

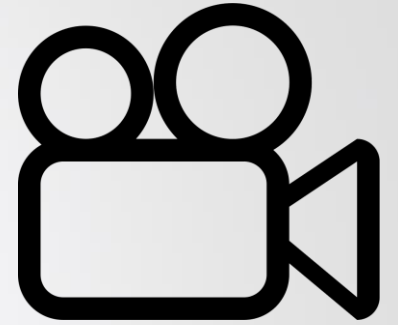
Age Group Rules Change Proposal

20th September 2023



Recording and Follow Up information

- This webinar will be recorded.
- If you would prefer to switch your camera's off, please do so.
- Please ensure your microphone is on mute.
- If you have any questions or comments, please can you hold these to the end, when we will have a Q & A session.
- If you are happy to type your questions in the chat function as well, this would be helpful.
- The recording of this webinar along with the slides covered and associated research will be shared following this session.



Phases of Age Group Discussions

Phase
One

Phase
Two

Phase
Three

Phase
Four

Insight and
Research
within the
sport

Submission
of the
proposal for
change

Consultation
period with the
sport

Final decision
and actions

Current state of the nation(s)

- Decreasing numbers and increased dropout throughout the sport
- Main age(s) for dropout are 14 to 16 and 18 to 20 years
- Young people are specialising too early
- Research and Insight has provided some key indicators to the possible reasons why.



Increase Retention and Recruitment

Using multiple approaches to help decrease drop out and increase retention

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graph TD; A[Using multiple approaches to help decrease drop out and increase retention] --> B[Personal Rewards]; A --> C[Adapted Competitions]; A --> D[Decrease Pressure on Young People at key ages]; A --> E[Athlete voice and choice];
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Personal
Rewards

Adapted
Competitions

Decrease
Pressure on
Young People
at key ages

Athlete voice
and choice

Focus for this session

The discussion on whether to change the age groupings has existed for several years now.

The shift to an U12, U14, U16, U18, U20 system, would fall in-line with the World Athletics age groups and most other countries around the world.

But this shouldn't be the only driver.

So, should we consider changing the age groups and what are the benefits?

It should be noted that the proposal is for the competition year to remain the same, i.e. 1st September to 31st August.

RAGE AGE GROUP CHART					
SEASON	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Birth Year					
2021					U5
2020				U5	U6
2019			U5	U6	U7
2018		U5	U6	U7	U8
2017	U5	U6	U7	U8	U9
2016	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10
2015	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11
2014	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
2013	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13
2012	U10	U11	U12	U13	U14
2011	U11	U12	U13	U14	U15
2010	U12	U13	U14	U15	U16
2009	U13	U14	U15	U16	U17
2008	U14	U15	U16	U17	U18
2007	U15	U16	U17	U18	U19
2006	U16	U17	U18	U19	
2005	U17	U18	U19		
2004	U18	U19			
2003	U19				



Key Reasons

Participation and Development Focus

1. Avoiding the clash of exam pressure with top of age group competition.
2. Avoiding age group being split over Primary and Secondary Schools.
3. Introduction of a New age group (U12s).
4. Creation of formal U18 age-group allowing for better transition to the U20s.
5. Better gradual progression for some technical events, such as hurdles and throws.

Performance Focus

6. Better alignment with the Talent Pathway.
7. Changing the age groups would fall in line with World Athletics age groupings and most other countries.

Key reasons to change?

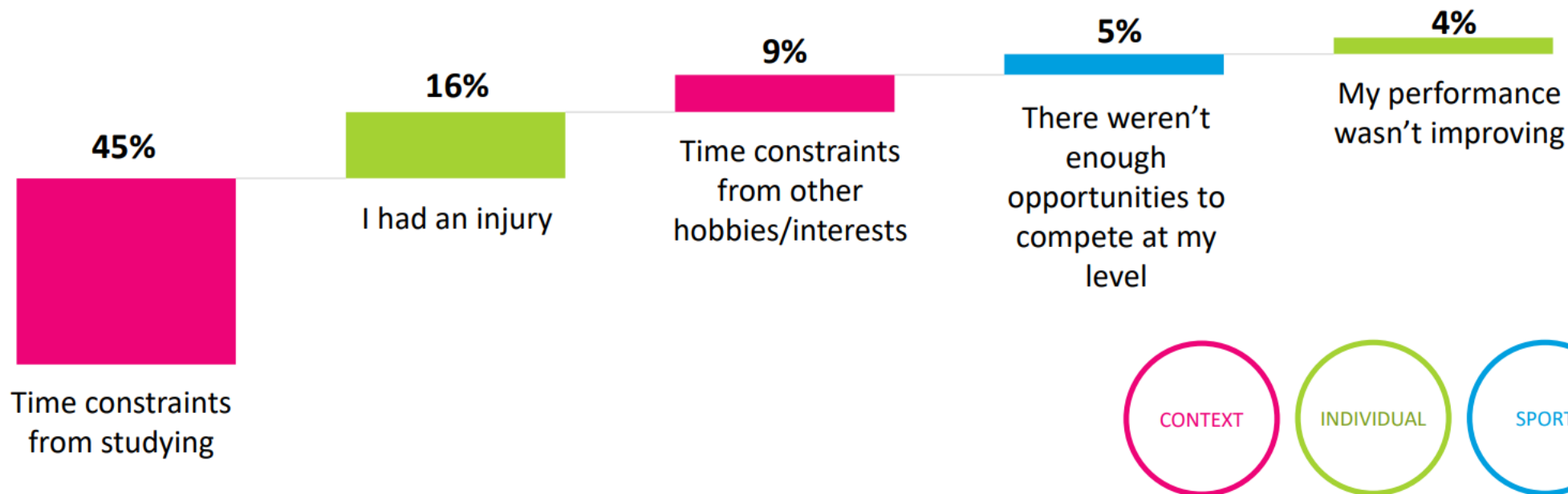
1. Avoiding the clash of exam pressure with top of age group competition.
 - For U17 & some U20 athletes (born September to December), their top year of the age group falls on the same year as either their GCSE or A- Level exams.
 - This puts major pressure on the young athlete both academically and with regards to competition, referred to as the '**Perfect Storm**'.
 - This has been cited as one of the key reasons for athlete drop out in research conducted in 2011 and 2018.





TURF analysis helps to pull this apart, establishing time constraints from studies as the most crucial influencer on lapsing. Injuries have the second largest influence

TURF analysis – top 5 unique reasons for lapsing



Aiding young athletes through the high pressure experience of balancing exams and training is paramount to future retention

This is particularly evident at critical exam times (namely GCSE's and A-Levels), when the highest proportion of athletes will lapse, after many years of engagement



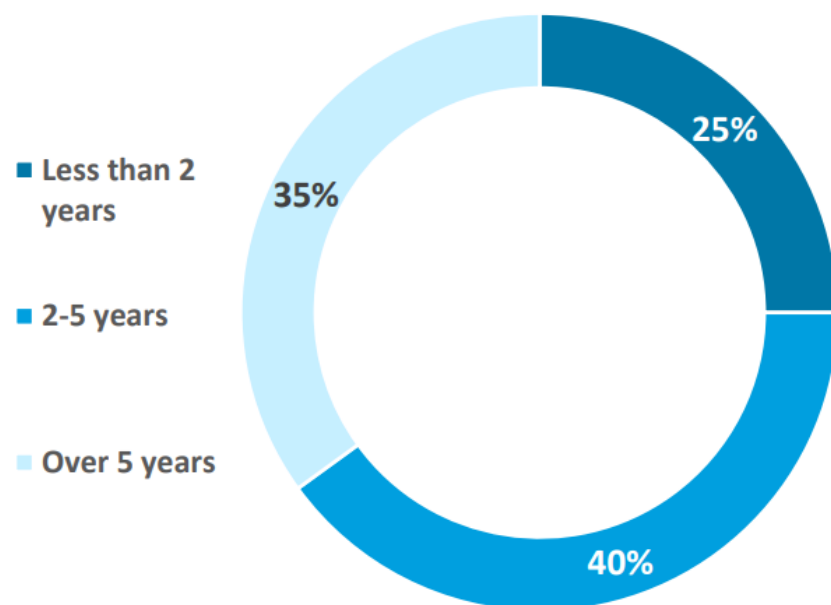
Context

Individual

Sport

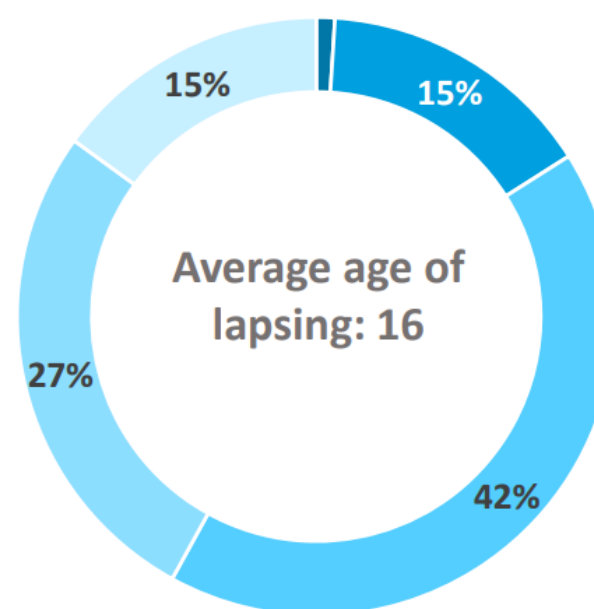


Length of participation
(lapsed only)



Age of lapsing

- Primary
- Lower secondary
- Upper secondary
- College
- University



"There is so much pressure to do well in your exams, that it just becomes your only focus. There was too much expected in me both at school and in athletics that it became too much" Lapsed, female, thrower

As a result, young people's life journey and athletics journey can conflict and create a 'perfect storm' of tension points...



Context

Individual

Sport



Primary

U11

- Athletics in primary school is fun, can try things and whether you fail/succeed it doesn't matter. Can experiment with different disciplines and have a good time.

Lower secondary

U15

- Get noticed by sports teacher
- Begin an informal relationship with an athletics club
- Haven't necessarily specialised
- Still benefit from early maturation use 'natural' talent.

Upper secondary

U17

- **15+ athletics becomes serious.**
- Competition gets intense and it becomes all about winning
- No longer try everything, have to specialise in one or two disciplines
- Commitment is everything. Have to train 4 x 2hrs a week or more and it no longer feels fun. It can become quite lonely and boring
- Long all day competitions on a Saturday or Sunday.
- 'Natural' talent often evaporates as everyone else catches up

College

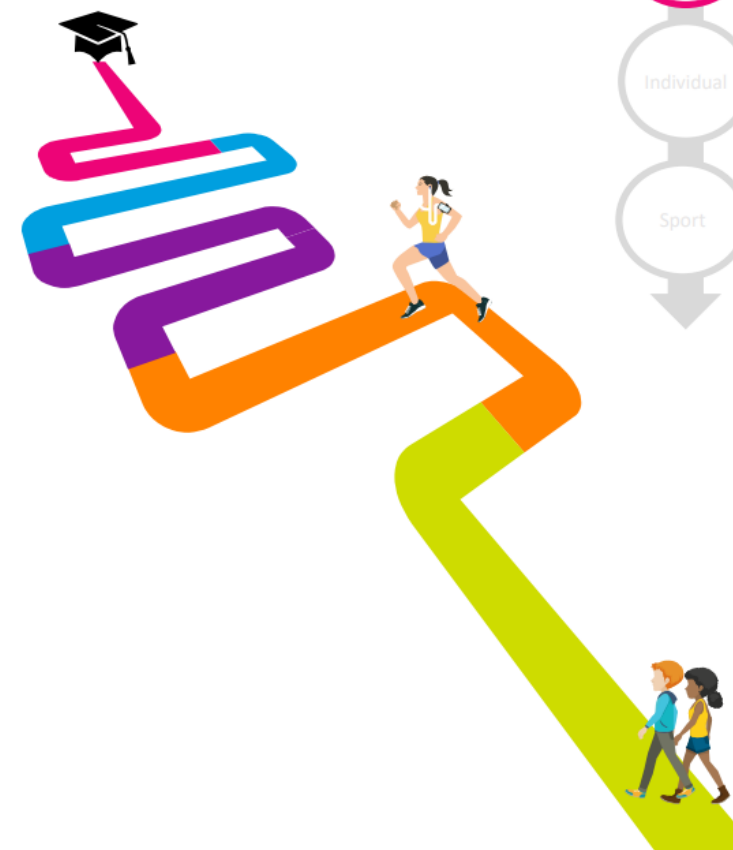
U20

- Young athletes are often forced to make a choice and decide whether they prioritise: their job/future/career or athletics
- Already know if 'they're good enough' and whether it's a legitimate profession

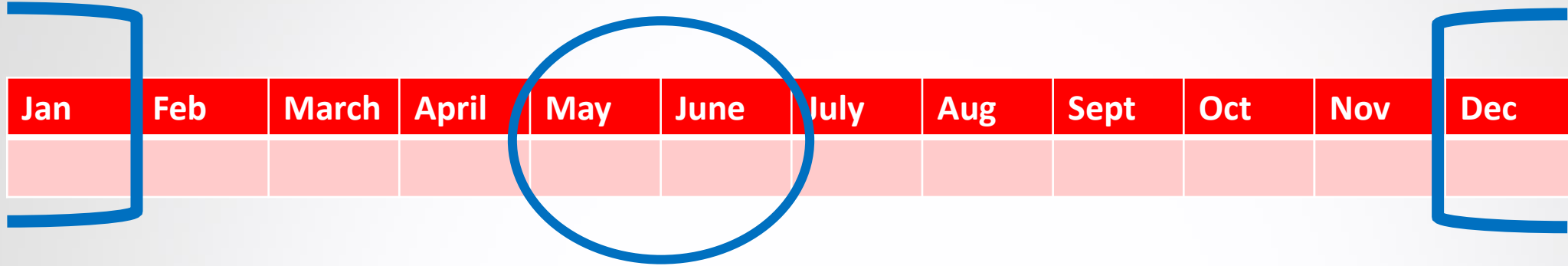
University

Seniors

- There is real bridge or pathway between their home club and Uni
- And athletics doesn't feel like a social activity compared to team sports and other clubs/societies



Exam Pressure Points



Mock exams

GCSE & A-Level

Mock exams





ATHLETICSWEEKLY.COM

Walking away from sport is not unusual in the teenage years. Statistics lay bare the casualty rate of talented youngsters bailing too soon, undone by the pressures of puberty and exams, injuries and other interests. These dropout rates spike during adolescence and the tricky transitional period from junior to senior age groups in any sport – and athletics is no exception.

Of 24,854 athletes aged 13 to 19 who competed in track and field in 2016 (71% of them members of affiliated clubs), 43% of them did not compete again the following year.

The same churn rate existed between 2017 to 2018 and the drift away was highest amongst 16 and 17-year-olds, who failed to return at alarming rate of 30% each year.

Posted by [Peta Bee](#) | Apr 17, 2021 |

Women in Sport Survey

The charity surveyed 4000 teenage girls and boys as part of its research work 'Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls', funded by Sport England.



43% - who once considered themselves 'sporty', disengage from sport following primary school.

A fear of feeling judged by others (68%)

lack of confidence (61%)

pressures of schoolwork (47%)

not feeling safe outside (43%)

were some of the reasons given for not wanting to participate for this group of girls.

Horizon scanning

The trends that will impact sport and physical activity to 2031 and beyond...

Demographics

Younger lives

15 core trends have been grouped by the following themes:

Economy and employment	Demographics	Society	Technology and connectivity	Community and activity
Multispeed economy	Ageing society	Health and wellbeing	Democratisation of information	Active travel
Individual economy	Diversified demographics	Social equity	Heightened consumer expectations	Place and space
Evolution of work	Younger lives	Greener lives	Digital leisure	Cohesive communities

In the long-term, children are making healthier choices in some areas of their lives, such as consuming less alcohol and lower rates of smoking. However, the majority of children are still not moving enough to meet recommended levels of activity.

Comparatively high levels of obesity – unchanged over the long-term – will remain an issue and one defined by inequalities.

Poverty rates for children are projected to increase, with a range of health and wellbeing outcomes set to become further polarised.

Time allocated for PE in school has declined as the focus on academic attainment and core subjects has intensified.

Academic pressure is also contributing to poorer mental health, with children in the UK having the lowest levels of life satisfaction in Europe.

The pandemic has also put the mental health of young people under increasing strain.

As true digital natives, younger people are spending more time online, in more technologically sophisticated ways. They are, however, vulnerable to excessive use and a lack of skills.

The effects of the pandemic are set to take an ongoing, yet uneven, toll on the lives of young people, potentially widening inequalities and adding to the mounting socio-political challenges they face.

Looking ahead

Potential impact

Key reasons to change?

2. Avoiding age group being split over Primary and Secondary Schools.

- The current U13 age group crosses over both the Primary (Year 6) and Secondary (Year 7) age group.
- *Previously the U13 sat withing a Primary space only, in the days of the 12+.*
- The split between school environments can sometimes impact on commitments, maturity, social, emotional, etc.



Key reasons to change?

3. Introduction of a New age group (U12)

- Allowing for younger athletes to take part in formal competitions
- Age-appropriate competition to increase club membership and representation

4. Creation of formal U18 age-group would allow for better transition to the U20 age-group

- Currently a 'young' U20, 17-year-old can compete in combined U20/Senior competitions / events (added safeguarding considerations).



Key reasons to change?

5. Better gradual progression for some technical events, such as hurdles and throws.

- Currently for many hurdles events the height and distance change together every two years.
- This could be staggered, if schools and clubs ran offset age groups

6. Better alignment with the Talent Pathway

- U18, U20, U23 Senior.



Hurdles Progressions through the ages

Male Sprint Hurdle Progressions						
U20				110m		99cm
U18				110m	91cm	
U17			100m		91cm	
U16			100m	84cm		
U15		80m		84cm		
U14		80m	76cm			
U13	75m		76cm			
U12	75m	68cm				
Bold Blue = distance increases				<i>italic = Height progressions</i>		

Female Sprint Hurdle Progressions						
U20				100m		84cm
U18				100m	76cm	
U17			80m	76cm		
U16			80m	76cm		
U15		75m		76cm		
U14		75m	68cm			
U13	70m		68cm			
U12	70m	60cm				
Bold Blue = distance increases				<i>italic = Height progressions</i>		

Throws Progressions through the ages

FEMALE ATHLETES IMPEMENT WEIGHTS								
Age	SHOT - Club	SHOT - Sch	DISCUS - Club	DISCUS - Sch	HAMMER - Club	HAMMER - Sch	JAVLEIN - Club	JAVLEIN - Sch
Senior	4.00 kg		1.00 kg		4.00 kg		600gram	
U20	4.00 kg		1.00 kg		4.00 kg		600gram	
U19	4.00 kg	4.00 kg	1.00 kg	1.00 kg	4.00 kg	4.00 kg	600gram	600gram
U18	3.00 kg	4.00 kg	1.00 kg	1.00 kg	3.00 kg	4.00 kg	500gram	600gram
U17	3.00 kg	3.00 kg	1.00 kg	1.00 kg	3.00 kg	3.00 kg	500gram	500gram
U16	3.00 kg	3.00 kg	1.00 kg	1.00 kg	3.00 kg	3.00 kg	500gram	500gram
U15	3.00 kg	3.00 kg	1.00 kg	1.00 kg	3.00 kg	3.00 kg	500gram	500gram
U14	2.72 kg	3.00 kg	0.75 kg	1.00 kg	2.72 kg	3.00 kg	400gram	500gram
U13	2.72 kg	2.72 kg	0.75 kg	0.75 kg	2.72 kg		400gram	400gram
U12	2.72 kg	2.72 kg	0.75 kg	0.75 kg			400gram	400gram
U11	2.72 kg		0.75 kg				400gram	

Throws Progressions through the ages

MALE ATHLETES IMPEMENT WEIGHTS								
Age	SHOT - Club	SHOT - Sch	DISCUS - Club	DISCUS - Sch	HAMMER - Club	HAMMER - Sch	JAVLEIN - Club	JAVLEIN - Sch
Senior	7.26 kg		2.00 kg		7.26 kg		800gram	
U20	6.00 kg		1.75 kg		6.00 kg		800gram	
U19	6.00 kg	6.00 kg	1.75 kg	1.75 kg	6.00 kg	6.00 kg	800gram	800gram
U18	5.00 kg	6.00 kg	1.5 kg	1.75 kg	5.00 kg	6.00 kg	700gram	800gram
U17	5.00 kg	5.00 kg	1.5 kg	1.5 kg	5.00 kg	5.00 kg	700gram	700gram
U16	4.00 kg	5.00 kg	1.25 kg	1.5 kg	4.00 kg	5.00 kg	600gram	700gram
U15	4.00 kg	4.00 kg	1.25 kg	1.25	4.00 kg	4.00 kg	600gram	600gram
U14	3.00 kg	4.00 kg	1.00 kg	1.25	3.00 kg	4.00 kg	500gram	600gram
U13	3.00 kg	3.00 kg	1.00 kg	1.00 kg	3.00 kg		500gram	400gram
U12	2.72 kg	3.00 kg	0.75 kg	1.00 kg			400gram	400gram
U11	2.72 kg	2.72 kg	0.75 kg				400gram	

Key reasons to change?

7. Changing the age groups would fall in line with World Athletics age groupings and most other countries.
- Changing the age group would mean **Major international age group champs would miss main exam times** for top end of age group . i.e., European / Commonwealth Youths or Euro / World Juniors years
- In recent years we have had to provide additional opportunities for athletes to compete in U18 competitions, to qualify for international youth events.



**WORLD
ATHLETICS™**



**TRINBAGO
2023**

**commonwealth
youth games**

An overview of the change

<u>Current Age Group</u>	<u>New Proposed Age Group</u>	<u>Major Exams in year</u>	<u>International Comp Year</u>
U13 (Top Year)	u14	None	
U15	u14	None	
U15 (Top Year)	u16	None	
U17	U16 (Top Year)	NONE	
U17 (Top Year)	u18	GCSE	
U20	U18 (Top Year)	As - Level	European Youth/ Commonwealth Youth
U20	U20	A - Level	World/ Euro U20
U20 (Top Year)	U20 (Top Year)	NONE	World/ Euro U20

School and Club Systems

The proposal would be that **school age groups remain the same**. This could provide national competition opportunities for top year athletes on an annual basis.

- As the current system stands athletes who are bottom year U15 and U17 are at a disadvantage to their older peers (top year U15/U17) by more than 12 months in most cases.
- By having club competitions at U16, U18, U20 and school competitions at U15, U17 and U19 there will be an opportunity for every child to challenge for a major champs every season, if they wished.
- The only issues here would be the difference in some events and implements.

Final Thoughts

The clash with academic commitments, creating massive pressure on young people, the lack of alignment with other countries, sports and talent pathways and the negative mental effects caused by the large amounts of pressure and other aspects such as the Relative Age Effect could cause the athlete to decrease or cease participation in athletics.

The proposed changes from a school aging point of view, then this would be a logical move, as

- Years 5 & 6 (Primary) would fall into the U12s,
- Years 7 & 8 (Secondary) would fall into U14,
- Years 9 & 10 would fall into U16 and
- Years 11 and 12 would be U18.
- Years 13 and Uni would be U20.

This would help athletes miss the major academic years (GCSE and A level) when they are top of their age group.

If schools age groups stay as they currently are and the only changes that are made are to club-based competition age groups, then this would provide young people with an opportunity to be top of their age group for a National champs every year (schools U15, U17, U19 and clubs U16, U18, U20).

Final Thoughts

An athlete shouldn't have to choose between academic or athletics success. We are pressurising our young athletes to perform at the highest level both physically and academically at the same time, this is not sustainable and why we see athletes leaving our sport.

Let's ease the pressure on our young athletes, protect and nurture their mental health and ensure they can perform at their optimum both physically and academically on alternate years.

Changing the age groups to evens will help do this, it will reduce pressure, protect their mental health and give them the opportunity to shine academically and in athletics, enabling our athletes to have a lifelong love of the sport at whatever level they compete.

Timelines - Rules of Competition | UK Athletics



- **30th June 2023:** Final date for submission of potential changes.
- **August / Sept 2023:** Proposals reviewed by the appropriate UKA Advisory Groups.
- **15th September 2023:** A document listing approved rule proposals posted to the UKA website for further comments
- **31st October 2023:** Deadline for all responses to the September / October consultation.
- **17th November 2023:** The exact wording for proposed rule changes will be written and agreed by the Rules Group and notified to other UKA Advisory Groups.
- **December 2023:** Final proposals submitted to UKA Board for consideration and sign off.
- **16th February 2024:** Planned publication date and publication of a summary of changes.
- **September 2024:** If the proposed Age Group changes are agreed, this would be the earliest the age groups would change.

Some questions posed to date



What changes to events will there be?



Why aren't the schools ages changing as well?



Have the athletes been consulted for their views, including a poll and asking athletes who have progressed in the sport?



WELSH ATHLETICS
ATHLETAU CYMRU

THANK YOU, ANY QUESTIONS ?