

Frequently Asked Questions

A key objective of England Athletics' new National Strategy is to support coaches through a variety of methods including formal education, an annual programme of conferences and local initiatives co-ordinated through a Club and Coach Support Officer (CCSO).

One of the ways in which your local CCSO may look to support you is through the co-ordination of Flying Coach visits – this is something that has proved very popular in the past. Thanks to support from both Sweatshop and Sport England, CCSOs now have a budget for providing new Flying Coach visits in their local area. This document aims to answer some of the key questions about these visits and how your club could benefit from them.

I've heard about Flying Coach visits but what are they?

The aim of the England Athletics Flying Coaches Programme is to provide opportunities for clubs, coaches, or groups of coaches to request a visit from a coach with specific technical skills in order to improve their own coaching knowledge. A range of coaches have contributed to the scheme in the past including former Chicago Marathon Winner Paul Evans and World Champion Coach John Anderson.

What level coach do I need to be to benefit from this?

The scheme is flexible and can be used to support coaches with various needs. For a group of new coaches, a Flying Coach visit may be about developing some basic skills that build upon formal coach education courses. For more experienced coaches, a Flying Coach visit might be more focused on the finer technical points that will enable their athletes to improve their performances by fine (yet critical) margins.

Can I have a Flying Coach visit all to myself?

Where possible, we would co-ordinate a group of local coaches to come together for a Flying Coach visit. This not only ensures that we are getting maximum impact from our resources but also enables you to make connections and share ideas with other coaches in your area, providing each coach with longer term support. In some cases this might not be possible and so we will need to take a more flexible approach. If you would specifically like a one to one session with a Flying Coach please be sure to mention this when you request a visit!

Sounds like there could be work involved – is there?

The CCSO will be able to support with most of the logistics. They will liaise with the Flying Coach both before and after the activity has taken place (including dealing with their payment), promote the activity to other local coaches for whom the visit would be appropriate, follow-up the activity with coaches that take part, and signpost participants to other activities/resources that they might benefit from. We do ask that one of the participating clubs provides a venue for the visit free of charge, though in many cases this can be provided as part of a general club training night. Some coaches will provide all of the equipment they need, others may ask if they can use local club equipment – this is considered on a case-by-case basis.

I think my athletes would love it – can they come along?

This needs to be discussed with individual coaches before the Flying Coach visit takes place – some will prefer to bring their own athletes to help demonstrate and others may have a clear idea of the numbers and type of athletes they want to use. This initiative is aimed at developing coaches – any involvement of local athletes is an added bonus for the clubs taking part.

Is an hour enough?

Most Flying Coach visits last between one and two hours and are designed to provide quick, focused support to coaches on a specific subject. It is hoped that participating coaches will then want to share their experiences with each other as part of local coaching groups over the longer term – facilitated through their CCSO. Each Flying Coach also commits to be available for at least two follow-up phone calls or emails after each session, should the visited coaches have any questions or further queries.

Sounds great, how do I organise a Flying Coach visit at my club?

The key thing to do is to contact your local Club and Coach Support Officer to discuss what type of support you are looking for. This enables them to inform you of any planned activities that you may benefit from and also helps us to bring small groups of coaches with similar needs together. They will also be able to advise if a Flying Coach visit is the best thing for you, as opposed to other types of support that we can offer.

☞ In the past I've organised these directly with the coach myself – can I just carry on like this?

We would certainly encourage the sharing of resources and expertise between clubs. However, in order for a coach to be funded through the Flying Coach Programme, the local CCSO must have agreed to the visit in advance. This is important as our resources are limited and we need to ensure that we gain maximum benefit from any activity that takes place. By coming through a central point (CCSO) we can be confident that we are strategically using our resources where they are needed most.

☞ These visits are just for road running clubs, right?

Not at all. We look to use top coaches from all event groups as part of this scheme.

☞ So, I've contacted my CCSO – can I be sure that I will get a Flying Coach visit?

We are committed to supporting local coaches. However, it may not be possible to approve all requests for Flying Coach visits. We will always try to explain why a request has been turned down and where possible, offer an alternative method of the coach gaining the required support. The local CCSO will make these decisions based upon the overall demand from local coaches, the specific needs within their area and the perceived benefits that each specific visit will bring.

☞ I'm a coach that wants to support others – how do I become a Flying Coach?

Again, please contact your local CCSO. They will then be able to consider your experiences and qualifications and involve you in local initiatives as appropriate. As a general rule, we use coaches who are Level 3 and have a current UKA CRB check for Flying Coach visits. However, if you are not at this level you should still get in touch as we may be able to support your development or involve you in other schemes.

☞ Who is my local CCSO?

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