

Athletics is a late development sport, most European, World and Olympic titles are won by athletes who are aged between 22 and 28. However, children develop an enjoyment of athletics at a young age, some through involvement in Sportshall athletics, and others through their involvement in clubs.

Much is misunderstood about how to ensure young athletes have a successful start to their athletics career: it very much requires a long term view, since successful young athletes start to be taken seriously at the age of 17.

Athletics events fall into 3 categories, run, jump and throw. At a young age athletics is more about athleticism, and training is more about providing athletes with the opportunity to develop a range of basic fundamental technical event skills in an enjoyable and creative environment - run, jump and throw skills - of course these are easily transferable to other sports!

With these skills in place, athletes can start to specialise in specific events. However, current best practice is to promote combined events where athletes continue to be involved in and specialise in a range of athletics events rather than specialise in a single event eg the 100m. This should continue until the athlete is at least 13 and potentially to 15 unless by this time the athlete has already decided to continue with combined events.

Peter promotes these guidelines in all the coaching work he undertakes in schools, academies and clubs, and in particular through the work he does with fellow coach Graham Norris to develop combined events through their ACE Academy. For more information go to:

www.aceathletics.co.uk