

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

TOP 10 TIPS FOR ATHLETES

TRANSITIONS

As an athlete, how you plan and prepare can make a big difference to how you develop and perform in your sport. The same applies for your personal growth and your future beyond the World Class Programme (WCP) and its funding.

We're not just talking about retiring from elite sport either, the point at which you come off the WCP, may be the point you turn professional in your sport, decide to self-fund with the ambition to return onto the WCP, talent transfer into another sport or explore a different career path.

Here are some top tips from the UKSI Performance Lifestyle (PL) team on ways to develop yourself and prepare for your future whilst you're on a WCP. The team are here to support you with this and how to navigate the change this brings when the time comes.

FIND OUT MORE

For further information or support in preparing for your transition from a World Class Programme, please speak to your Performance Lifestyle Practitioner or contact the UKSI's central Performance Lifestyle team at PL.Futures@uksportsinstitute.co.uk



LEARN HOW TO MANAGE CHANGE

In life change is inevitable and in elite sport you'll go through many changes. It could be a move to a centralised programme, a change in coach, going from a junior to senior team, changes to your classification, injury, or a change in your funding levels. Each change is an opportunity to learn how you best manage change and uncertainty.

Through learning from your experiences and the support of your PL practitioner, you can grow your understanding of how you manage change and identify and develop the skills and strengths that you can use to navigate it.

Coming off a WCP can involve a huge amount of change, personally in terms of your identity and purpose as well as practically across areas such as your finances or where you live. Developing your ability and confidence to manage change is great preparation for this and life.



DEVELOP A BROADER IDENTITY #MORE2ME

The UKSI PL #More2Me philosophy promotes all elite athletes developing a more-rounded identity. Being an athlete is likely to mean you have a strong athletic identity, however if your sport is the only thing that defines you, it can make your transition from elite sport more challenging.

Whilst you're pursuing your sport, having interests, passions, and a life alongside it can benefit you and your performance, and can provide you with useful perspective during more challenging times. As part of downtime strategies, athletes also say spending time on other interests and passions can help them to feel more balanced and refreshed.

Take the opportunity to develop your identity and life alongside your sport, knowing it will support your future and the transition off and beyond a WCP.



DISCOVER AND GET TO KNOW YOURSELF

As you grow and progress throughout your sporting career, you can discover and get to know yourself. Through the work you can do with your PL practitioner, you can explore your needs, values, strengths, passions, and future aspirations. These things can help you make decisions about what you need and your next steps, as well as giving you confidence in who you are and your value beyond sport.



USE YOUR UK SPORT PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD (PDA)

When it comes to exploring your interests and passions, your personal and professional development or taking care of your mental health and wellbeing, there's no better way than making full use of your PDA.

By supporting the costs associated with relevant activities and opportunities, using the PDA benefits you whilst you're an athlete and can help you to prepare and develop for your future too. It's also available for you to access for when transitioning from the WCP (up to 12-months after your last APA payment). For more information reach out to your PL practitioner.



BE CURIOUS AND BUILD YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Your network is your net worth or so the saying goes. At some point you might be looking for a development opportunity or links to a particular industry etc, and as athletes you get to meet lots of people! Therefore, building your professional and personal networks is something to really capitalise on during your career in elite sport.

Our top tips are to be curious when you meet people and chat to them about what they do for a living, set-up a LinkedIn profile so you can add people that you meet at events etc, join the BEAA Athlete Alumni, take the time to follow-up with people that you meet and thank those that help you along the way.



TAKE STEPS TO LOOK AFTER YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH

Financial insecurity can have a big impact on our mental health and well-being. When you transition from the WCP, this is likely to be a time when your financial situation will change in some way. Your APA will come to an end and any income from prize money or sponsorship deals may also change. At the same time, you may have the same or a different level of financial commitment and responsibility for things such as your house or car.

There are steps you can take to prepare for this and it's important to seek expert advice so that you can take the right financial steps for you and your future. Your PL practitioner can signpost you to expert financial support so reach out if this is an area you'd like to focus on.



VALUE AND USE YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT NETWORK

A study by Olympic medallist Goldie Sayers, found friends and family were the most important source of support during an athlete's transition. Your friends, family, and anyone else you have in your personal support network will be your biggest supporters as you travel through the highs, lows, and experiences of elite sport. Take steps to build and recognise who you have in your support network and learn how to use that support throughout your career. Likewise, take care of your support network, there'll be times they need your support too.

Show how much you appreciate them throughout your career, not only will that support be a boost and a help when you're on a WCP, it will also help you manage the change and emotion that a transition from the WCP may bring for you.



EXPLORE THE WORLD OF WORK

The world of work is evolving, and career related reports and statistics tell us that it's normal to make a number of career changes in your lifetime. In fact, that can be part of the process of finding the career that's right for you.

Career development is one of the areas your PL practitioner can support you with during your time on the WCP. Whether the start point is exploring your career interests and drivers or identifying ways and windows in your year to gain work experience, there are a variety of ways that you can explore, prepare, and qualify yourself for future careers.



BUILD YOUR WELL-BEING FOUNDATION

Learning what contributes to you feeling good and functioning well is part of what enables you to take care of your mental health and well-being.

By learning what enables you to thrive and be at your best, and cope during challenging times you are building your wellbeing foundation.

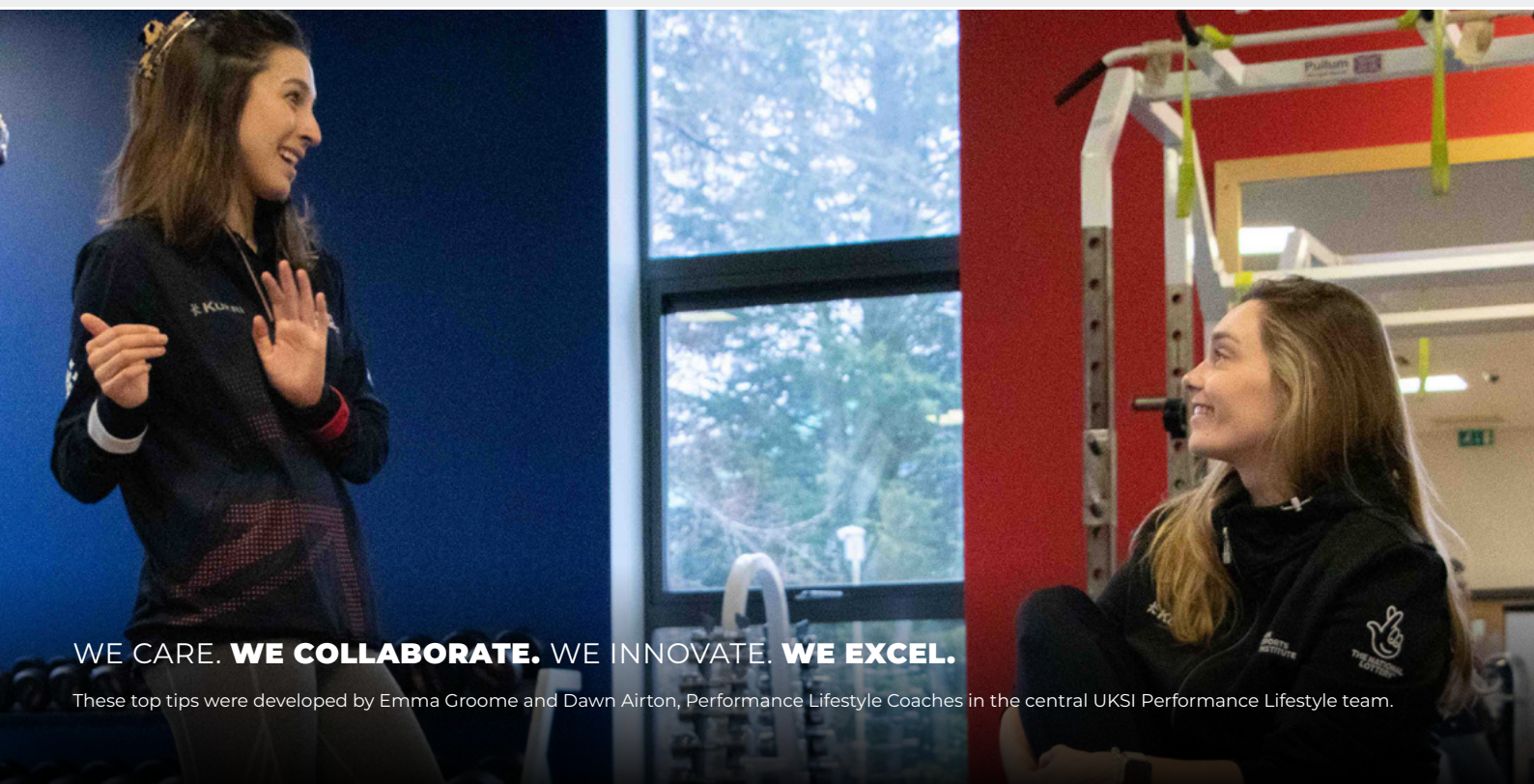
Athletes say having this foundation in place is important. It helps you embrace the unique demands and opportunities of your sport and performing at an elite level. It also really helps when faced with some of the bigger life questions that transitioning off a WCP can raise such as who am I? What is my purpose in life now?



MAKE USE OF PERFORMANCE LIFESTYLE!

Performance Lifestyle is there to support you as you transition onto, through and from a WCP, and is available for up to 2-years after your WCP funding ends. Delivered by PL practitioners who are integrated members of the sport science and medicine team you can access as a WCP athlete, the support focuses on 6 areas: education, career development, learning and development, financial health, transitions and mental health and wellbeing.

Make the most of this support, your PL practitioner can support you to bring to life these top tips. Whether developing your understanding of yourself or helping you to build a CV or set-up a LinkedIn profile there are lots of ways we can support you now, that could also benefit your future.



WE CARE. WE COLLABORATE. WE INNOVATE. WE EXCEL.

These top tips were developed by Emma Groome and Dawn Airton, Performance Lifestyle Coaches in the central UKSI Performance Lifestyle team.