

## Sports Coaches Are Important To Anti-Doping Attitudes Among Athletes

A study examining the perspective of Scottish coaches on anti-doping has highlighted the influence coaches have on the views of an athletes. The study also urged sport governing bodies to embed anti-doping procedures and policies for ensuring Scotland is able to maintain its clean reputation.

This study, commissioned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), was conducted by coaching and anti-doping experts at the [University of Stirling](#), Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence. For this study, experts and coaches interviewed Scottish performance coaches. It was found that the excellent anti-doping record of Scotland was heavily linked to the anti-doping attitudes of Scotland but it also revealed that the role of a coach is not being maximized as it should. This study also recommended the development of further case study examples on how and when to engage coaches and athletes in anti-doping conversations and experiences. The study also suggested integration of anti-doping information into wider topics like optimization of performance preparation and recovery where discussion might include nutrition and supplement use along with anti-doping.

Dr Justine Allen, Lecturer in Sports Coaching and lead author of the study, said we found there was a strong stance from Scottish coaches towards anti-doping and their ethos is based on athletes achieving success through hard work and not through taking any shortcuts. Dr Allen also remarked that the foundations are there in that respect, but many coaches said they lacked knowledge around anti-doping and for some it was a low priority due to the established anti-doping culture in the UK and few incidents in their sport. He further added that there are very good examples of anti-doping best practice and integrated programs in some governing bodies, but this tends to be in sports with a [history of doping](#) issues internationally when it should be across the board and there is a need to establish clear roles and responsibilities within each governing body of sport in relation to anti-doping.

Dr Justine Allen also went on to remark that it might be the responsibility of the coach, an anti-doping officer or the physiotherapist and it's up to the governing body to determine the best fit for them, but the crucial thing is that they define the responsibilities clearly as it should be an around the clock role – not just at a tournament or doctor's appointment. He also said if it is clear where the responsibility lies, it becomes a priority for them and they are more likely to ask themselves if they know enough and seek out available education. Dr Allen added, Scotland most athletes are not full-time professional athletes in Scotland, nor are the coaches necessarily, so they don't see one another all the time and there is a lot of trust and responsibility put on the athlete. He also said for instance, if they go to their GP, it's up to them to intimate they are a competing athlete so they don't receive medication which contains a banned substance.

WADA President Sir [Craig Reedie](#) welcomed the findings and said this study has been insightful in highlighting the importance of anti-doping policies, and the role coaches and the athlete entourage may play in influencing athletes.