

# Talent Programme Update

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## 1. Background Context

In September 2016, the structure of the new Talent Pathway Programme was provided in this announcement: <http://britishfencing.com/news/latest-news/?n=1620>

A further update was provided in November 2016: <http://britishfencing.com/news/latest-news/?n=1652>

UK Sport announced their decision not to continue to fund the British Fencing World Class Programme in December 2016. Following this decision, British Fencing took the opportunity offered by Sport England to revise the submitted Talent Strategy on the basis of needing to operate a standalone Talent Pathway system and programme.

The British Fencing Board approved mission for the next four years remains unchanged and continues to provide a clear direction and focus for the pathway: *"To deliver a talent system that enables every talented athlete to access a high-quality pathway that fulfils their potential."* This mission is underpinned by the three core values, honesty, respect and excellence, along with the additional values of professionalism and teamwork.

In February 2017, Sport England confirmed their support for the British Fencing Talent Strategy and awarded £500,000 of funding for the two year period up to the end of March 2019. Subject to the delivery of the Strategy and Operational Plan, a further £500,000 has been ring-fenced for the period to the end of March 2021 for the continued delivery of the Strategy.

As we seek to implement the Talent Pathway Programme we will embed the following philosophies:

1. **Athlete centred.** Our system will put the progression and welfare of the athlete at the heart of what we do. We will use athlete profiling to measure progression and adopt Sport England agreed tools to measure athlete satisfaction and welfare. We will seek to implement recommendations from the Duty of Care Review ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/610130/Duty\\_of\\_Care\\_Review\\_-\\_April\\_2017\\_2.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/610130/Duty_of_Care_Review_-_April_2017_2.pdf)) to ensure that athletes are treated fairly and transparently.
2. **Collaborative.** The British Fencing Talent Programme will support athletes and coaches to develop and achieve their goals. Personal coaches with athletes on the Programme will be supported in their personal development so they are able to best support athlete development.

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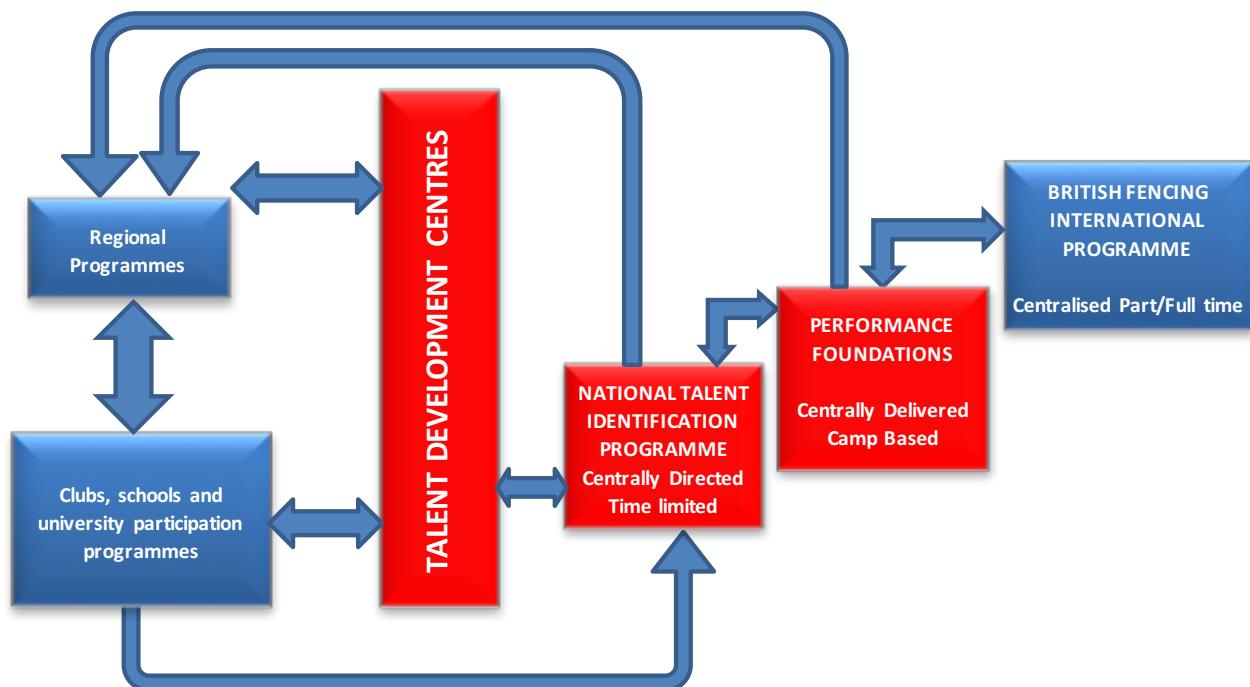
In addition, the Programme will engage with the wider athlete support team which will include parents, clubs and sports science and medicine professionals already supporting athletes.

3. **Progression based.** The Talent Programme is intended to support athletes who have the motivation and capability to progress and improve to international medal winning standards. British Fencing will aim to provide these athletes with the best development opportunities and best training environments.

## 2. What does the Revised Performance Pathway look like?

The diagram below shows the whole of the **Performance Pathway** in fencing from club level to senior international. The funding from Sport England is **ONLY** for the Talent element of the Pathway. Talent covers from Talent Development Centres (TDCs) through to the Performance Foundations level (highlighted in red).

### Performance Pathway for Fencers



### **2.1 What ages are covered?**

The minimum age for entry to a Talent Development Centre is typically 15 years. However, we would expect that, in the main, athletes will be at least competing at international Cadet level. Given there is no funded Podium Potential Programme, the top age for Performance Foundations level has now been raised to include U23 athletes.

## **3. Talent Development Centres**

### **3.1 What is a Talent Development Centre (TDC)?**

Our research, based on feedback from athletes and coaches, highlights the need for athletes from different clubs to come together regularly and gain a higher level of developmental challenge, for example through high quality sparring and competition scenario training.

A key part of our Talent Strategy is the development of the TDC concept. A TDC is not a physical centre or entity, but an opportunity for identified athletes at every level of the Talent Pathway to come together with an identified Talent Coach to train together in a local / regional environment.

These wider development opportunities will provide feedback that will help the athlete gain a better understanding about their own personal profile and be better educated on how they can improve different aspects as they progress, potentially all the way to world championship medal winning level.

The expectation is that these additional training and education opportunities at a TDC, would be in addition to and supplement the training and coaching already being received in their home club environment. The TDCs will also ensure that the culture and values of British Fencing and the Talent Programme transfers down the whole Pathway, as part of the wider athlete curriculum.

The local area/regional TDC concept is intended to cut down on travel time and costs, particularly where historically travel to the ETC has provided an economic barrier for some athletes. Most importantly TDCs are intended to increase coach contact time and enhance the athlete development experience.

Each TDC will be managed by an identified TDC Coach, to lead on the training and education curriculum, with the support of the Talent Pathway Coach. Personal coaches will be encouraged to attend the training sessions with their athletes.

We have committed to establish three TDCs (one for each weapon) by April 2018. It is our intention that by the end of the four-year funding cycle there will be at least six TDCs operating across the

country.

### **3.2 As a Personal/Club Coach, how can I be involved in a TDC?**

Coaches involved in training athletes that are on programmes will be encouraged to engage with and participate in TDC activity as much as possible. In doing so, coaches will be expected to demonstrate the highest level of coach behaviours, both in regards to their own development and that of their athletes. Any coach can nominate an athlete they are training for consideration for inclusion in a TDC.

### **3.3 How will athletes be selected for the TDCs?**

Athletes will be selected for TDCs by regular assessment and identification opportunities. The TDC coach will use national ranking lists and international junior results to invite athletes and will also encourage nominations from local club coaches.

Following on from the assessment and identification opportunities, entry into a TDC will be based on several factors including those evidenced at the assessment day (e.g. motivation) and those evidenced from other sources (e.g. results). Maintenance in the TDC will be achieved by meeting agreed progression goals.

Any athletes who were previously identified at TIC level and are still within the U23 (or below) age group, will be eligible to be nominated into a TDC as they are established.

Depending on their individualised programme, athletes nominated at PF level may also train at the TDCs. This will provide an opportunity to keep the PF athletes engaged in high quality coaching, training and education between national programme activity, in addition to providing enhanced sparring opportunities for athletes in the TDC.

### **3.4 What else will the TDC be for?**

The TDC will also provide the opportunity for close engagement of coaches in the Coach Development Programme being led by British Fencing. Coaches engaged within the TDCs will have the opportunity to undertake a training needs analysis and therefore be able to access help and support from the Coaching Development Programme.

### **3.5 Timetable for the establishment of the TDCs?**

We have committed to starting at least **one pilot** multi-site TDC by the end of summer 2017. The intention is to run this pilot alongside announcing the process for establishing additional TDCs. As part of this process, we expect to provide opportunities for coaches to tender to operate a TDC.

In addition to the limited funding from SE, we currently do not have the numbers of athletes to

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provide nationwide coverage. However, our intention is to work with athletes and coaches to provide the best possible access, to the most talented athletes, to engage within a TDC.

### **3.6 Will you be running TDCs outside England?**

The Sport England funding to set up a Talent Pathway is intended to be used for creating a Talent Programme in England. As such, TDCs will be set up in England. British Fencing will not restrict access to the Talent Pathway Programme to athletes from other Home Nations, however athletes from other Home Nations may not necessarily receive the same Sport England funded support.

## **4. What is Talent ID and Confirmation (TIC)?**

TIC is a short-term confirmation phase (usually a maximum of six months) for the Talent Pathway Coach to have more contact and engagement with that athlete. Following the six months an athlete will either move up to the PF Programme (currently MS/MF/WF) or move back in to the TDC. TIC should be seen as temporary Programme in which athletes remain for no more than six months. Should an athlete not be successful in moving up, targets relating to the athlete profile will be agreed which will need to be met prior to any subsequent re-nomination for TIC.

Athletes who are training regularly in their club **and** as part of a TDC will be eligible to be considered for the TIC Programme. Nominations can be made by the club with the support of the TDC Coach for an athlete(s) to be considered by the Talent Pathway Coach.

It is important that coaches and parents understand the expectations that will be placed on an athlete as part of TIC and we will be working to help ensure that athletes are nominated at a time that maximises their chances of being successful.

## **5. What is Performance Foundations?**

We currently have three weapons operating at Performance Foundation level - MF, WF, MS. Over the last year we have established the PF Programme, but given there is now no WCP in place, the day-to-day delivery will be revised. Whilst there may still be some daily / weekly activity in the ETC, the focus will be on a centralised camp based programme.

There are a number of junior athletes already identified at this level and they will remain on the Programme. We will also review the U23 athletes who were on the Podium Potential Programme, and where the motivation and capability to train is still ongoing, seek to include them.

The Talent Pathway Coaches will be in direct contact with each athlete and their coach to

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discuss/confirm participation in the Programme. As part of this process it is expected that, with the help of the coaches, each athlete will start/continue to develop their individualised development plans appropriate to that athlete's development needs.

### **6. Who is leading on the Talent Pathway now there is no World Class Programme?**

Ultimately, the Board through the CEO will ensure that the Talent Pathway Strategy is meeting its key aims, objectives and targets in line with the agreements with Sport England.

On a day-to-day basis, the Talent Programme will be led by Maxine McCombie, Talent Pathway Manager. Maxine is currently on maternity leave (until end June 2018) and during this time, Steve Garrett has been seconded from his role in Higher Education Development to cover this position.

#### **6.1 What is the staffing structure?**

The Pathway will be led by the Talent Pathway Manager reporting to the CEO. They will be supported by an administrator who will also help and support the logistics for the TDCs.

We have recently run a recruitment process for a Talent Pathway Coach in Foil and Epee, and Cyril Tahon will continue on a part-time basis as Talent Pathway Coach for Sabre. (please see separate update [here](#))

Over time, additional TDC Coaches will be contracted to develop and operate TDCs.

#### **6.2 Who has been appointed following the recent recruitment?**

We have prepared a separate statement to update on the current recruitment process for the Talent Pathway Coaches in Epee and Foil.

## **7. What is happening next?**

Amongst other tasks and activities, we will

- Confirm the outcome of the recruitment process – this will be announced here  
<http://britishfencing.com/news/latest-news/>
- Recruit for an Administrator– vacancy will be posted on  
<http://britishfencing.com/news/vacanciesandrecruitment/>
- Confirm the athletes that are part of the PF Programme in MS, MF and WF
- Notify and have one-to-one meetings with all nominated athletes on the PF Programme
- Start work on the first pilot TDC

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- Generate more comprehensive athlete profiles underpinned by the What it takes to Win model
- Announce details of the British Fencing advanced coach development programme. This forms part of British Fencing's ongoing work to develop coaches and will be underpinned by three modules: Coaching Practice, Coach Development and Athlete Development.
- Provide a monthly update on the progress of the implementation of the Talent Pathway.

Should you have any questions or queries in the meantime, then please contact Steve Garrett on [steve.garrett@britishfencing.com](mailto:steve.garrett@britishfencing.com).