

Becoming a BTF Foundation Coach

by Lucy Cosgrove (June 2026)

How did you find out about the opportunity, why did you take it up and did you have any niggling doubts?

My partner and I (David Hammond) have dabbled in Triathlon over the years and mainly we've settled into running and cycling, our daughter having watched patiently from the sidelines during that time then turned 9 and became involved in Hoddesdon Junior tri.

We then moved to Bishops Stortford and Hoddesdon provided a fantastic introduction to Stortford Junior tri club by sending out a flyer for a 2-day Junior triathlon activity club during the summer holidays run by Stortford Junior Tri. We were always enormously impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm that the coaches demonstrated, and Hoddesdon was often asking for us to be involved but we lacked the confidence in our ability to coach having never attempted anything like that in our careers to date.

We all then settled in Stortford and quickly began to get to know a new set of faces (coaches and other parents alike) again the energy and enthusiasm from the coaches was endless. Dave and I took an active interest in the kids' sessions and were fascinated with how creative the coaches could be with getting the children to learn and grow with confidence in all disciplines whilst having fun and not being too serious! Laurence then organised for the children to go to Colchester cycling track and invited any cycling parents to join the coaches and children to help supervise - this was the turning point I feel! He was great at involving us just enough, so we didn't feel like 'spare ones' but of course we didn't really do anything other than join in and observe. This was when we both realised that it wasn't so scary to be involved after all!

Laurence put the 'We need you!' email out and as parents we all began to discuss whether we might be suitable Steve Parrot/myself and Dave! In terms of reservations, there were several - can we afford it? Do we have the time to do it? Will the kids listen to us or will they roll about laughing?!

In the end Dave and I decided baby steps were best and signed up for the Swim/bike/run leader award first - this meant very little commitment outside of working hours -x2 1.5hour online workshops and an online safeguarding course and the club re-imbursed us immediately so we were not out of pocket! We were off the mark!

We usually attend both of our daughter's training sessions every week so it made sense that we make ourselves useful and being leaders was a great way of observing and assisting without actually coaching - it gave us more insight into what is involved and we both felt more confident to take the next step into coaching! - so I signed up for the foundation coach course.

What was involved?

How / where you signed up to the course

Once Laurence knew I was keen to move onto the next step he sent me the links to British triathlon and suggested a few locations and dates, there were plenty to choose from but you had to move fast because they get booked up quickly. I chose the London VeloPark as I liked the idea of the location (which didn't disappoint) however I believe we are lucky enough that they sometimes run at the college, so it can be very local for some!

What the course involves / includes

The course itself involves a number of self-led online learning modules - all available via the learning hub, x2 1.5 hour online meetings (these were 2 weeks apart and held in the evenings after work) with the other people taking part in the course, followed by one in-person learning day (held at the weekend) where you will be asked to prepare in advance a '15min coached' session to deliver to your group on a given coaching aspect and to take part by being coached and feedback to others on the day (this was actually brilliant and you come away feeling like you've learned loads and practised in a safe environment) To complete the course after the in-person day you then need to plan and deliver x3 coached sessions in a 'club' environment which is observed by the head coach, all of this is submitted to the online portal and signed off by your 'Teacher'. You have access to lots of resources to assist with planning your session via the portal and Laurence also kindly ran an eye over my plans prior to the sessions to sense check them and feedback or offer suggestions for amendments.

What did you get out of the course (your sport, your coaching, life...), and would you recommend it to others?

The foundation course is great - it really takes you from the ground up, you could truly know very little about the sport to begin with as it walks you through all elements of Triathlon, what's expected of the athlete and equipment involved, rules and regulations, it covers safeguarding, coaching style, working with young people, how to deliver information in a meaningful way that keeps people's attention and it also has you questioning your coaching ethos and what you stand for. The online learning modules don't have to be galloped all in one go - you complete a few of them that lead you nicely to the first online meeting where your teacher talks through these and you work in groups to recall what you've learnt and then you're sent on your way to complete a few more before the next session and by the time I got to the assessment day I was actually looking forward to demonstrating what I'd learnt and taking part in other peoples coached sessions to get more tips and ideas.

The one day session was particularly valuable and not scary at all as I realised I was surrounded with lots of people - just like me - There was even a Dad who had never competed in triathlon before but his daughter did and he wanted to support her club - he'd actually borrowed her equipment to take part 😊 - Pink goggles!! doing the course re-invigorated triathlon for me - I was a very solo athlete before and quickly got quite tired of the sport, the course made me enjoy triathlon for very different reasons - I am now really interested in technique and training and in

particular making it fun and inclusive, Its opened up a whole new world of trying to communicate in different ways and I've realised that my own training may never end! I also think that both Dave and I have learnt more about fitting our own training into our personal lives because of it - we are better at managing our time and being more meaningful with the small amount of time we have for it. We also joined the Adult tri club which is another first!

What is the weekly / total time commitment associated with completing the course and how did you fit it into daily life?

I would say provided you are disciplined and start with little and often then it shouldn't impede on normal day to day life - an hour or so in the evening every few days for a couple of weeks to get through the online modules, the workshops are in the evenings so get dinner in nice and early! And find a quiet environment to complete your modules so you are fully focused and don't need to re-watch! The coaching plans are easier to complete than you think as they provide lots of templates and resources to help you plan and of course your head coach/fellow coaches are always there for any help/tips. My teacher was also available to email if I needed any help and replied quickly.

Any useful resources / weblinks you used.

Only what was provided by the coaching course, which is all you need!

What's happened since you completed the course? What weekly commitment do you make to coaching sessions, how much control do you have over that via the rota, how do you find fitting it in, what do you get from your coaching teammates?

The more I take part in coaching sessions the more confident and easier it feels. I try to go to all of the sessions at the moment to get the practice in but as a group of coaches we share the rota and discuss availability regularly - I don't feel like it impedes on my weekend plans as there is lots of visibility on everybody's future commitments outside the club and of course the more of us there are the easier that gets and the more fun we all have.

Laurence has full control over the coaching plans, but we are all invited to feedback ideas/experiences and suggestions on our chat all the time. It's been nice doing the coaching at the same time or just after other parents as we can talk about our experiences and I was able to get a feel for what to expect from Steve who did it before me. Dave (my other half) is up next - once I completed my course he felt he was missing out!

Your aspirations / next steps in coaching.

Coaching felt very much out of my comfort zone so it's awesome to get to this point! I'm currently working through my First aid qualification, and I would like to eventually complete the

group coaching course, however for the moment I'm happy to continue in my current role and get more practice and experience.

The kids are fab and respond really well to the sessions - they are all so respectful, engaging and fun! It's a very different relationship to the one you have with your children!

My current aim is to get better and more confident with my delivery, to be better at observing and giving positive and meaningful feedback to the children but above all continue to be creative and fun with the games and exercises we bring to training.

I'm also mindful of the link between the club and the parents and to make triathlon for 'non triathlon' parents accessible and easy to understand, anyone can be a triathlon coach - you don't have to be actually doing the sport just be good at using the resources available to deliver the coaching.

Dave and I really love being part of a local coaching community, it's a real plus that we're doing this together as it's made it easy to support each other with the training, it fits in with our homelife and interests and we get a boost every weekend when we see our coaching buddies at training. The icing on the cake recently was supporting our juniors at Waldon junior Duathlon - a super rewarding day and the children were so proud to be racing in their club colours and cheering each other on!