

UKA ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY V1.2

Introduction

The UKA Athlete Development Pathway is a simple model that illustrates the different ways athletes can develop with age. The pathway highlights the requirement for athletes to possess a range of skills and attributes that are appropriate for their current stage of development. Furthermore, it addresses the challenge faced by athletes that enter the sport at an advanced age, who may need to readdress key deficiencies in their developmental in order to reach their full potential. This last point is especially significant to Athletics because it is a sport in which individuals can excel even if they begin formal training at a relatively mature age.

Ideal Development

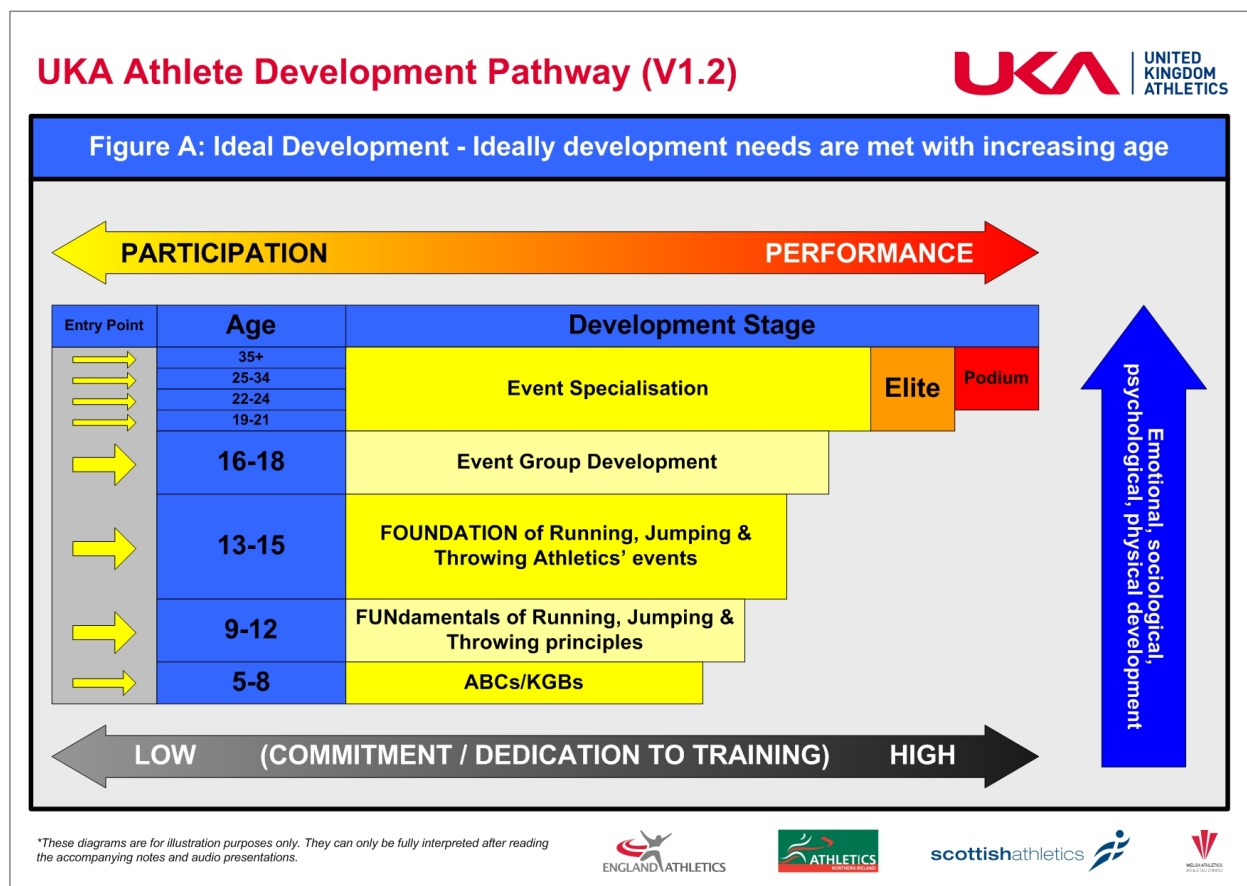
UKA have created a simple model to illustrate the development of athletes across different **age** ranges. The diagram shows **entry points** at every age group to reflect the diverse range of people who begin Athletics at different stages in their development from 9-12 year olds starting out with Sports Hall to adults who catch the road running bug. With increasing age there are changes in terms of **emotional, sociological, psychological and physical development** – although it should be noted that individuals develop at different rates across the developmental spectrum so an athlete could be physically very mature but sociologically and psychologically very immature or vice versa.

Horizontally from left to right the diagram illustrates a shift from **participation towards performance** orientation. However, many recreational road runners train multiple times a day in preparing for a half marathon (though their key reason for doing so is for participation rather than competitive reasons) and so horizontally there is also a spectrum in terms of **commitment / dedication to training** from left to right to reflect this.

As already stated, athletes can enter the sport at a variety of ages. An ideal model of development would see athletes following a pathway, whereby they engage in activities that are most appropriate for their current level of development; are progressive in nature and lay the foundation future training requirements. Such a model would see young athletes initially engaging in the **ABCs/KGBs** (Agility, Balance and Co-ordination as well as Kinaesthetics, Gliding, Buoyancy and Striking) – e.g. all round global movement skills. Here it should be noted that traditionally this age range has traditionally not been catered for in British Athletics Clubs, where the typical entry age is at least 9 years old.

Having developed all around basic physical literacy, children would then move onto the **FUNDamentals of Running, Jumping and Throwing** – e.g. activities that are fun but include these key movement patterns seen in Athletics; before engaging with more formal training in these skills to create a **Foundation of Running, Jumping and Throwing Athletics' events**.

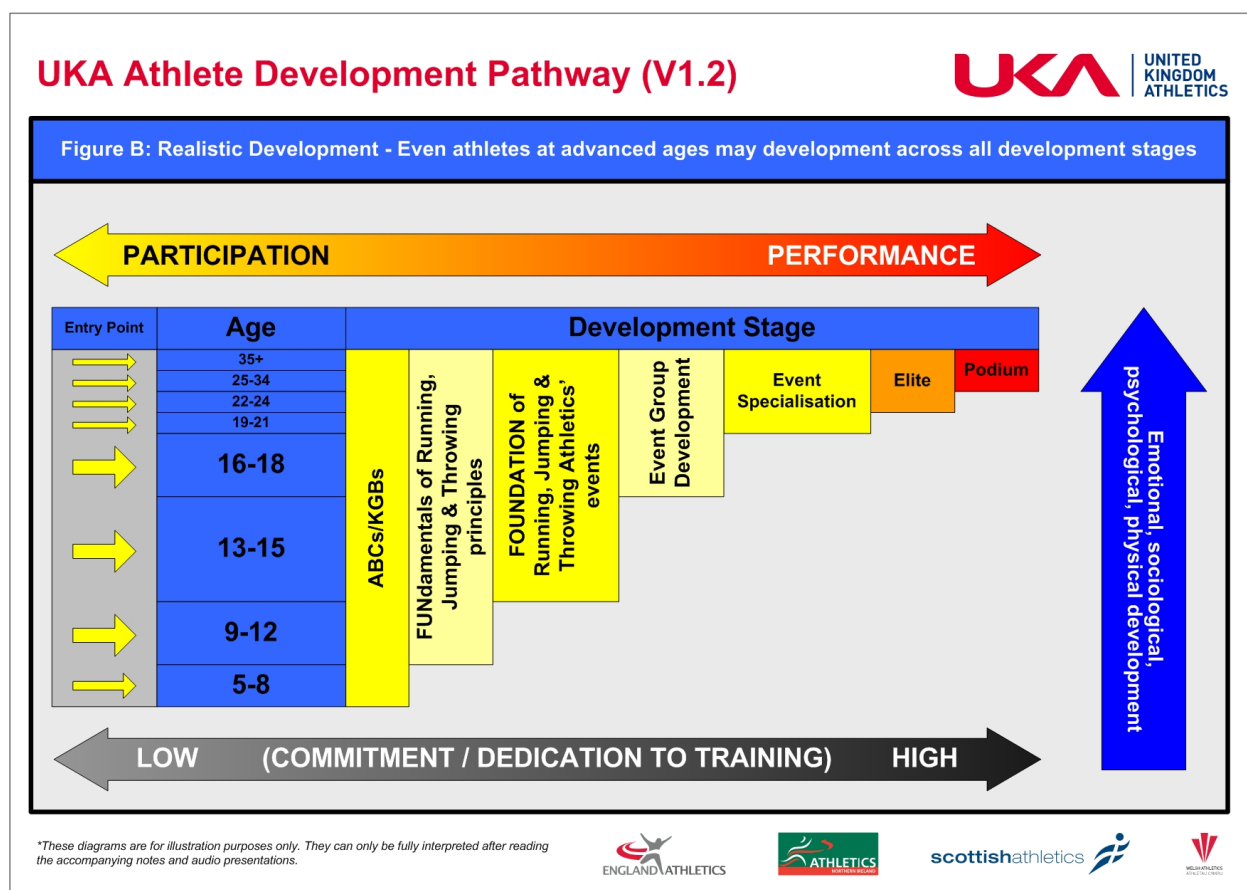
Having mastered these basic skills they should then progress into a phase of **Event Group Development** where the focus is on learning the more specialist movement patterns used within the chosen event group before deciding to pick an event or events to specialise in – e.g. **Event Specialisation**. From here those with the required potential will transition into more **Elite** training and potentially arrive at a performance level that gets them onto the **Podium** at major events.



Such an ideal pathway matches the athlete’s progression in terms of training focus to their **Emotional, sociological, psychological and physical development**. So at different stages in the athlete’s development they are engaging in activities with a different focus – e.g. 5-8 year olds are engaged in the ABCs and KGBs of physical literacy, while 16-18 year olds have narrowed their focus to developing skills within an Event Group. Therefore, as the athlete develops their training changes to take into account what is most appropriate for their current stage of development.

Realistic Development

However, athletes are rarely in an environment that encourages them to follow such a well-rounded development pathway. A more **Realistic Development** pathway sees athletes entering the sport at different ages with varying levels of skill across the ABCs/KGBs, FUNDamentals of Running, Jumping and Throwing or Event Group Development etc. So while it may be ideal for a 16 year old to be engaged in Event Group Development work at that age, in reality at 16 they may lack basic agility or balance skills that should have been covered between the ages of 5-8. Such an athlete will, therefore, have to revisit these before or in conjunction with addressing Event Group Development.

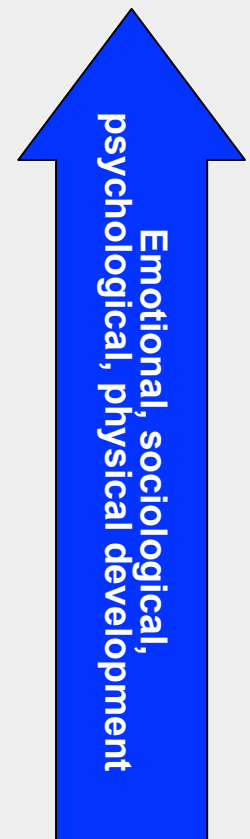


This need to potentially go back and readdress development issues upon entry into the sport at older ages means that the Athlete Development Pathway can be redrawn to show the number of development stages requiring attention increasing with age. So for an athlete entering the sport as a senior there may be the requirement to go back and work on skills that were not developed at any of the previous developmental levels, depending on the athlete's developmental history. This may be especially prevalent in individuals who take up competitive road running at a more advanced age but have little background in training and so are not necessarily prepared developmentally for the training they may need to perform to realise their aspirations.

Figure A: Ideal Development - Ideally development needs are met with increasing age

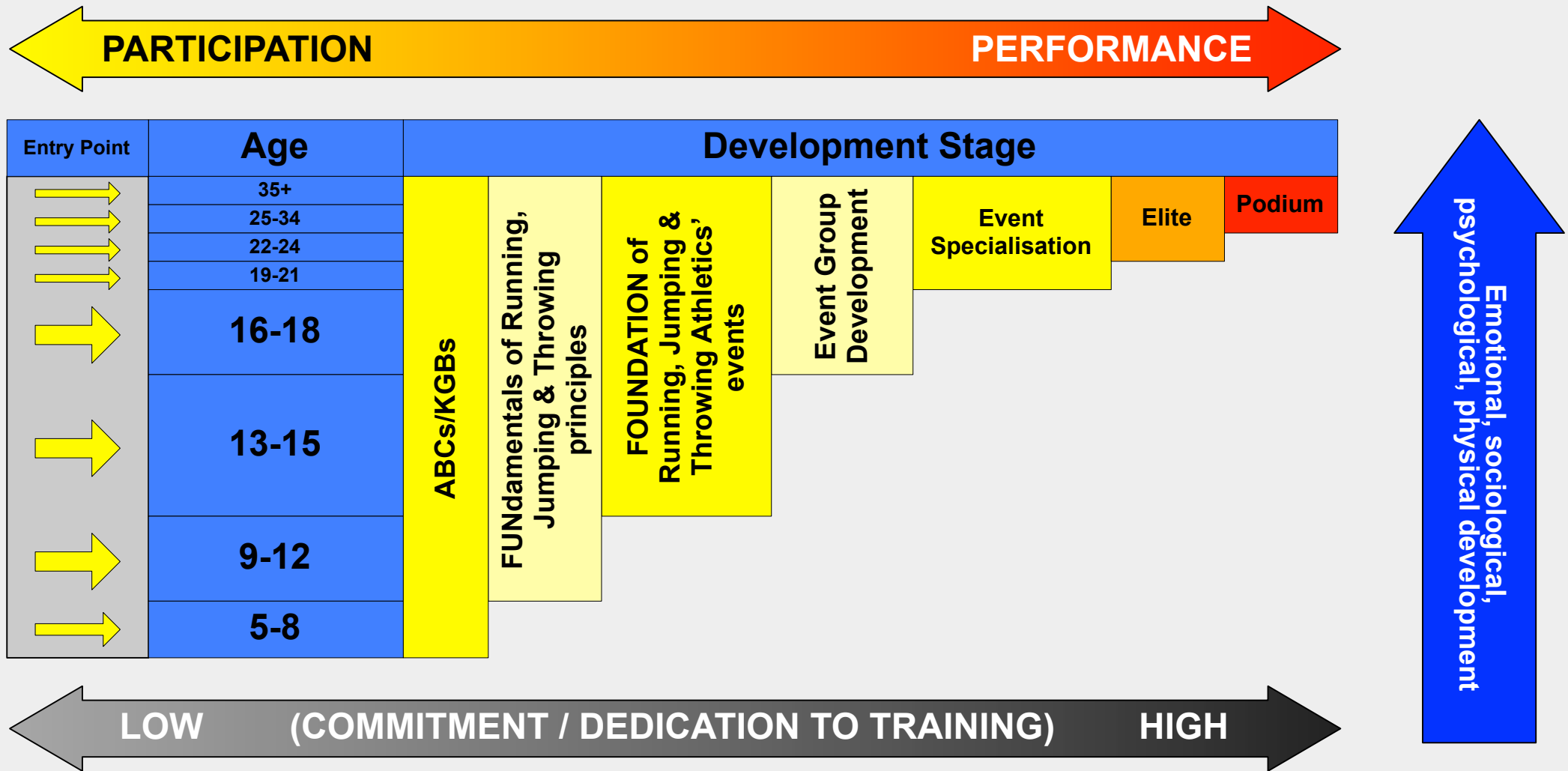


Entry Point	Age	Development Stage		
→	35+	Event Specialisation	Elite	Podium
→	25-34			
→	22-24			
→	19-21			
→	16-18	Event Group Development		
→	13-15	FOUNDATION of Running, Jumping & Throwing Athletics' events		
→	9-12	FUNDamentals of Running, Jumping & Throwing principles		
→	5-8	ABCs/KGBs		



*These diagrams are for illustration purposes only. They can only be fully interpreted after reading the accompanying notes and audio presentations.

Figure B: Realistic Development - Even athletes at advanced ages may development across all development stages



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