

Becoming a UKA Coaching Assistant

by Sam Worrell (June 2026)

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

I first realised there were coaching opportunities in the junior and beginner sections from an email from Mike. I debated a bit whether I would be right for the role, partly because I hadn't worked with children for about 14 years (I used to be a volunteer football coach at Sawbridgeworth Town FC). However, I wanted to give something back to the club and, being relatively free on Saturday mornings, this sounded like a great chance to do so.

What was involved?

How / where you signed up to the course

I signed up to the course through England Athletics. For the Coaching Assistant courses, there are options to either attend a practical day at a nearby centre (Chelmsford for most of us) or complete the course 100% virtually. I chose the former as I felt I would learn more from a practical day than sending EA a recording of me coaching a drill. Typically, the practical day is 9-5 on a Saturday, however my course was not fully booked so we were done by 3!

What the course involves / includes

Most of the course was completed online, with four main modules to work through. These included a short test at the end of each module (although you can retake them as many times as needed to pass if required). There were also basic first aid and safeguarding modules to complete. These were all very informative and interesting.

Personally, I felt I would learn more by attending the practical course day. It was just one day, held on a Saturday, so fortunately I didn't need to take any time off work.

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

I learned a lot from the course, both about coaching and about creating a positive environment for athletes. It improved my understanding of how to structure sessions, communicate clearly, and adapt coaching to different abilities and learning styles.

Not coming through the juniors myself, I gained a good insight into fun drills that can be implemented in sessions, as well as different ways to scale activities up and down for varying abilities. During the practical day, I picked up a lot, especially in terms of keeping athletes

interested and using different methods to explain instructions clearly to ensure they understand.

I'd recommend the course to others because it's practical, supportive, and gives you confidence as a coach while allowing you to learn from experienced coaches and other attendees.

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

I spent around 1–2 hours once a week working through the modules. Saturday mornings became very running-focused: parkrun to start, potentially supporting the junior coaches afterwards, before heading home and completing a module. It didn't feel too time-consuming, partly because I found it genuinely interesting anyway.

Any useful resources / weblinks you used.

The course also provides several useful resources, such as the Athletics 365 app, along with pages on the England Athletics website, blogs, and articles.

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?

I assist with the juniors roughly five Saturday mornings per school term (full term rather than half term), and during the spring beginners' programme once a week.

The team have been flexible and supportive. If I've been away for a race, scheduled a long run that morning, or had an MWL fixture on a Wednesday, there have been no issues arranging cover.

The coaching team themselves are great. Some are people I've run with anyway, while others I hadn't spent as much time with before. Everyone has been really supportive, and I've been allowed to develop gradually over the weeks by observing other coaches and building confidence, rather than being thrown straight in and being told to lead warm-ups and cool-downs.

Your aspirations / next steps in coaching.

I want to do what I can to help both the juniors and beginners develop into stronger runners while still enjoying themselves and the process along the way.

Now, I'm really enjoying what I'm doing and having fun with it. There are several different qualification routes available, which I'll look into further to decide which direction I'd like to take in the future.