

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22

Encouraging the Conditions to Support Care: A Head Coach’s Story of Developing a Caring Culture in a UK Basketball Club.

*Colum Cronin¹, Joseph Grogan¹, Simon J. Roberts¹, Alan Keane^{1, 2}

¹Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences (RISES), Liverpool John Moores University,

²MVMT Sports Limited,

Authors Note:

Colum Cronin <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1687-4437>

Joseph Grogan (No Orcid ID)

Simon J Roberts <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7370-0161>

Alan Keane (No Orcid ID)

*Corresponding Author c.j.cronin@ljmu.ac.uk

23 Encouraging the Conditions to Support Care: A Head Coach's
24 Story of Developing a Caring Culture in a UK Basketball Club.

25 Abstract

26 Necessitated by sustained evidence of abuse and inappropriate coaching practices, an ethic of care
27 has been promoted as a promising approach to sport coaching. Providing care in sport contexts is,
28 however, difficult because caring is often labour intensive, situational, and many individuals
29 including coaches themselves may need care. That is the conditions of some sport coaching contexts
30 may not be conducive to care. Currently, there are few evidence-based examples of how to develop
31 the conditions that facilitate care in coaching contexts. Accordingly, this study reports on a Head
32 Coach's attempts to develop a 'caring culture' using the Continuous Change Model for Caring
33 Cultures (CCMCC)(Hickey, & Cronin, 2021). Utilising a structural narrative analysis of stories gathered
34 across a season, findings reveal challenges including limited capacities and capabilities to care, and
35 the need to align care with wider norms. The narrative also highlights the value of publicly rewarding
36 care, and how other characters beyond the Head Coach attempted to provide care in different
37 scenes. These findings provide the first account of utilising the CCMCC, including stories and analysis
38 that may support others to develop the conditions to support caring relationships.

39

40 Keywords: Athletes' Needs; Care; Club Development; Culture Change

41

42 Introduction

43 Often jolted into the wider consciousness by high-profile scandals, care is paradoxically a critical
44 coaching issue and one that can be 'taken for granted' or even absent. In response, coaching
45 researchers and policy makers have called for, and in some instances developed, safeguarding
46 procedures to reduce abuse, promote non-malevolence, and inform everyday sporting practices
47 (e.g., Lang, 2021; McMahon et al., 2025). Indeed, in the UK coaches have a legal *duty of care* to take
48 reasonable steps to prevent harm (Partington, 2021). Augmenting this legal duty, researchers have
49 argued that in addition to non-malevolence and safeguarding, caring relationships informed by an
50 *ethic of care* can be productive pedagogical relationships (e.g., Fisher et al., 2019; Gano-Overway &
51 Guivernau, 2018; Gearity, 2012). More precisely, it is reasoned that caring relationships, where
52 'carers' (i.e., coaches) understand the needs of the 'cared for' (i.e., athletes) and engage in dialogical
53 and reciprocal relationships, can be vehicles for athletes to learn, thrive and flourish (e.g., Cronin &
54 Armour, 2018; Fisher et al., 2019). The basis for such claims rests predominantly on several small
55 bodies of research. Firstly, retrospective case studies and surveys, mainly developed from coaches'
56 perspectives, depict how understanding the needs of athletes and jointly developing contextually
57 relevant actions can lead to productive athlete development (e.g., Cronin & Armour, 2018; Knust &
58 Fisher, 2015; Annerstedt & Eva-Carin, 2014). Secondly, recognising that care should be relational
59 rather than dominating, recent studies have drawn on athlete perspectives (e.g., Kjaer et al., 2023;
60 Lewis, et al., 2023; Morris, et al., 2023). These voices have reinforced the importance of dialogue,
61 understanding context specific needs, and have additionally emphasised the importance of
62 authentic listening and acting. Finally, a small corpus of research has examined care in youth sport,
63 PE, and positive youth development settings (e.g., Gano-Overway, 2013; Gano-Overway & Peteron,
64 2023). Supported by quantitative measures such as the caring climate scale (e.g., Fry & Gano-
65 Overway, 2010) this work has evidenced the positive influences care has on young participants and
66 how caring relations between young people themselves may lead to educative experiences.
67 Informing this empirical sport research, is a significant body of philosophical work over four decades

68 which argues that caring relationships can be powerful pedagogical entities. Specifically, it is argued
69 (e.g., Noddings, 2005; 2013) that in caring relationships both parties work together to help the cared
70 for flourish and potentially learn. Together this party of research intimates that an ethic of care,
71 though not unproblematic, can be a powerful positive influence upon some athletes' development.
72 Thus, whether from a duty or an ethic perspective, care is a key coaching issue, and consequently
73 the focus of this study.

74 Whilst different conceptions of care abound, in her work Noddings (2003; 2005; 2013)
75 promulgated an ethic of care as a moral and pedagogical conception of care. This conception does
76 not see care as a duty but a relational ethic informed by principles such as engrossment (i.e.,
77 sustained attention to the needs of the cared for), motivational displacement (i.e., where carers act
78 in the interests of the cared for), and reciprocity (i.e., where the 'cared for' is respected as an
79 individual who can contribute to the relationship). These principles enable both parties of a caring
80 dyad to collaboratively understand and act in response to the needs of the cared for (i.e., care is
81 relative to the needs of the cared for and the ability of the carer to support). For Noddings (2003, p.
82 61) needs are typically differentiated from wants as "stable over time or intense" and "desirable or
83 at least not harmful". Such needs may be inferred by coaches' observations or even through data,
84 but there is a danger here of projecting the carer's own perspectives on to the cared for (e.g., if I was
85 in that position I would...). Rather Noddings (2013) encourages dialogue and listening such that the
86 freedom of the cared for is recognised and they can express their needs without unnecessary fear.
87 In this way care is particular (Clark Miller, 2005), and not "dependent on rules, or at least wholly on
88 rules – not upon a prior determination of what is fair or equitable – but upon a constellation of
89 conditions that is viewed through both the eyes of the one-caring and the eyes of the cared-for
90 (Noddings, 2013, p. 13). Subsequently interdependent action can be undertaken. Again, reflecting
91 the freedom and needs of the cared for, it is for the cared for to affirm that such acts are caring. This
92 relational and needs focused conceptualisation of care has informed work in a variety of contexts

93 such as nursing (e.g., Lundqvist & Nilstun, 2009), education (e.g., Andersson et al., 2016), social work
94 (e.g., Hay, 2017) and to a modest extent, sport coaching (Cronin & Armour, 2018).

95 Critically, it is worth noting that care is a form of emotional labour (Cronin & Armour, 2018).
96 Reflecting Noddings' feminist roots, it has been considered that care labour has long been
97 undervalued and under resourced (Noddings, 2013). This may be particularly the case in sporting
98 contexts given that coaches have complex and demanding roles (Dohsten et al. 2020). Hence it is not
99 always easy to be engrossed and support the needs of another (Enright et al. 2020). Working
100 conditions, turnover and stress (Mercer et al. 2025), may mean that authentic caring relationships,
101 as Noddings (2013) describes, are difficult to develop and potentially unsustainable (Dohsten et al.
102 2020). Additionally, much coaching is voluntary (e.g., Brazier, Lara-Bercial, Hill, Hodgson, & Megicks,
103 2025; Moustakas & Bales, 2022) and again coaches may have diminished resources (e.g., time) which
104 inhibit caring (Cronin & Armour, 2018). Furthermore, care can be challenging in sport contexts
105 because many coaches are part of asymmetrical power relationships with influence over athlete
106 development, selection, and potentially careers (see Potrac & Jones, 2009; Denison, et al. 2017). In
107 such circumstances, it may be challenging for athletes to express their needs to powerful coaches
108 who they are required to impress. Similarly, it may be extremely challenging for athletes to assert
109 their freedom and to genuinely affirm care (Enright, et al. 2020). Conversely, in the often-
110 competitive sport context, coaches have reported presenting powerful, all knowing, and
111 commanding fronts to maintain respect and discipline amongst athletes and staff teams (Jones et al.
112 2010). From this perspective listening to athletes can be misunderstood as weakness or a lack of
113 knowledge. Indeed, the prevalence of micro-politics (Enright, et al. 2020), prevailing patriarchal
114 discourses (Gearity, et al., 2023), and social structures within sport organisations may somewhat
115 thwart coaches' abilities to enact an ethic of care where power flows equally between the carer and
116 the cared for.

117 With the above contextual challenges in mind but simultaneously appreciating the potential
118 of care to enhance sporting experiences, there is a need to explore how care can be facilitated in
119 organisations such as sport clubs. Consideration of how care is developed within organisations is
120 significant because as Noddings (2015, p.82) declares “caring-for requires a person-to person
121 relationship in which both carer and cared-for play essential roles. No institution can do this. What it
122 can do is to provide and support the conditions under which caring relations can prosper.” To date,
123 however, few contextually situated and longitudinal accounts of how organisations can support care
124 exist. Specifically, the challenge remains to develop caring cultures which can facilitate care labour
125 to be provided sustainably and received by those in need. In response this paper moves research
126 beyond existing retrospective accounts and aims to consider a Head Coach’s attempt to develop a
127 caring culture within a UK basketball club. The Head Coach’s perspective is pertinent because
128 coaches are powerful actors often tasked with the construction of visions (ICCE, 2012) and
129 orchestration of cultural norms within their organisation (see Edwards & Milton, 2025). This may
130 involve promoting values, embedding systems, and guiding others through tensions within the
131 context (see Henriksen et al. 2025). Indeed, work with the caring climate (Fry & Gano-Overway,
132 2010) suggests that coaches can be powerful promoters of caring relationships amongst others
133 within their cultural context. Accordingly, we provide the first article to report on a Head Coach’s
134 attempt to implement the Continual Change Model for Caring Cultures (CCMCC) (Cronin & Hickey,
135 2021). This model is a theoretically informed approach to developing a caring culture (i.e., a culture
136 that promotes the conditions in which care can flourish). It is examined here as an aid to others who
137 aspire for care to flourish within their sporting organisations.

138

139 Theoretical Framework; Continual Change Model for Caring Cultures
140 (CCMCC)

141 To critically consider the Head Coach's attempt to develop a caring culture within a UK basketball
142 club, we used the Continual Change Model for Caring Cultures (CCMCC) (Hickey & Cronin, 2021).
143 With the realisation that coaches had numerous influences and responsibilities that could limit their
144 ability to care, Hickey and Cronin (2021) developed the CCMCC model to guide the development of a
145 widespread organisational caring culture, which includes and advances beyond individual (i.e., self-
146 care) and dyadic views of care. Several postulates influenced the development of this work:

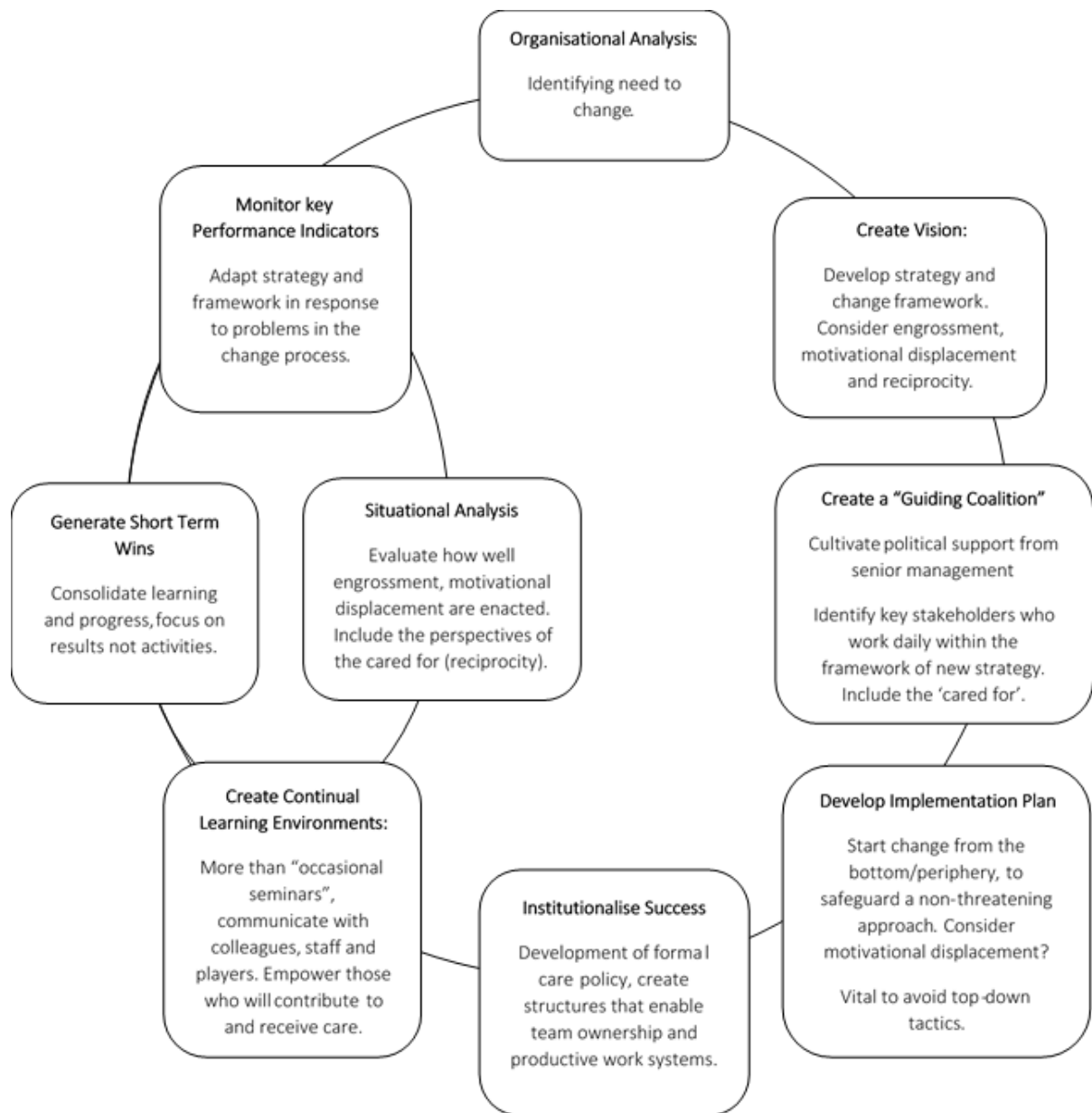
- 147 1) The conceptualisation of care as including non-malevolence *and* both moral and pedagogical
148 relationships that may help individuals flourish (e.g., athletes, coaches, officials).
- 149 2) The notion of caring relationships embedded in everyday practice rather than solely as a
150 response to critical incidents.
- 151 3) The limits of coaches to provide care for all, and the need to distribute care labour
152 throughout a sub-culture.
- 153 4) The recognition that others (e.g., senior stakeholders) within sporting contexts can enable
154 and thwart the sustainability of care within a setting.

155 Imbued by these insights, the model (See fig.1) includes concepts from Noddings' care theory (i.e.,
156 engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity) as a means of understanding and meeting
157 individuals' inferred and expressed needs. Amongst other features the model supports those who
158 wish to develop the conditions for care by encouraging the development of a guiding coalition to
159 work with stakeholders including the cared for. Subsequently, actions and policies should be
160 developed to meet the needs of the cared for. Through these features and concepts there is a
161 recognition that athletes' needs could be diverse (e.g., physical, technical, psychological and broader
162 needs), athletes' voices are imperative in expressing their needs, and that stakeholders can
163 systematically work to support athletes with these needs.

164 In the CCMCC, Noddings' concepts (i.e., engrossment, motivational displacement, and
165 reciprocity) are amalgamated with features from emergent change management theory (See By,
166 2005). Emergent change approaches are often contrasted with traditional sequential planned
167 approaches to change, and diverge by promoting non-linear, continuous and open-ended processes.
168 This recognises the need to respond to unpredictable events as change occurs, the influence of
169 multiple variables on change, and the value of shared and widespread understanding. The model
170 also prompts those who seek to develop the conditions for care, to include a learning mechanism as
171 a means of evaluating care from the perspective of stakeholders including the cared for. This is
172 particularly relevant to sport coaching which is often a dynamic and somewhat unpredictable
173 (Bowes & Jones, 2006). These theoretical perspectives (i.e., both Noddings' care, and emergent
174 change, theories) are reflected in the CCMCC and manifest through:

- 175 1) The idea of a *shared vision* of care across an organisation based on an analysis of existing
176 practices and environments.
- 177 2) The value of a *guiding coalition* of powerful stakeholders to advocate for, and support, the
178 co-construction of a caring culture.
- 179 3) The inclusion of specific action plans with achievable *key performance indicators*
- 180 4) The implementation of a *continual learning environment* to provide a mechanism for review,
181 refinement and change.

182



183

184 Figure 1. The Continual Change Model for Caring Cultures (CCMCC) (Hickey & Cronin, 2021).

185 Thus, the CCMCC model, informed by Noddings' care work and change management theory,

186 provides a cyclical guide to supporting sporting organisations intentionally develop caring cultures.

187 Yet, to our knowledge, no research has examined the implementation of this model. Such work is of

188 course necessary to consider how caring cultures can be developed within sporting organisations, so

189 that care is not absent, nor taken-for-granted, but intentionally planned for, enacted, and evaluated.

190 To that end, we used the CCMCC as a theoretical framework to guide and evaluate the Head Coach's

191 attempts to develop a caring culture.

192 Methodology

193 To address the aim of considering a Head Coach's attempt to develop a caring culture within a UK
194 basketball club, this study was situated within an interpretivist paradigm often characterised by
195 ontological relativism and epistemological subjectivism. From this position reality is considered in
196 relation to social and cultural experiences (e.g., relative to biography and context). Subsequently the
197 knowledge developed herein is relative to this context of the study and the needs and actions of
198 individuals involved (e.g., Head Coach, athletes, researchers). It may or may not be relative to other
199 coaches or their contexts. On that basis, transferability needs to be cautiously undertaken through
200 the natural attitude of readers, who should as connoisseurs (Sparkes & Smith, 2009) look to critically
201 consider the findings in terms of worthiness of the topic, significance of the findings, and resonance
202 with their own context (Tracy, 2010). To aid with this, we proceed by outlining key features of the
203 UK basketball context and the club in question.

204 Introduction to UK Basketball and the Basketball Club

205 The basketball club that provided the case study is located in the UK. Basketball in this context is not
206 as well established as other sports (Football, Rugby, Hockey, Netball) but is particularly popular in
207 city regions (e.g., London, Manchester, Glasgow), with a small number of more rural hotspots. As
208 with much European sport, basketball has largely separate school and club systems. Clubs often
209 operate on an amateur basis, outside of school hours, with a volunteer ethos permeating playing,
210 coaching, and official roles. Reflecting the limited income streams in comparison to larger European
211 markets (e.g., Spain, Greece, Italy), only a small number of clubs in the UK have entirely full-time
212 professional squads. Typically, these operate at the highest level of UK basketball (i.e., men's and
213 women senior teams), with some clubs competing in European level competition. Underneath this
214 level, some clubs have senior adult teams that operate with a mixture of paid and volunteer players
215 and staff who operate on a semi-professional basis. This is the case with the case study club.
216 Specifically, the men's and women's 'senior teams' operate on a semi-professional basis and

217 comprise several players from the US or Europe alongside local players. Together these players and
218 staff adopt a performance ethos (Lyle, 2002) characterised by high levels of preparation and
219 competition involvement. That said, reflecting the economic market and in keeping with the vast
220 majority of basketball provision in the UK, the majority of the club's provision (e.g., youth teams) is
221 facilitated by volunteer coaches, volunteer committee members, and low paid officials (referees,
222 table officials) enabling youth, female, male, and disability participation. Here, an emphasis on
223 positive bio-psycho-social development and experiences through sport participation (e.g.,
224 developing friendships), accompanies competitive aspirations. To support this, the club, employs the
225 Head Coach in a paid capacity with dual responsibility for the performance of the senior men's team,
226 and also wider club development/participation. Critically, there is also a recognition that the labour
227 needed to support all members' needs is significant, and perhaps too much for the small number of
228 paid employees in the club.

229 Data Collection

230 The stimulus for the project was provided by the Head Coach of the club who upon hearing about
231 our previous work on care, contacted us as researchers. Through two informal conversations (August
232 and September 2022) we discussed the CCMCC model, and the coach expressed a desire to develop
233 a caring culture in their club. From this genesis, and subsequent to institutional ethical approval, the
234 coach committed to using the CCMCC model across the season. Subsequently, eight monthly online
235 interviews with the coach were scheduled (Oct 2022 - May 2023). In time, these were conducted via
236 Microsoft Teams. Interviews were designed to be exploratory in nature. Many of the questions
237 asked by the researchers were neutral, open and general to provide time and space for the coach to
238 provide their stories of developing a caring culture (e.g., how are you getting on?). Other questions
239 were directly related to the model (e.g., Can you tell me your opinion on how the club created a
240 vision of care? How did you find the process of formulating a guiding coalition within the club? Can
241 you tell me about the plans to achieve a caring culture?). Typically, these questions were asked

242 congruently with the stages of the model (i.e., early interviews focused on the implementation of
243 the early stages of the model, and later interviews focused on the later stages of the model). In
244 keeping with Kvale's (2007) traveller metaphor, we sought to understand the Head Coach's world,
245 and their experience over the course of the season. Inevitably, as humans are storytelling animals
246 (Papathomas, 2016), these questions led to storied accounts of experiences containing coherent and
247 sequenced events (Book et al., 2024). Again, aligned with Kvale (2007), who sees interviews as an
248 'inter' exchange of 'views', the researchers also provided their perspective and insights on the
249 stories and how the coach could best implement the CCMCC. Together, participants and researchers
250 developed 'middle stories' (Griffin and Phoenix, 2016; Bell, 2009). To be clear, these are not small
251 stories that are often told in everyday interaction, and which ethnographic researchers might
252 observe. Nor are they big stories that chart the entire life story of an individual. Rather, middle
253 stories have elements of each, are typically reflective in nature, and focused on the recent past. In
254 this study, the 'inter view' (Kvale, 2007) provided a space for trust, vulnerability and dialogue that
255 enabled the coach to (co) construct and share middle stories. Doing so provided a means of
256 collaborative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), to analyse the club landscape, and the Head
257 Coach's experiences of utilising the CCMCC.

258

259 Data Analysis

260 Imbued with 8 recorded and transcribed interviews with the Head Coach across a basketball season
261 (Oct-May), we undertook a structural narrative analysis to explore the storied experiences of the
262 coach. Individual's stories are increasingly common in qualitative research (See Book et al. 2024)
263 because researchers recognise that narratives are ongoing constructions (Papathomas, 2016) that
264 can reveal our embodied, relational and situated 'realities', and also contribute to sensemaking and
265 the formation of identities (Griffin and Phoenix, 2016). As such, analysing the structure of stories and
266 the narratives that both shape and are promulgated by individuals (i.e., the Head Coach), can enable
267 insights into the experiences and perceptions of the storytellers themselves.

268 With the above in mind, after an initial reading and note taking by the second author, the
269 structural analysis was undertaken by the first author. The structural analysis began by reading and
270 focusing on understanding key events from across the season. This coding of events was undertaken
271 manually and chronologically (i.e., data examined in the order events occurred). Subsequently, and
272 with a more latent disposition, the first author revisited the coded data to provide an initial attempt
273 at unveiling how the events are connected and unfold (i.e. the plot). Informed by Larty and Hamilton
274 (2011) we were mindful of complex plots which include Aristotle's a) 'reversal of intention', where
275 actions have consequences that contrast with their intentions; b) 'recognition of ignorance', where
276 new knowledge is gained alongside an awareness of previous ignorance; and c) 'scenes of suffering'
277 that indicate the struggle and tension in the story. These concepts were used to reexplore the plot,
278 and previously coded events were reconsidered and renamed. At that point, the coded data was
279 examined in relation to character (who, and what type) and scene (where, when). Critically, Larty
280 and Hamilton (2011) also recognise how story analysts need to not only examine the functional
281 components of narratives (e.g., plot, scene, character), but also consider these in relation to wider
282 social, historical and cultural contexts. This led to another round of analysis to examine latent
283 aspects. Thus, analysis involved back and forth sensemaking over some time. This process resulted in
284 six narratively informed insights that reveal the complexities, challenges, and success of developing a
285 caring culture within a basketball club via the CCMCC. These were then shared with the wider team
286 for further discussion and refinement. Minor amendments were made to ensure ethical
287 presentation of the data (e.g., in relation to confidentiality).

288 Rigour and Limitations

289

290 The strength of this work lies in the use of the CCMCC, longitudinal data collection, reflexive
291 perspective of the coach, and the structural analysis of his experiences. To ensure trustworthiness
292 across these processes, members of the wider team acted as critical friends (Smith & McGannon,
293 2018) posing questions and looking to self critically interpret the experiences. Examples of this

294 include critically looking at the CCMCC and problematically considering its application. Additionally,
295 the Head Coach reviewed the findings as part of a member reflection (Smith & McGannon, 2018). He
296 confirmed a sense of verisimilitude and only requested minor changes to ensure professional
297 representation (e.g., removing 'umms' and colloquial language from direct quotes). Notwithstanding
298 these processes, it is important to once again transparently recognise the specific context of the
299 study. For instance, the Head Coach proactively contacted the researchers and explicated a positive
300 desire to develop care in the club. This predisposition to care may not be replicated in other clubs.
301 Furthermore, the coach is the sole participant in the study and other members of the club may have
302 different experiences. With this in mind, future research should look to utilise alternative methods
303 e.g., the care climate scale (Fry & Gano-Overway, 2010), document analysis, and visual methods to
304 explore multivocal insights. In particular, the voices of the cared for should be prioritised. Finally, the
305 study is delimited by the aim to consider a Head Coaches' attempt to develop a caring culture within
306 a UK basketball club. It does not, but future work should, aim to explore the influence on sporting
307 performance.

308 Findings

309 Aligned with the aim to consider a Head Coach's attempt to develop a caring culture within a UK
310 basketball club, this section explores the coach's storied experiences. Consistent with a structural
311 analysis, six sub-sections are presented to reveals insights into the metanarrative, plot, characters
312 and scenes of the Head Coach's experiences. To support confidentiality, we refrain from providing
313 directly identifiable information such as the names of coaches, players, and organisations,
314 throughout the findings.

315 The Meta-Narrative; A Quest for a Caring Culture.

316

317 Intrigued by the notion of a caring culture, the Head Coach described an interest in prioritising care
318 within his coaching and the club at large. This interest is rooted in his biographical experiences (e.g.,

319 family influences) that have inculcated a value of care, coupled with deep reflection about what
320 coaching means for him (i.e., a relational endeavour). Supplementing these dispositions, the Head
321 Coach had unexpectedly experienced others turn to him for support.

322 Everyone wants to be a coach. Let me introduce you to what it really means. We start talking
323 about the wearing this caring lens. With that, you can't actually shut off at any point. There
324 has to be that little radar on for most of the time really, because in the most unexpected
325 moments, that care is needed. For example, experiences with serious personal issues. It's in
326 the unexpected moments that it manifests itself. When it comes to the surface, it's like
327 “fuck! I wasn't expecting that tonight”, but where do I go with this?

328 To illustrate further, the coach described one historical incident.

329 One of our professional players is not feeling good. 'He is very down. He told me one of his
330 teammates in the US had been killed recently. He came from a tough inner-city Chicago
331 neighbourhood where this happened. His two best friends had died during the course of the
332 season that he was with us. He doesn't tell anybody, but he comes to me. (exhale) Where do
333 I go with this?

334 In response to these incidents, the coach described a sense of impression management (Goffman,
335 1959) projecting a somewhat distorted image that he is in control, is wise, has “answers”, and is
336 “seen as someone who can solve problems”. A performed authority. Consequently, the Head Coach,
337 the main character in this story, could be conceived as a ‘missionary’ type figure with altruistic and
338 charitable aspirations. In the comfort of the interview, however, the coach was trustingly revealing
339 that he felt unprepared to care for players; a felt inadequacy. He revealed;

340 We're conditioned to be fixers. The players come to you for the answers for everything.
341 Another comes to me for support regarding the loss of his father, “my father passed away
342 two years ago, and I've never really told anybody and I'm really struggling. But right now I
343 don't know what to do”. I had this very similar situation again about the loss of a parent
344 come to me two weeks ago. A 22-year-old young man said, “I am thinking about therapy.
345 What do you think?” Boom! Oh! what do I think? Ohh shit like I better be careful what I say
346 here. What's the right and wrong thing to say?

347 These feelings, and a recognition of ignorance (Larty and Hamilton, 2011) provided a prompt for a
348 more skilled caring approach. Accompanying this rationale, the Head Coach recognised two
349 structural challenges to developing caring coaching in the club. Firstly, in the UK basketball scene,
350 other coaches are often volunteers or part-time employees. Typically, they may be introduced to the
351 role either as a parent-coach, or as a current or former player, which represents a long-rooted
352 narrative of amateurism that pervades much UK sport coaching (Brazier, Lara-Bercial, Hill, Hodgson,
353 & Megicks, 2025; Day, 2015). Against this backdrop the Head Coach argued that it would help if all
354 involved had training in areas such as noticing and listening. Without this, other characters may not
355 have the capability to care.

356 The day-to-day skillsets to just listen empathetically. Most coaches haven't been guided by a
357 specialist like Stephen Rollnick (motivational interviewing expert)...I think that's where the
358 coaching domain can be very vulnerable for us coaches. I think we're vulnerable, and we're
359 definitely not supported in a way to navigate such a tricky journey.

360 In recognising the limits on coaches' capabilities, the Head Coach drew attention to the precarity of
361 sport coaching in the UK. Previous research has linked coaches' precarity to poor working conditions
362 (e.g., audit cultures, part-time roles) and unstable employment which influence coaches' emotive
363 experiences (Ives et al., 2021). In this study, however, the Head Coach alludes to coaches being
364 vulnerable because the demands of caring in the role may be beyond the skill set of the coach, and
365 beyond the training they are provided. Although, largely a volunteer context and in an
366 underdeveloped profession (see Taylor & Garratt, 2010), coaches in this jurisdiction nonetheless
367 have a legal duty to care. Should they fail to meet this, perhaps through a lack of capability (i.e. lack
368 of training or skill), they may be open to prosecution (Partington, 2021). Thus, in keeping with the
369 notion of vulnerability (Hägglund et al. 2024), the Head Coach compassionately recognised the need
370 to help coaches with the capability to care in this sport organisation.

371 Of course, some and perhaps many coaches in this domain, have developed noticing and
372 listening skills through experiences in other roles (as parents, as employees, and as employers).

373 Indeed, Noddings (2013) argues that many learn to care from being cared for (as children, siblings, in
374 schools etc.) and observing others who model care. Notwithstanding this, even coaches with the
375 capability to develop caring coach-athlete relationships founded on an ethic of care, and
376 characterised by engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity, may not have the
377 capacity to do so. This is because in a single team, the Head Coach could often lead 10-12 players, 1-
378 3 assistants, and be responsible for orchestrating parents/guardians. An ethic of care may not be
379 possible in the short time they have with players (e.g., 4-10 hours per week), amongst a gamut of
380 other non-sport responsibilities (e.g., employment, familial). Indeed, Kjaer et al. (2023) emphasised
381 how an ethic of care requires coaches to invest time “discovering the capability of each athlete –
382 both the person and the athlete” (p.78). They recognise that recurring dialogue is a basis for
383 understanding and confirming athletes’ needs and is a key part of demonstrating a long-term
384 commitment to athletes. Kjaer et al. also recognised that it is not always possible for coaches to
385 undertake such care labour.

386 Amongst a breadth of imperatives (e.g., teaching basketball skills, developing athletes
387 physically, organising fixtures, managing parental expectations), there is the potential for caring
388 labour (noticing, listening, supporting) to be seen as an added extra, overlooked, or sidelined
389 (Cronin, 2021; Cronin & Armour, 2018). Specifically, Cronin et al. (2019) explain how presenting
390 socially acceptable emotional responses to individuals such as empathising, listening and supporting
391 can be emotionally laborious. In addition, the performance narrative in sport that often values
392 competition and frames redundancy as an acceptable consequence of poor sporting results, can
393 mean that coaches employ impression management to present strong ‘fronts’ that hide any sign of
394 weakness. Strong ‘fronts’ may manifest via working long hours (first in last out), and a reluctance to
395 demonstrate vulnerability in front of peers (Corsby et al. 2023; Krahn, 2024). Coaches who
396 experience tension whilst managing both caring and authoritative fronts may be privately
397 overwhelmed with their role and may potentially experience stress, burnout, or burnout symptoms
398 (e.g., cynicism, fatigue, feelings of detachment) (Cronin et al. 2019; Norris et al 2017). In extreme

399 cases, without rest and recovery, burnout may increase their risk of coaches experiencing
400 psychosomatic illness (e.g., diabetes) (Cronin et al. 2019). Thus, the limits of coaches' capabilities
401 and capacities to care may create a serious 'conflicting action' and legitimate obstacles which
402 require consideration of how to sustainably care (Dohsten et al. 2023) and what can happen
403 realistically happen next within the particular social context. Embracing this quest, the coach arrived
404 at a point where they enthusiastically sought to develop a caring culture, to support more care, not
405 just provided by the head coach, but throughout the club.

406 A Bumpy Start to the Quest

407

408 Within the first few days of beginning to develop a caring culture, even before the initial
409 steps of having a guiding coalition in place were taken, it became apparent that there was a need to
410 develop a contextually appropriate conceptual understanding of care. This awareness was
411 crystallised by a rush to action from an inexperienced coach who aspired to care. While well-
412 intentioned, an incident occurred that led to some concern and confusion amongst parents, and a
413 need to clarify what is appropriate in this context. Specifically, in the UK, it is often not seen as good
414 safeguarding practice for a coach to have a 1-1 meeting with a child (under 18). This social norm has
415 developed in response to both historic and contemporary evidence of abusive practices in sport (see
416 Whyte, 2022; Grey-Thompson, 2017). The Head Coach recounted what happened...

417 The coach approached a player with some 'issues' from a place of care (*i.e., an aspiration to*
418 *care – authors' explanation*). But they probably crossed a line by having a one-to-one
419 meeting and put themselves in a difficult and dangerous position. Obviously, the parents got
420 involved and were wondering about the motive behind the meeting. We had a lot of
421 meetings (with the parents) to get enough information and data about both sides and their
422 feelings about the situation. We arrived to some kind of mediated meeting with the parents,
423 coach and a player to get back to a level playing field for everybody, it took about 8 days in
424 total.

425 The colloquial 'place of care' refers to the Head Coach's view that the coach aspired to care.

426 However, from a Noddings' perspective, care only occurs if affirmed by the cared for (*i.e., the*

427 athlete) as part of a reciprocal relationship. This affirmation is essential so as to avoid controlling
428 behaviours, to reciprocally involve the cared for in the relationship, and to recognise the role of the
429 cared for in the relationship. Thus, in this instance, the coach's intention to care does not denote
430 that care has taken place, or not. Moreover, the scene of an adult coach meeting privately with a
431 young athlete was an area of concern for the parents (i.e., why are you meeting with our child, in
432 this way?), who were aware of wider discourses of coach abuse. Subsequently, an early attempt to
433 care led to Aristotle's 'reversal of intention' (Larty & Hamilton, 2011), whereby the initial actions had
434 an unintended and unanticipated impact. It raised questions about the judgment of coaches, their
435 understanding of their context, and emphasised the importance of explicitly considering contextual
436 norms. In response the CCMCC model provided a framework to support the Head Coach in their
437 attempts to create a caring culture. Firstly, the model reinforced the need to work from the bottom
438 up and develop a shared understanding/vision of policies and productive systems amongst the
439 coaches throughout the club. To be clear while care occurs via dialogical, reciprocal and needs
440 focused relationships, shared understandings, visions, and policies may help to "provide the
441 conditions under which on-site workers can engage in caring-for" (i.e., Noddings, 2015 p. 75).

442 We just had a new board member assigned Monday who I think would be a perfect fit and
443 valuable member of this coalition. I need to bring people up to speed because of what she's
444 involved in and what a value to the group will be... I still need to bring them (the coaches in
445 the club) up to speed with where she can help with this.

446 Secondly, the learning mechanism inherent in the model reinforced the value and opportunity to self
447 critically develop a caring culture. This is consistent with Noddings (2002, p. 136) who argues that
448 "attentive love listens, ... and it monitors its own actions". Imbued by this and aided by the
449 conversations with the researchers, it was recognised that there is a need to consider the
450 boundaries of coaches' competencies and knowledge. It was acknowledged that while coaches may
451 be well positioned to notice a variety of needs (Cronin & Armour, 2018), they are perhaps best
452 qualified to meet sporting needs (e.g. supporting technical sporting skills). For other needs (e.g.,

453 medical, psycho-social), coaches may be best placed to signpost athletes to club welfare officers or
454 professionals rather than meet athletes alone.

455 We talked about developing some signposting resources or constructing signposting
456 procedures because this coach didn't have that guidance. Now as I think back to our
457 conversation, I was explaining that "We (the club) dropped the ball here because had we
458 had not been clear with the coaches if a player approaches you with XYZ issue, you should
459 signpost them as the next step".

460 Aligned with the CCMCC, these storied incidents illustrate the value of firstly establishing a guiding
461 coalition who work with coaches to clarify a shared vision, and key actions/procedures within clubs
462 *before* individuals seek to care. In the absence of this, and in the context of wider narratives of abuse
463 and safeguarding, a well-meaning intervention, became an area of concern. Fortunately, through
464 dialogue, listening, and the use of the CCMCC the Head Coach was able to mitigate the confusion
465 and in a non-linear fashion, return to working on securing a coalition of people across the club, to
466 somewhat clarify policies, structures and systems that may support care (i.e., proceed with the
467 quest).

468 What does this care actually mean?
469

470 Prompted by the initial incident above, the Head Coach embraced the CCMCC model, as a guide
471 on his quest. This manifested in several ways such as confirming the guiding coalition including
472 influential coaches, trustees and players from different sections of the club. The members were
473 chosen for their expertise but also to notice, interact with members and represent the needs of
474 others across all parts of the club. As the coalition met for the first time, the Head coach proposed
475 an implementation plan that included amongst other actions:

- 476 1) Holding a workshop to clarify what care is in this context, including the importance of
477 expressed needs.
- 478 2) The development of a sign posting document to enable coaches deal with athletes needs
479 that might arise beyond coaches' competencies.

480 These actions reflected the concerns of the Head Coach who was responding and connecting to the
481 previous incident and the sense that there is a need to clarify what is caring coaching in a sporting
482 context. What was noticeable here, was the need to open up the plan by authentically involving
483 more characters via the coalition i.e., what is care for particular members at particular moments.
484 This is essential because as Noddings argues, care is focused on the needs of the cared for. Thus, the
485 CCMCC does not position the role of the Head Coach or the guiding coalition as implementing a top-
486 down well-intentioned strategy. This is a tempting pathway, but it contains a pitfall; if a caring
487 culture is to be developed, it is important, as far as contextually possible, to ensure the needs of the
488 'cared for' are thoroughly identified, by the cared for themselves. Accordingly, a bottom-up plan,
489 informed by the inferred (through members of the guiding coalition noticing) and expressed
490 (through dialogue) needs of club members, is required. With this perspective clarified, the Head
491 Coach sought to involve others and listen to the needs/aspirations of members. This manifested
492 mostly notably at the workshop exploring what is care with coaches, when the Head Coach was
493 approached by a club member.

494 One of the senior Men's players, a second team player, who's also an assistant coach one of
495 the youth teams came to me and said, "you know, your care workshop got me really
496 thinking about food, and healthy eating and eating disorders. He said, "it made me wonder
497 about some of the members in our club, if they are suffering from eating disorders". He (the
498 senior player) had some previous experience with it, which is why he shed a light on it. He
499 also said to me, "look, my partner, she works for some charity organisation. She's an
500 ambassador for eating disorders. Do you want me to bring her in to do a just a workshop
501 delivery?"

502 In this instance, the intentional attempts to clarify what care might involve and explicit dialogue led
503 to a greater awareness of potential needs and resources within the club. Similarly other coaches
504 professed a new understanding of how opportunities to care may abound everyday club activity.

505 Off the back of the workshop, one of the senior female players came to me and said "I
506 thought that was an amazing workshop. I've never heard anything like it". She's been
507 through the American system as a player. She said, "I've never been involved in anything like

508 that before. I never thought about playing, performance, and coaching like that". She's also
509 our under 14 girls head coach. She shared "I've never thought about care that way or never
510 thought about coaching or sport or performance or playing in that regard. Now that I think
511 about it, it's just all around us and I was blindfolded to it. I just wasn't aware of it".

512 Via the guiding coalition and attempts to develop a shared vision, other characters were coming to
513 the fore. Additionally showing a self-critical attitude, the Head Coach began to recognise previous
514 instances when listening was absent. Specifically, ahead of the season and with a positive intention
515 to get the job done early, a team kit was ordered without consulting or listening to the expressed
516 needs of those female players who were due to wear the kit. The white shorts that were ordered
517 were inappropriate for female players who may be concerned with menstruation (See McHaffie, et
518 al., 2022).

519 A club staff member bought a white kit for the women's senior team. He didn't involve the
520 senior women's team in the process. For example, just ask them, "what kind of colour? What
521 kind of colour would you like? We might not be able to get it, but I'd like to hear your
522 opinions on the type of kit you desire most or what not to get". He didn't involve them in the
523 process. Now that kit can't be used because he got a white kit. And rightly so, they're not
524 going to wear it! So yeah, there's good learning there and I think that's an example of the
525 lived experience we've had this past season because we didn't ask questions. We didn't
526 involve others.

527 Ordering the kit without considering the expressed needs of the players is an example of how care
528 does not always manifest within everyday sporting practices. Showing Aristotle's 'recognition of
529 ignorance' (see Larty & Hamilton, 2011), the Head Coach reflected upon and reconceptualised this
530 incident through a care perspective illustrating how "we had not listened". Thus, despite the bumpy
531 start, through workshops and dialogue with individuals across the club, a greater awareness of the
532 opportunities and importance of noticing, listening and meeting the everyday sporting needs of
533 individuals within the club was developing. In this way the culture of care was moving from the Head
534 Coach's personal impulse to a growing discourse and organisational aspiration.

535 Involving More Characters; Care Beyond the Head Coach.

536

537 With an increasing dialogue between members of the guiding coalition, soon a wider action
538 plan that was influenced by intentional attempts at care, was developed. For instance, one member
539 approached the Head Coach about bidding to secure funding to employ a club welfare and wellbeing
540 officer. This was ambitious but characterised the growing mission and quest to support members'
541 needs. With a more immediate outcome, other members of the club including trustees considered
542 the needs of referees who come to the club on Saturdays to officiate matches. Often these
543 characters are overlooked as stories are often dominated by coaches and athletes (Ryou, Cushion,
544 Rhind, & Cope, 2025). Despite their importance to youth sport, as neutral officials they are also
545 somewhat isolated from teams and coaches, and in other contexts have been subject to aggression
546 and abuse (e.g., Brodeur, Schellenberg, & Tamminen, 2023).

547 We got talking about referees, and how that they aren't fairly treated. So how are we going
548 to approach that as a club and be part of the solution. One of the trustees anchored it back
549 to care, being a caring club, and the journey, we're going on. The trustee said, "well, why
550 don't we after every game, make sure those two referees for each game have two cups of
551 tea and sandwiches. Have a packed lunch ready for them when they finish the game or even
552 give it to before the game. Being intentional about that. Not offering them a cup of tea if
553 they happen to be hanging around the tea area but actually having a packed lunch ready for
554 the referees for when they finish the game." I thought that was brilliant. We want referees
555 to feel cared for when they referee, and you want them to enjoy coming into our venue ...
556 Because of this action, late last week I was told by a Federation member that we are the first
557 place that's selected by referees. Referees want to come here.

558 While noticing the needs of the referees (a form of engrossment) is vital, Noddings (2005;2015)
559 argues that noticing is not enough to care. It also requires motivational displacement from the carer
560 (i.e., the carer has to act in response to the cared for). In this case, the relatively simple of act of
561 providing teas, coffees and packed lunches is an action in response to an inferred need; a nurturing
562 of those in the community. Reciprocally it appears that the referees acknowledged the welcome and

563 promoted the club to the federation. What is also interesting here is how the care labour did not fall
564 on the Head Coach, but other characters undertook this labour.

565 We needed volunteers. We've set up a parents' group. We approached a group of parents
566 with the intention to set up our volunteers group, basically asked them, would they be
567 interested in doing that. X amount came back and said "we'd love to do it". So they set up
568 their own group. They've got their own WhatsApp group where they self-manage. They've
569 got their own role. Who's buying the stock? Whose role is to do what? They've got their own
570 rota. They set up the whole thing. We as a staff have learned that "oh, this is so much easier
571 than we thought. We thought it was going to be a headache, to be honest". It's a flourishing
572 group and they're actually building relationships with each other. So you've got parents who
573 wouldn't even know each other, who decided, "yeah, I'd like to help out with that". What
574 does it look like now? well now there's a bit of banter there, they're building relationships,
575 and they're speaking well of each other, forming friendships.

576 With intentional attempts undertaken by the trustee and the parents, the tea and coffee area that
577 previously had been empty, has become a scene for publicly visibly caring activity and dialogue;

578 (Without undertaking action informed by the CCMCC) We probably would still be operating
579 as we have; hundreds of hundreds of members, people come through the facility each
580 weekend, and we weren't even providing teas and coffees. I know it's basic, but it's a game
581 changer! It really is, because there's a hub of social activity going on around that table. You
582 know, you go there, hang out, there's conversations happening that would never have. Then
583 there is the away team. They're buying coffees, so we shoot the breeze with the away team.
584 Whereas generally they would just get on the bus, go away.

585 A wider array of characters beyond the coach and athlete were now involved in providing and
586 receiving care. This extra support is essential to ensure the care labour of noticing and meeting
587 needs is undertaken. Doing so also moves care towards a micro-cultural norm (Hickey & Cronin,
588 2021). Imbued by this positive and impactful activity, undertaken by relatively 'dormant' members
589 of the club, the Head Coach was keen to spread care labour further.

590 New Scenes of Care
591

592 As the season progressed and shaped by the CCMCC's prompt to secure 'quick wins', the
593 Head Coach updated the action plan to capture and share good examples of care. To achieve this,
594 the guiding coalition and twenty-one full-time, part-time, and volunteer coaches contributed to a
595 shared document providing examples of care already happening within the club. A member of the
596 month award was subsequently announced via the club newsletter.

597 We sent out an e-mail with our first ever member of the month and we put a little blurb
598 beside it and said why. We didn't talk about care. We just talked about service to the club
599 and somebody who's there helping and reliable... So we gave it to a young man who's just
600 always there in terms of helping if we need a qualified table official and coaching at camps
601 etc. He's not on the best team, he's on the regional team, which is basically the B team, but
602 he's constantly turning up, working hard, helping out. The impact the award had was just
603 electric...

604 We got an e-mail from the parent that would almost bring a tear to your eye about the
605 impact it had on her son.

606 "He had a really tough year last year...but the team have been his lifeline and a safe
607 space and we're really grateful that you and all the coaches acknowledged him with
608 such a lovely award as member of the month."

609 And honestly, we sat in the office when the when the e-mail came through, we were like
610 "How many others could we have impacted like for the past? How many years?" It (the
611 award) was just simple. Not time consuming. It came up in our team meeting; who deserves
612 member of the month? We did it this Wednesday for the month for April.

613 Once more, involving the guiding coalition and others to notice, draw attention to, and reward
614 caring acts was key to the mission of developing a caring club. This is consistent with Noddings'
615 (2013) and Gano-Overway & Guivernau's,(2018) emphasis on modelling care. Powerfully, the Head
616 Coach felt these quick wins, as part of the learning mechanism, prompted further caring action
617 throughout. For instance,

618 One of the things going on in the club at the moment that has blown us away because it
619 seems to have just emerged. None of us (coaches) instigated it. We have a big foyer area.
620 The players have been saying "there's a space to hang out"; and they want couches (sofas)
621 to just hang out and stuff. So we put an e-mail out to all parents and said "we're not looking

622 for freebies, but if anyone has any thoughts or stuff they don't want...", and we ended up
623 with two couches (sofas) for free. Long story short, the kids have been hanging out a lot
624 more. But actually, what's happening now at least three times a week is, they've created
625 their own homework club ...One of the under 18 women's squad members was helping one
626 of her teammates with a particular subject she was struggling with in school before their
627 practise at like 6. This was going on from half four (16:30) to six (18:00). When I asked more I
628 found out they had made a plan to meet weekly to study together. This is continuing on
629 subsequent weeks with other members joining. It's just amazing. We (the coaches) haven't
630 done that.

631 Capturing, promoting and rewarding examples of care, appears to have led to more caring acts, in
632 different scenes, where different characters (e.g. parents, athletes) support each other needs. In this
633 case, players mentoring their peers and supporting with homework as part of visible virtuous cycle.
634 Such acts are reminiscent of positive peer interactions that may occur when care is experienced in
635 PE (Gano-Overway, 2013) or youth sport settings (Fry and Gano-Overway, 2010).

636

637 The Resolution and Coda

638

639 One of the players shared with us, that his granddad came and saw him play basketball for
640 the first time last week. This is a senior men's player. He has had different challenges in his
641 life to this point and some very different experiences. But he shared with us that it was
642 wonderful that his granddad came to watch him play. His granddad's observation was, I
643 quote, "I can see that you really belong here".

644 Through this story the Head Coach was keen to stress, a visible sense of belonging had been
645 developed as the end of season approached. For instance, the grandfather's (a new character)
646 reported recognition that his grandson was comfortable, accepted and supported in the club, starkly
647 contrasted with the initial confusion of how to care which was evident during the early months of
648 the season. Speculatively, we suggest that an improved sense of belonging may benefit athletes and
649 support Fisher et al.'s (2019) heuristic that links improved care to improved sporting performance.
650 Critically, while the caring culture may be temporally embodied by participants and empathetically

651 inferred by observers, it is not an end point. Rather the CCMCC is continuous, and non-linear, and
652 with an embedded learning cycle to reinforce learning and prompt development. Accordingly, I
653 challenged the Head Coach to revisit the vision and consider who may be in need as the season end
654 approaches. Recognising that some coaches will leave at the end of year, conversations soon
655 revolved around the inferred needs of those incoming coaches. Foreshadowing what may come, we
656 discussed the importance of upskilling these coaches to notice and where appropriate (e.g.,
657 technical and tactical aspects) support athletes' needs. Additionally, we also revisited the
658 signposting document that coaches may need for instances where athletes express needs that are
659 outside of their scope. Finally, we considered how existing coaches might support incoming coaches.

660 What we're talking about here is widening our lens to better support new members. For
661 example, writing a letter to the next person coming in. This could be very valuable because
662 someone else is going to learn from this person's experience or maybe relate to it. For the
663 current member they may feel valued as they would really need to think about what to write
664 because it's going to influence somebody else perhaps. People generally do things better if
665 you think you're helping somebody.

666 In this way, we returned to the cycle of the CCMCC. However, readers should interpret the success
667 of this with caution, as once more, while well-meaning, such actions reflect the inferred needs of
668 coaches, rather than expressed needs. Thus, once more the voices of the cared for are essential in
669 determining what is care.

670 Considerations and Conclusions

671 In this first account of using the theoretically informed Continuous Change Model for Caring Cultures
672 (CCMCC; Hickey & Cronin, 2021), the model served as useful guide for the Head Coach's quest to
673 build a caring culture. Across a longitudinal study of a sporting season, the emphasis on

- 674 1) Moving care labour from solely the role of the coach to others,
- 675 2) Selecting a guiding coalition from across the club to notice needs and intentionally support a
676 caring culture,
- 677 3) Undertaking actions that respond to inferred and expressed needs.

678 4) Utilising a learning mechanism to both reflect on incidents and also share positive examples
679 of care

680 proved valuable as a means of helping the coach establish conditions to support care. In a
681 contextualized insight that may advance the CCMCC, early challenges included the prevailing
682 cultures of amateurism, limitations on individuals' capacity and competence to meet others' needs,
683 and wider safeguarding norms and discourses. Clarifying what care is in this particular sporting
684 context was therefore key to the Head Coach's quest. This may be a useful consideration for others
685 seeking to implement the CCMCC, within their context. Additionally, the Head Coach's quest was
686 aided by empowering others across the club and visibly modelling and rewarding care. In time more
687 characters undertook care labour in unexpectant scenes within the club, and incidences of care were
688 deemed to increase.

689 In providing these largely positive narrative insights, we do not seek to proclaim that the
690 CCMCC is unproblematic, the case study basketball club *is* a wholly virtuous organisation, nor that an
691 ethic of care entirely or permanently permeates the culture. Our reticence to do so reflects the
692 complexity and dynamism of interpersonal relationships, the evidence that bad practices occur even
693 in those contexts that appear to be successful in a sporting sense (see Whyte, 2022), and Noddings'
694 (2013) view that care is subjectively and relationally experienced. On that basis it is for those in
695 need, in any given temporal moment (e.g., players, parents etc), to determine if any club has a caring
696 culture. More broadly, others also critically question whether care is truly enacted without
697 challenging the prevailing and wider systems that often marginalise those with greatest needs (e.g.,
698 Gearity, et al., 2023). For instance, is a homework club truly caring if it does not authentically
699 challenge the education, housing and employments systems that mean not all young people have
700 safe places to study? Thus, for several reasons we are reluctant to make definitive pronouncements of
701 care, and we encourage readers to be cautious as they consider the transferability of the stories in
702 this study to their own context.

703 In sum, the insights herein, developed through structural narrative analysis, provide
704 reflective prompts for others seeking to develop caring cultures in their sports and organisations.
705 Evidence suggests this action is necessary in the UK (see Whyte, 2022; Lang, 2021) and elsewhere
706 (see McMahon, McGannon, Zehntner, & Brighton, 2025), as a means of developing more caring
707 cultures. To advance this agenda, we recognise the value of the collaborative research undertaken.
708 Specifically, the monthly meetings and ‘inter views’ enabled the coach to revisit the CCMCC model
709 (Hickey & Cronin, 2021), and provide opportunities that led to the constructing and sharing of
710 stories. To supplement this work, we encourage policy makers, coaches and researchers to build on
711 the longitudinal and theoretically informed narrative presented here by utilising co-constructed
712 interventions, collaborative action research, and communities of practice studies with multivocal
713 inputs. In particular, we need to hear from the cared for, and we also need to explore the influence
714 of caring cultures on sport performance. Doing so will provide further understanding and illustrative
715 resources to support caring cultures in sporting contexts.

716 Bibliography

- 717 Andersson, J., Öhman, M., & Garrison, J. (2018). Physical education teaching as a caring act—
718 techniques of bodily touch and the paradox of caring. *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(6),
719 591-606. doi:10.1080/13573322.2016.1244765
- 720 Annerstedt, C., & Eva-Carin, L. (2014). Caring as an important foundation in coaching for social
721 sustainability: a case study of a successful Swedish coach in high-performance sport.
722 *Reflective Practice*, 15(1), 27-39. doi:10.1080/14623943.2013.869204
- 723 Bell, N. J. (2009). Making connections: Considering the dynamics of narrative stability from a
724 relational approach. *Narrative Inquiry*, 19(2), 280-305. doi:10.1075/ni.19.2.05bel
- 725 Book, R. T., Svensson, J., & Stambulova, N. (2024). Narrative research in sport and exercise science in
726 the early 21st century: a state-of-the-art critical review. *Qualitative Research in Sport,
727 Exercise and Health*, 16(6), 567-597. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2024.2374827
- 728 Bowes, I., & Jones, R. L. (2006). Working at the edge of chaos: Understanding coaching as a complex,
729 interpersonal system. *The Sport Psychologist*, 20(2), 235-245. doi:10.1123/tsp.20.2.235
- 730 Brazier, R., Lara-Bercial, S., Hill, M., Hodgson, G., & Megicks, B. S. (2025). The UK Youth Sport
731 Coaching Workforce Report. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 1(aop), 1-9.
732 doi:10.1123/iscj.2024-0122

- 733 Brodeur, J. F., Schellenberg, B. J., & Tamminen, K. A. (2023). When hockey parents are motivationally
734 imbalanced: Passion, need satisfaction, and verbal aggression toward officials. *Psychology of*
735 *Sport and Exercise*, 69, 102506. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2023.102506
- 736 By, R. T. (2005). Organisational change management: A critical review. *Journal of Change*
737 *Management*, 5(4), 369-380. doi:10.1080/14697010500359250
- 738 Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative*
739 *research* (1 ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 740 Miller, S. C. (2005). Need, care and obligation. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements*, 57, 137-
741 160. doi:10.1017/S1358246100009188
- 742 Corsby, C. L., Jones, R., & Lane, A. (2023). Contending with vulnerability and uncertainty: What
743 coaches say about coaching. *Sports coaching review*, 12(3), 323-342. doi:
744 10.1080/21640629.2022.2057697
- 745 Cronin, C. (2023). Care in sport coaching; different perspectives and alternative voices. *Sports*
746 *Coaching Review*, 12(1), 1-5. doi:10.1080/21640629.2022.2164836
- 747 Cronin, C., & Armour, K. (2018). *Care in Sport Coaching: Pedagogical Cases*. London: Routledge.
- 748 Cronin, C., Hayton, J., Hjälml, S., & Armour, K. (2019). The cost of caring: Dave's story. In C. Cronin &
749 K. Armour (Eds.), *Care in sport coaching* (pp. 113–135). New York, NY: Routledge.
- 750 Day, D. (2015). *A History of Sports Coaching in Britain: Overcoming Amateurism*. London: Routledge.
- 751 Denison, J., Mills, J.P., & Konoval, T. (2017) Sports' disciplinary legacy and the challenge of 'coaching
752 differently', *Sport, Education and Society*, 22(6), 772-783, doi:
753 10.1080/13573322.2015.1061986
- 754 Dohsten, J., Barker-Ruchti, N., & Lindgren, E. C. (2020). Caring as sustainable coaching in elite
755 athletics: Benefits and challenges. *Sports Coaching Review*, 9(1), 48-70.
756 doi:10.1080/21640629.2018.1558896
- 757 Edwards, C. N., & Milton, D. (2025). The coach as cultural architect: an exploration into the
758 knowledge, skills and behaviours of elite rugby union coaches. *Physical Education and Sport*
759 *Pedagogy*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2025.2562570>
- 760 Enright, K., Knowles, Z. R., & Cronin, C. (2020). The challenge to care in a Premier League Football
761 Club. *Sports Coaching Review*, 9(2), 123-146. doi:10.1080/21640629.2019.1578593
- 762 Fisher, L. A., Larsen, L. K., Bejar, M. P., & Shigeno, T. C. (2019). A heuristic for the relationship
763 between caring coaching and elite athlete performance. *International Journal of Sports*
764 *Science & Coaching*(14), 126-137. doi:10.1177/1747954119827192
- 765 Fry, M. D., & Gano-Overway, L. (2010). Exploring the contribution of the caring climate to the youth
766 sport experience. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 22(3), 294-304.
767 doi:10.1080/10413201003776352
- 768 Gano-Overway, L. A. (2013). Exploring the connections between caring and social behaviors in
769 physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 84(1), 104-114.
770 doi:10.1080/02701367.2013.762322

- 771 Gano-Overway, L. A., & Guivernau, M. (2018). Setting the SCENE: Developing a caring youth sport
772 environment. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 9(2), 83-93.
773 doi:10.1080/21520704.2017.1343214
- 774 Gano-Overway, L. A., & Peteron, M. C. (2023). Connections between caring climate, self-compassion,
775 self-pity, and reactions to an emotionally difficult sport situation. *Psychology of Sport and
776 Exercise*, 67, 102420. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2023.102428
- 777 Gearity, B. (2012). Coach as Unfair and Uncaring. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in
778 Education*, 6(2), 173-200. doi:10.1179/ssa.2012.6.2.173
- 779 Gearity, B. T., Fisher, L. A., Yandt, A., Perugini, A., Knust, S. K., Bejar, M. P., . . . Fynesj, J. M. (2023).
780 Deconstructing caring in the coach athlete relationship: a gentler form of domination. *Sports
781 Coaching Review*, 12(1), 6-26. doi:10.1080/21640629.2021.1936959
- 782 Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing
783 Group.
- 784 Grey-Thompson, T. (2017). *Duty of Care in Sport*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- 785 Griffin, M., & Phoenix, C. (2014). Becoming a runner: Big, middle and small stories about physical
786 activity participation in later life. *Sport, Education and Society*, 22(3), 393-404.
787 doi:10.1080/13573322.2015.1066770
- 788 Hägglund, K., Wagstaff, C. R., Kenttä, G., & Thelwell, R. (2024). Starting a conversation about
789 vulnerability in elite sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology in action*, 15(1), 19-29. doi:
790 10.1080/21520704.2023.2207481
- 791 Hay, J. (2019). 'Care is not a dirty word!' Enacting an ethic of care in social work practice. *European
792 Journal of Social Work*, 22(3), 365-375. doi:10.1080/13691457.2017.1399253
- 793 Henriksen, K., Dideriksen, S., Kuettel, A., Schlawe, A., & Storm, L. K. (2025). The coach as an architect
794 of Danish high-performance sport environments. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 80,
795 102877. doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2025.102877
- 796 Hickey, C., & Cronin, C. (2021). Developing caring cultures in football: a model for practice and
797 change. In N. Campbell, A. Brady, & A. Tincknell-Smith, *Developing and Supporting Athlete
798 Wellbeing* (pp. 150-166). London: Routledge.
- 799 International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE)(2012) International Sport Coaching Framework,
800 Human Kinetics
- 801 Ives, B. A., Gale, L. A., Potrac, P. A., & Nelson, L. J. (2021). Uncertainty, shame and consumption:
802 Negotiating occupational and non-work identities in community sports coaching. *Sport,
803 Education and Society*, 26(1), 87-103. doi:10.1080/13573322.2019.1699522
- 804 Jones, R. L., Potrac, P., Cushion, C., & Ronglan, L.T. (2010). Erving Goffman: Interaction and
805 impression management: Playing the coaching role. R. L. Jones, P. Potrac, C. Cushion, & L.T.,
806 Ronglan (Eds.), *The sociology of sports coaching* (pp. 23-34). Routledge. doi:
807 10.4324/9780203865545
- 808 Kjaer, J., Bjärsholm, D., Fahlström, P., & Linnér, S. (2023). Breaking through? Exploring care in the
809 early life of elite Swedish athletes. *Sports Coaching Review*, 12(1), 68-86.
810 doi:10.1080/21640629.2022.2057695

- 811 Knust, S. K., & Fisher, L. A. (2015). NCAA Division I Female Head Coaches' Experiences of Exemplary
812 Care Within Coaching. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 2(2), 94-107.
- 813 Krahn, A. N. (2024). Precarity in sport coaching: Exploring the working conditions of Canadian
814 university sports coaches. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 59(7), 994-
815 1011. doi: 10.1177/10126902241246579
- 816 Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing Interviews* (1 ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- 817 Lang, M. (2021). *Routledge Handbook of Athlete Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- 818 Larty, J., & Hamilton, E. (2011). Structural approaches to narrative analysis in entrepreneurship
819 research: Exemplars from two researchers. *International Small Business Journal*, 29(3), 220-
820 237. doi:10.1177/0266242611401796
- 821 Lewis, C. J., Sawiuk, R., & Grimes, S. (2023). "It looks like he cares, but he doesn't.": athletes'
822 experiences of "good" and "bad" care in women's football. *Sports Coaching Review*, 12(1),
823 108-123. doi:10.1080/21640629.2022.2045137
- 824 Lundqvist, A., & Nilstun, T. (2009). Noddings's caring ethics theory applied in a paediatric
825 setting. *Nursing Philosophy*, 10(2), 113-123. doi: 10.1111/j.1466-769X.2008.00391.x
- 826 Lyle, J. (2002) *Sports Coaching Concepts*, Routledge
- 827 Mercer, R. A., Russell, J. L., Strack, D. S., Coutts, A. J., & McLean, B. D. (2025). Work Demands,
828 Responses, and Coping Strategies for Staff in High-Performance Sport: A Scoping Review.
829 *Sports Medicine*, 1-58. doi: 10.1007/s40279-025-02324-0
- 830 McHaffie, S., Langan-Evans, C., Morehan, J. C., Strauss, J. A., Areta, J. L., Rosimus, C., . . . Morton, J. P.
831 (2022). Normalising the conversation: a qualitative analysis of player and stakeholder
832 perceptions of menstrual health support within elite female soccer. *Science and Medicine in*
833 *Football*, 6(5), 633-642. doi:10.1080/24733938.2022.2145349
- 834 McMahon, J., McGannon, K. R., Zehntner, C., & Brighton, J. (2025). Implementing trauma-informed
835 approaches to coaches' workplaces in sport to enhance their safety and wellbeing: A critical
836 commentary. *Sports Coaching Review*. doi:10.1080/21640629.2025.2487754
- 837 Morris, S. V., Fisher, L. A., Moore, M. A., Schools, J. A., Knust, S. K., & Christy, Z. (2023). "Make
838 someone love something and share your passion": Perceptions of coach caring amongst Elite
839 women's rugby sevens athletes. *Sports Coaching Review*, 12(1), 87-107.
840 doi:10.1080/21640629.2021.1955460
- 841 Moustakas, L., & Bales, J. (2022). Developing recommendations for European sport coaching policy:
842 The PEAK Project. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 10(1), 121-125.
843 doi:10.1123/iscj.2022-0036
- 844 Noddings, N. (2002) *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy*, Berkeley: University
845 of California Press.
- 846 Noddings, N (2005) *The challenge to care in schools*. Teachers College Press.
- 847 Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education*. Cambridge University Press.

- 848 Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley: University
849 of California Press.
- 850 Noddings, N. (2015). Care ethics and “caring” organizations. In D. Engster & M. Hamington (Eds).
851 Care ethics and political theory (pp. 72-84). Oxford University Press
- 852 Norris, L. A., Didymus, F.F., & Kaiseler, M. (2017) Stressors, coping, and well-being among sports
853 coaches: A systematic review. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* (33) 93-112.
854 doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.08.005
- 855 Papathomas, A. (2016). Narrative inquiry: From cardinal to marginal... and back? In B. Smith, & A.
856 Sparkes, *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport* (pp. 59-70). London:
857 Routledge.
- 858 Partington, N. (2021). *Coaching, sport and the law: A duty of care*. Routledge.
- 859 Potrac, P. & Jones, R. (2009) Power, Conflict, and Cooperation: Toward a Micropolitics of Coaching,
860 *Quest*, 61:2, 223-236, doi: 10.1080/00336297.2009.10483612
- 861 Ryou, J., Cushion, C., Rhind, D., & Cope, E. (2025). Understanding in-situ complexities: a scoping
862 review on the trends of qualitative method design and practice in coach–athlete dialogue
863 studies. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1-25. doi:10.1080/13573322.2025.2480717
- 864 Smith, B., & McGannon, K. R. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and
865 opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and*
866 *Exercise Psychology*, 11(1), 101-121. doi:10.1080/1750984X.2017.1317357
- 867 Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2009). Judging the quality of qualitative inquiry: Criteriology and
868 relativism in action. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 10(5), 491-497.
869 doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.02.006
- 870 Taylor, B., & Garratt, D. (2010). The professionalisation of sports coaching: definitions, challenges
871 and critique. In J. Lyle & C. Cushion (Eds) *Sports coaching: Professionalisation and practice*,
872 99-117. Churchill Livingstone.
- 873 Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: eight “big-tent” Criteria for excellent qualitative research.
874 *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851. doi:10.1177/1077800410383121
- 875 Whyte, A. (2022). *The Whyte Review*. London: Sport England and UK Sport.
- 876
- 877