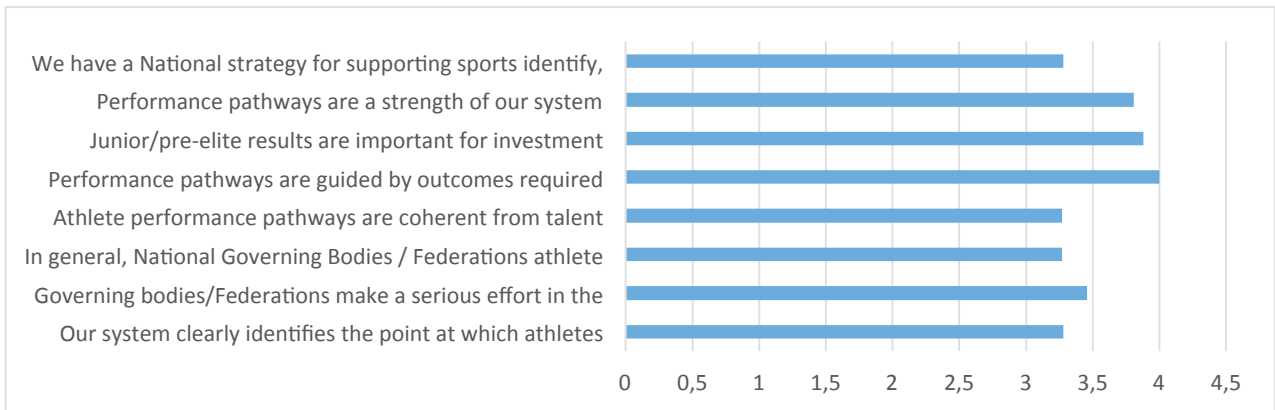
Additional points:

- Some refer to it as from cradle to grave and others from TiD or specialisation.
- Multi-layered refers to the various components required to support athlete i.e. coaching, daily training environment, performance support etc
- Quality process includes effective transitions
- Quite a few just view the pathway as an evidence line rather than a fully integrated pathway

Question 3:

System: How would you rate the following statements in relations to your system? (0 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree)

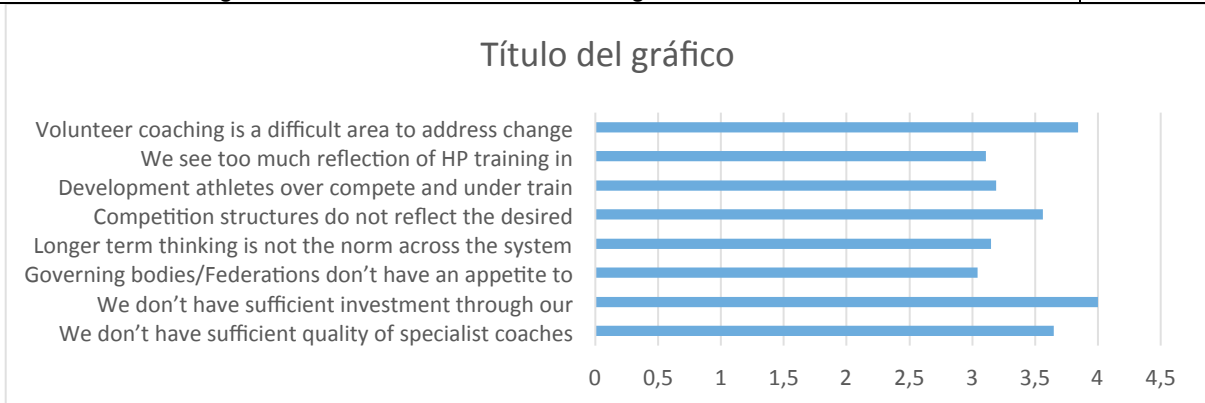
Statement	Average
Our system clearly identifies the point at which athletes with medal winning potential are first identified & confirmed	3.28
Governing bodies/Federations make a serious effort in the talent development space to underpin High Performance outcomes	3.46
In general, National Governing Bodies / Federations athlete performance pathways are clearly defined	3.27
Athlete performance pathways are coherent from talent through to high performance	3.27
Performance pathways are guided by outcomes required from High Performance	4
Junior/pre-elite results are important for investment	3.88
Performance pathways are a strength of our system	3.81
We have a National strategy for supporting sports identify, confirm and develop talent	3.28



Question 4:

Challenges - Please rate the following statements in relations to your system. (0 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree)

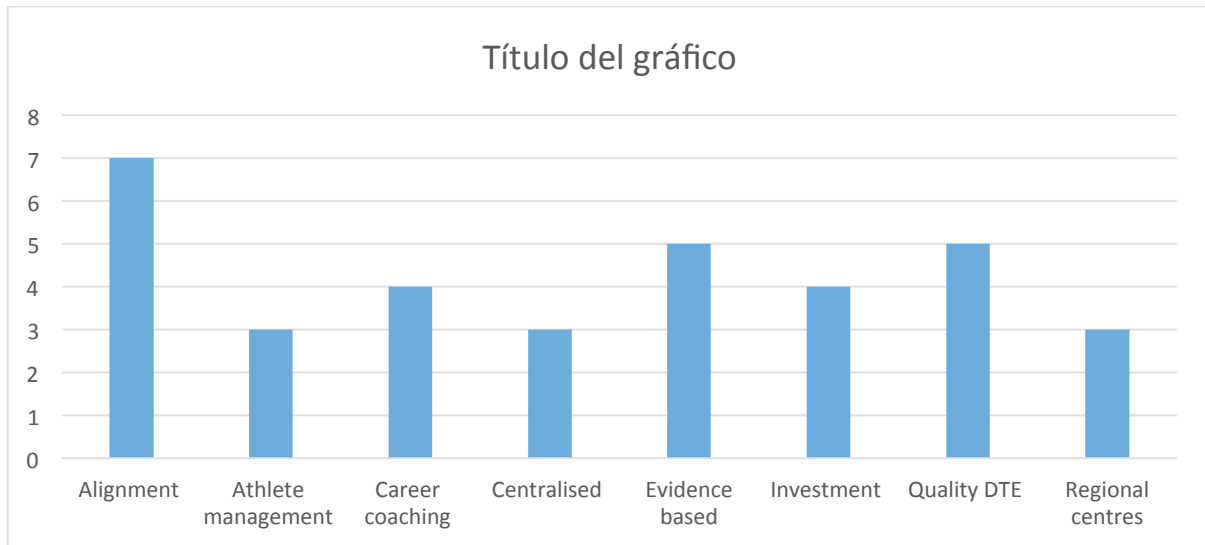
Statement	Average
We don't have sufficient quality of specialist coaches working with emerging athletes	3.65
We don't have sufficient investment through our performance pathways	4
Governing bodies/Federations don't have an appetite to excel in this space	3.04
Longer term thinking is not the norm across the system	3.15
Competition structures do not reflect the desired development outcomes at pre-elite level	3.56
Development athletes over compete and under train	3.19
We see too much reflection of HP training in development athlete programmes	3.11
Volunteer coaching is a difficult area to address change	3.84



Question 5:



What do you feel are the key strengths of your talent development system and performance pathways?



Others:

Area	Number of mentions
Capacity	2
Clear pathways	1
Competition exposure	1
Control	1
Dual career	2
Expertise	1
Fundamentals	2
Integrated pathways	1
Interdisciplinary	1
Progressive	1
Sport specific	1
Support	2
Systematic	1
Talent pool	1
TiD	2
Understanding	1

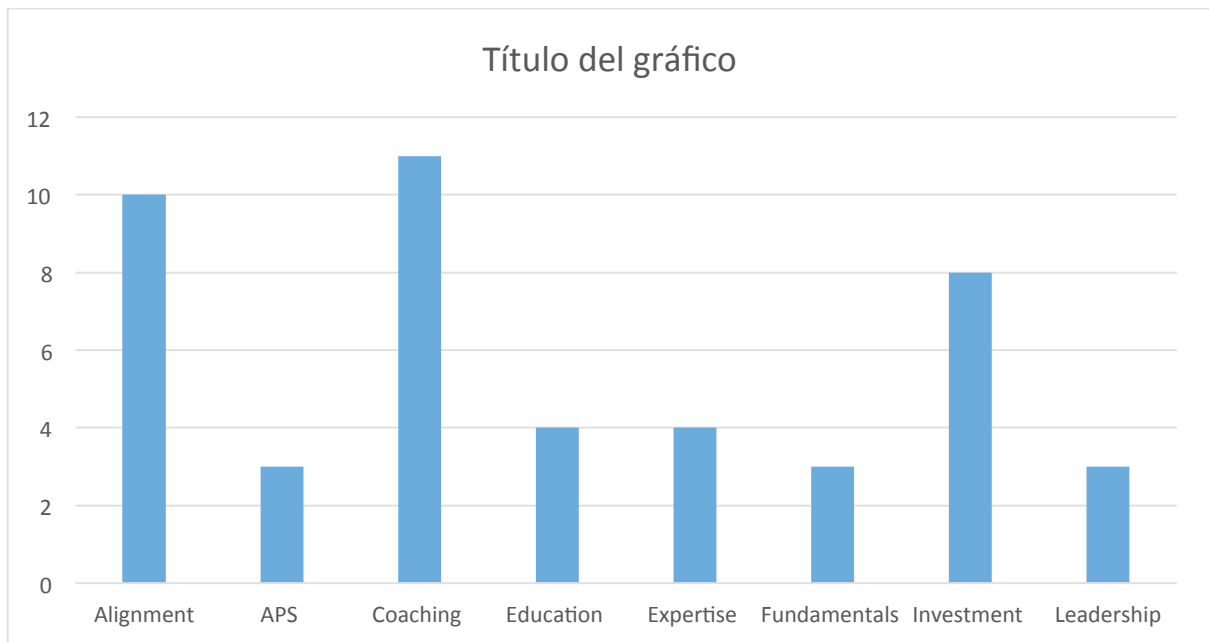
Additional points:

- Athlete management relates to monitoring, tracking and programming
- Support relate to the system supporting the area

Question 6:



What are three areas you feel, as a National system, need to be addressed to enhance performance pathways?



Others:

Others	Number of mentions
Capacity	1
Centralisation	1
Competition exposure	1
Critical mass	2
Development focus	2
DTE	1
Efficient	1
Evidence	1
Performance pathway	1
Policy	2
System adjustment	1
Targeted	2
TiD	2
Transfer	1
Transparency	1
Welfare	1



In the session it was identified that it may be of some use to countries to get some guidance around first steps and action they could take to get some traction in the athlete performance pathway area. We have put together some key pieces that we hope will be of use.

1. Current System Status

- a. Is there an understanding of the following:
 - i. Expertise in the area
 - ii. Investment into the area
 - iii. Appetite for athlete development
 - iv. The value proposition to the system

2. What it takes to win

- a. How much work has gone into understanding what it takes to win in current and future Olympic Games/World Championships? The level and type of analysis that goes into understanding this can be costly and time consuming but very valuable. For those with limited budget here are a few places you can start:
 - i. What is current world's best? This is much easier to do in CGS (Centimeters, Grams and Seconds) sports
 - ii. What is your coaches/programmes picture of world's best? This contextual view is important, especially for team sports, but when put together with the data from above can start to create a more complete picture
 - iii. Where is the sport going? Is this quantifiable or something that the experts in the sports can build
 - iv. Have you got the athletes that can achieve world's best? What is your current crop of athletes capable of? How are your future athletes tracking? Do you have too many/not enough?
 - v. What environment/support do you need to create at each level to ensure your athletes are getting everything they need to achieve success?
 - vi. Transparency is attractive to almost everyone. Know exactly what needs to be done to progress is much more appealing than moving goalposts

3. Good process takes time and thought but not much additional investment

- a. Agreement on what it takes to win and the parameters for continued inclusion in the programme are a vital component to setting things up well



- b. Quality process and athlete/transition management are key elements to maximizing the athletes ability to succeed. Simple pieces can make a huge difference:
 - i. Having a pathway that people know how to access and what they have to do to gain entry
 - ii. Quality induction process that prepares athletes for the environment they are about to enter and a clear outline of the expectations the programme has for the athlete and what the athlete should expect of the programme
 - iii. Quality transition processes that support the athletes progression through the pathway
 - iv. Well managed exit and late entry processes that offer athletes the opportunity to re-enter/enter the programme should they address what is required and adequate time for late entry athletes to gain a foothold in the pathway. A well managed exit also promotes future involvement in the sport even if not as an athlete but may also support transition to another sport if appropriate

4. Testing that your curriculum is optimal for your athletes development

- a. Utilising HP intel to inform your development pathway is an important step. What are athletes currently arriving into HP with or without that requires enhancement or adjustment
- b. Each development curriculum will have a number of strands to it. Checking these against each other for alignment can help to create a more effective and aligned pathway and get more buy in from those involved in the design and delivery
- c. Maintaining the balance between a challenging and supportive environment is important

5. Advocates and ambassadors for longer term thinking and/or investment

- a. Again this is low cost and high value to promote the value and importance of generating sustainable success both internally and externally

6. Working in collaboration with others in the system to create the best environment possible that suits your national context and programmes. This should also promote alignment (but not always!)