

GUIDELINES FOR JUNIORS TRANSITIONING TO ADULT GROUPS

Valley Striders AC actively encourages and supports its juniors to make a successful transition into the adult Improver, Intermediate, Advanced or Fast training groups. The primary objectives through transition are to ensure that young athletes remain safe, participate at a level they can physically manage and continue to enjoy their running in a supportive environment.

Any transition will only be permitted with the approval of the junior coaches.

As part of the transition, Valley Striders AC will observe the following guidelines:

1. Age and maturity

An athlete must be 14 or over to transition to an adult group. Athletes under 14 years old must train with the junior section, unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- where appropriate, juniors 12 years + may be invited to join the adult track session;
- where appropriate, juniors 12 years + may join the adult improvers group;
- juniors 12 years + may be “counted” in VS Grand Prix parkrun events.

References to ‘young adults’ throughout this policy refers to athletes aged 14-17 years old, but includes 12-13 year olds in cases where the above exceptions apply.

Regardless of age guidelines, the young athlete must have a suitable level of maturity, and be willing and able to listen and adhere to instructions.

2. Parental permission

A young adult will only be permitted to train with one of the adult groups with their parent / carer’s permission.

Parents/carers should be copied into any email or message communication with the young adult.

Young adults who wish to train with one of the adult training groups should be dropped off beforehand / picked up afterwards from the training venue. Young adults will be discouraged from incurring additional mileage through running to / from training.

The young adult or parent should alert the group leader prior to their attendance at the session, so that they know to expect them. This should include accepting or declining the relevant Spond invite.

Young adults should only be attending Valley Striders training session that are advertised on Spond. Taking part in informal runs with other club members is the decision of the young adult’s parent/carers and would ideally involve their presence. However, this is not a situation that Valley Striders encourages.

3. Supervision

All group leaders, especially for groups involving young adults, should have a minimum of Leader in Running Fitness (LiRF) qualification which includes safeguarding training and enhanced DBS.

If the parent is not taking part in the session, then before the start of session, the parent must “hand over” the young adult to the leader, and at the end of the session, the leader must “hand back” the young adult to the parent.

Where possible, a second qualified run leader will be assigned to the group to ensure adequate supervision of the young adult.

Where this is not possible, the group leader may assign another adult in the group to assist with continuity of the session in the event that the leader is required to focus their attention on the young adult, eg. in the case of injury, illness, falling behind the group etc.

4. Mileage and Intensity

Young adults who wish to train with one of the senior groups will be discouraged from excessive mileage and intensity in any single session and will be discouraged from excessive weekly mileage.

Valley Striders will adhere to the following guide for maximum training volume. The table has been adapted from guidance given by England Athletics ^[1, 2]:

| Age | Maximum Weekly Mileage | Maximum Long Run Distance | Max number of runs per week |
|-----|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 17 | 40 miles | 13 miles | 6 |
| 16 | 35 miles | 10 miles | 5 |
| 15 | 25 miles | 6 miles | 5 |
| 14 | 15 miles | 4 miles | 4 |
| 13 | 10 miles | 4 miles | 3 |
| 12 | 6 miles | 3 miles | 2 |

The anaerobic (lactic) energy system of a young athlete is not fully developed. Their training should therefore be largely aerobic, with shorter, faster paced running focusing mostly on technique and leg speed rather than challenging the anaerobic system with high intensity repetitions ^[3, 4].

5. Competition

Valley Striders AC will seek out opportunities to engage the young adult in senior, age appropriate, competition. However, the young adult will always be encouraged to run with his / her peers in junior competitive events. The minimum age for taking part in the club handicap race is 15 years old.

UKA rules for race distances are summarised in the following table:

| Maximum Race Distance | | | | |
|-----------------------|------|---------------|-------|------|
| Age | Road | Cross Country | Trail | Fell |
| 17 | 25km | 10km | 25km | 10km |
| 16 | 15km | 6.5km | 10km | 10km |
| 15 | 10km | 6.5km | 6km | 7km |
| 14 | 6km | 5km | 6km | 5km |
| 13 | 6km | 5km | 5km | 5km |
| 12 | 5km | 3.5km | 5km | 5km |

6. Appropriate Ability Group

The young adult will be placed in an adult training group according to their ability. Where necessary (particularly in the fast and advanced groups), they will be instructed to carry out a reduced or adapted version of the main session. Or they may be placed in a slightly lower ability group than their race pace suggests, to allow for a low volume and intensity session appropriate for a young athlete.

References:

1. England Athletics Youth Endurance Guidance, V1 March 2022 ; Dr Matt Long, England Team Manager and Coach <https://www.englandathletics.org/take-part/children-and-young-people/youth-endurance-resource/>
2. England Athletics Youth Endurance F.A.Q.s ; England Athletics and Leicestershire Running & Athletics Network ; Jenny Harris, National Coach Mentor for Youth Endurance. <http://iran.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ea-endurance-faq-2016-v2.pdf>
3. Endurance Training Guidelines for Young Athletes U13 + ; Jenny Harris, NCM Youth Development (Endurance); Dave Sunderland, NCM Endurance; Barry Fudge, EIS/UKA Physiologist. leedsathletics.net/docs2012/LCDP_Training_Guidelines.pdf
4. Leader in Running Fitness Module 3 – Endurance Factors, Energy Systems and their Application; UK Athletics.