



When is a coach not a coach? – Implications of impending legislation

sports coach UK would like to draw the attention of coaches and Governing Bodies of Sport (GBs) to the implications of proposed legislation regarding the regulation of psychologists. Although the vast majority of coaches will not be directly affected by this legislation, we believe it is important that individuals and GBs are aware of the issue.

Under current law, anyone can claim to be a psychologist or counsellor and offer their services to the public irrespective of their training or experience. For many years, the British Psychological Society (BPS) has sought to ensure public protection and now HM Government wants to regulate the profession, through the Health Professions Council (HPC).

One of the effects of the proposed legislation is that nobody will be able to call themselves a sports psychologist unless they are registered with the HPC (which requires evidence of a formal qualification and continued practice / CPD).

Mental training, preparation and psychological techniques all play an important role in the coaching of many sports. We understand that the proposed legislation will have no impact on that position, as the focus of the coach is concerned with developing performance in the sport, rather than being focussed on the psychological health and wellbeing of the individual. This should allay fears which have been expressed that sports coaches will be "criminalised" simply because they use psychological, as well as physical techniques in their work.

Thus the critical relevance of the proposed legislation is that any coaches who use the term "sports psychologist" in referring to themselves will be unable to do so if/when the legislation is introduced, unless they are registered. GBs are invited to continue to monitor the situation. Much more detailed information is available from the British Psychological Society (www.bps.org.uk)