

SUPPORTING OFFBOARDING TRANSITIONS

BEST PRACTICE SCENARIOS



This resource provides three scenarios that illustrate best practice related to offboarding transitions for athletes. This guidance will require contextual adaptations according to the unique needs and resources of each NSO/sport.



INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATIONS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY ADAPTATION

- Exiting the sport
- Staying connected to sport
- Seeking re-entry
- Undecided

Journey

- Voluntary
- Involuntary
- Planned
- Unplanned

Reason/nature

- Immediate
- Extended/longer term
- Unknown

Timeframe

Preparation and support

- Career planning
- Personal/professional networks
- Health and wellbeing resources

Important considerations for all sports:

- Clarify the process and specific support that is provided by HPSNZ and/or the NSO (this can vary by sport) – e.g.,
 - Establish specifically Who is conducting the offboarding transition interview
 - Determine the timeline of who engages at which point (e.g., NSO, Performance Life)
 - Identify the actions and a clear plan that emerges from interviews
 - Implement an articulated communications strategy (e.g., clarify who the athlete can expect to hear from, ensure all relevant parties are providing aligned messages)
- Ensure that the type of support offered is consistent with the most current Periodic Health Evaluation (PHE)



Scenario 1

ASPIRATIONAL SPORT ATHLETE

Individual considerations:

Exiting the sport / Immediate / Involuntary

Mary is a 23-year-old HP Elite (TAPS athlete) swimmer who has won three 1500m Freestyle World Championship titles. Following the most recent World Championships, she incurred a significant shoulder injury and was advised by her medical team that it was career ending. Mary was guided to meet with her support team over the course of the next few weeks to begin planning for her offboarding transition. The team included her coach, family/whānau, sport psychologist, medical lead and other athlete performance support services as determined by the offboarding transition interview and regular discussions. Mary's goals, concerns, and preferences were explored through open and curiosity-driven conversations.

After connecting with the designated HPSNZ support staff to coordinate efforts (e.g., Performance Life lead), the Swimming NZ wellbeing lead aligned needs and resources among all parties to inform subsequent processes. A contextualised transition support plan was co-developed, which considered Mary's individual journey, the involuntary nature of her transition and her broader wellbeing and identity beyond sport. Clarity was provided regarding information sharing, privacy, communication frequency and format (including rollout of information to teammates), and roles and responsibilities across the system. Additionally, it was clarified to the athlete who they could anticipate hearing from in relation to their support plan, and who they could reach out to with any questions.

Throughout her transition, Wellbeing, Psychology, Performance Life, and health resources were proactively incorporated to support her rehabilitation, continued sense of connection, and anticipated next steps related to her long-term career plans.



Scenario 2

TEAM SPORT ATHLETE

Individual considerations:

Exiting the sport / Immediate / Voluntary / Planned

Caleb is a 24-year-old basketball player who is transitioning out of the Tall Blacks team after several successful seasons. In the year prior to his departure, Caleb made a deliberate decision to shift his professional focus toward a career in property development. Recognising the significance of this change, he sought guidance from his coach to discuss his future plans.

In response, Caleb's coach worked with him to determine an optimal exit plan related to training and competition. In addition, his coach referred him to the team's Performance Life coach to develop a tailored transition support plan alongside their exit plan work. The collaborative approach was essential to successfully managing the transition. Those who formed his offboarding transition team (as noted above) agreed to develop a shared transition plan – this was also documented in a secure, password protected platform to safeguard Caleb's privacy and confidentiality.

The offboarding team also agreed on communication protocols, including how often they would meet and which meeting formats would best suit Caleb's preferences and needs. This collaborative structure allowed the group to work consistently and deliberately over the course of a year, rather than approaching the transition as a single event.

By taking a planned, well-paced approach, the team aimed to support a smooth and healthy transition for Caleb, while also acknowledging the importance of his personal identity and ongoing relationship with basketball. Although Caleb would no longer be directly connected to the sport in a professional capacity, the transition plan was designed to preserve his positive connection to the game and support his long-term wellbeing beyond high performance sport.

Scenario 3

PODIUM SPORT PARA ATHLETE

Individual considerations:

Staying connected to sport / Timeframe unknown / Unplanned

Sylvia is a 19-year-old HP Potential (TAPS athlete) Para athletics runner who was recently deselected from the World Para Athletics Championships team due to changes in the event's classification criteria. Although she is based full-time in Australia, Sylvia was supported by her National Sporting Organisation (NSO) based in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Following her deselection, the NSO connected with HPSNZ to discuss the athlete's options, including funding/support. Following this discussion, HPSNZ confirmed that her existing training conditions, funding, and overall performance support would remain in place for six months, noting that their case could potentially be reviewed after six months.

Despite this continued support, Sylvia experienced significant distress following the setback and uncertainty about how future changes to international classification regulations might affect her eligibility and long-term prospects within elite sport in Aotearoa New Zealand. In response, Sylvia's support team followed up with her directly after the updated selection criteria were released to provide her targeted assistance through the offboarding transition.

In particular, Sylvia's primary offboarding team included her High Performance Athlete Support Manager, Coach, Sport Psychologist, Medical Lead, case manager (when applicable, as part of formalised wraparound public health support), and Performance Life representative from Athletics New Zealand. Together, the team agreed to prioritise Sylvia's mental health and wellbeing while continuing to support her as she decided what her next steps would be – competitive and personal. To ensure responsiveness and adaptability, the offboarding plan was formally reviewed and updated every two weeks, as agreed by the group at the outset.

As part of this process, the team identified and mapped relevant health and wellbeing resources within Sylvia's local community to ensure she had appropriate support available where she was living and training. The High Performance Athlete Support Manager and Coach led efforts related to classification enquiries and follow-up with World Para Athletics, with ongoing discussion that included Sylvia. Additionally, it was clarified to Sylvia who she could anticipate hearing from in relation to her offboarding plan, and who she could reach out to with any questions. At her request, she took on responsibility for updating the shared documentation and communicating key developments to the group. Following each significant update, the team reconvened to review the situation and adjust action plans as needed.

After six months, further changes introduced by World Para Athletics, following rules set by the International Paralympic Committee, resulted in classification requirements that ultimately required Sylvia to reconsider her long-term sporting goals. During the subsequent meeting, the offboarding team reorganised its approach and began planning for Sylvia to step away from Para athletics competition in a gradual and supported manner. This included investigation into any opportunities for a Para sport transfer to another Para sport, and also examining an (alternative pathway that would allow her to remain connected to the sport by transitioning into an assistant coaching role, as she had expressed an interest in this career path and begun her Bachelors in Sport Science by way of an Athlete Prime Minister Scholarship during her competition years.

