



PERFORMANCE
PATHWAY PROGRAMME

PERFORMANCE PATHWAY PROGRAMME
2027



INTRODUCTION

Sport Ireland (SI) invests in High Performance sports through the annual athlete carding scheme. Collectively as a joint programme SI and Athletics Ireland will manage and administer the 2026/27 senior athlete carding scheme.

Additionally, Athletics Ireland provides support from its own resources for u23 & Senior athletes who do not meet the criteria for individual SI carding (International, Podium, World Class) to athletes that are, or are likely to be, selected and make an impact at targeted international championships via Development and Discretionary categories of carding.

For u20 & u18 athletes, support is through the Performance pathway Programme.

This document outlines **Athletics Ireland's Performance Pathway Programme**

Athletics Ireland's Performance Pathway Programme aims to support the identification and development of athletes (ages 16-20) who have the potential to progress into successful senior athletes. The programme offers support to the athletes, their personal coaches and their parents.

The objectives of the pathway are:

- To work with young athletes & their Personal Coaches to help them to progress and develop in order to achieve success on the senior international stage.
- To provide performance support to complement their existing training & support services set-up
- To support Coaches of young athletes
- To help provide guidance to Parents of young athletes
- To work with athlete's existing support networks to ensure a holistic approach to their development
- To increase the number of talented athletes medalling at youth, junior and senior internationals.



The Performance Pathway programme will complement the work being done by the respective National Event Co-ordinators and work with them to encourage athletes and coaches to develop their technical abilities. Both the Pathway Performance programme and the National Event Co-ordinators provide Mentoring and upskilling opportunities for the Coaches, and help them to develop their own Performance environment.

The **Performance Pathway Programme** aims to:

- Support athletes' **long-term development** and progression towards senior international performance.
- Provide structured **education, training, and competition opportunities** aligned with world-class athlete development principles.
- Foster a strong **performance culture** among Ireland's next generation of elite athletes
- Encourage athletes to attend and develop physically & mentally through a series of workshops and testing and information sessions.



The needs of the athlete at this stage of development are broader, requiring inputs such as ;



- technical and sports science support
- coaching and coach support
- personal support
- medical and physio support
- Strength & Conditioning support
- Third level transitioning support
- Career advice and professional development

A key strategic goal of Athletics Ireland's High Performance Programme is to provide a world-class approach to identify and develop talented athletes capable of winning at the highest level in their event discipline. The Performance Pathway Programme was developed and has evolved to select talented athletes and support this strategy to deliver on Athletics Ireland's high performance goals and vision.

Athletes who meet the criteria and apply to be part of the Performance Pathway Programme are expected to:

1. Engage with Performance Pathway Event Leads
2. Engage with programme initiatives such as Pathway Days, Technical Event Days, S&C regional hubs, Pathway Programme Testing and Pathway Camps.
3. Fill out a Performance Pathway Application form: <https://forms.gle/QV7vw8EW5bAAbrGX7>
4. Satisfy all World Athletics, eligibility, nationality, and European Championship participation rules.
5. Be a registered member of Athletics Ireland and have a valid current Irish passport.
6. Remain in "good standing" with Athletics Ireland and at all times comply with any established Code of Conduct or Athlete Agreement and otherwise conduct themselves in a way that does not bring their sport or the Performance Pathway Programme into disrepute
7. Complete & hold current valid certification for the [European Athletics Anti-Doping Education Programme – I Run Clean](#)

Athletics Ireland Performance Pathway Programme (2027)

The **Athletics Ireland Performance Pathway Programme** is designed to identify, support, and develop talented young athletes who are progressing towards success at **European U18**, **European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF)**, **European U20**, and **World U20** level competitions, and to help those first year u23 tracking towards European u23s & Senior Championships.

For the **2027 programme**, eligibility extends to athletes **born between 2007 and 2011** who are demonstrating the potential to perform at these international standards.

The programme provides progressive levels of support across three tiers for u18s & u20s — **Foundation**, **Emerging**, and **Priority** — reflecting each athlete's stage of development within the national performance pathway. The first year u23s (2007 born) are categorised separately as **Transition** due to them transitioning from the junior to senior programmes.

Athletics Ireland's High-Performance Strategy 2025-2028 commits to enhancing the support of and investment in our **Performance Pathway Programme** to better prepare our talented young athletes for the challenges inherent in transitioning to full senior international athletes competing on the global stage.

Following Spring 2026 appointments, supported by both Athletics Ireland & Sport Ireland, Performance Pathway Manager **Jacqui Freyne** who has led the Pathway programme since 2015 has been joined by the following part-time staff offering more tailored event-specific support to Pathway athletes & their coaches;

- **Niamh Fitzgerald**, who has been appointed as Pathway Endurance Coach.
- **Karen Kirk**, who has commenced as Pathway Sprints Hurdles & Relays lead
- **Shane Ryan** who joins the team as Pathway Strength & Conditioning Lead
- **Barry Pender & Tom Reynolds** who have joined the High Performance team as Performance Jumps Coaches and will work across both Senior and Pathway programmes. Barry and Tom will work with Field-Event lead David Sweeney, who has served in that role since 2019.
- **Dave Sweeney** will continue as Pathway Throws Lead

Athletics Ireland Performance Pathway Programme Levels

1. Performance Pathway Foundation

The **Foundation** tier supports athletes who are beginning to show strong potential and commitment to long-term performance development.

Support includes:

- ✓ Performance Pathway T-shirt
- ✓ Performance Pathway Diary
- ✓ Invitations to Performance Pathway events in Ireland
- ✓ Programme S&C support
- ✓ Support from Pathway Event Leads



2027 Performance Pathway Foundation Level Standards (* denotes appropriate heights & weights)

BOYS:	<u>u20</u>	<u>u19</u>	<u>u18</u>	<u>u17</u>	GIRLS:	<u>U20</u>	<u>u19</u>	<u>u18</u>	<u>u17</u>
100m	10.80	10.90	11.00	11.10	100m	12.00	12.10	12.20	12.30
200m	21.60	21.70	21.90	22.00	200m	24.50	24.60	24.80	25.00
400m	49.00	49.50	50.50	51.00	400m	56.00	56.50	57.00	57.50
110mh *	14.30	14.50	14.70	14.00*	100mh *	14.40	14.60	14.80	15.00
400mh	53.30	54.00	55.05	56.00 & 40.00**	400mh **300mh	60.80	61.85	62.80	63.00 43.50**
800m	1:53.00	1:54.0	1:55.0	1:56.5	800m	02:10.00	02:11.00	02:12.00	02:13.00
1500m	03:54.00	03:56.00	04:00.00	04:02.00	1500m	04:29.00	04:32.00	04:34.00	04:36.50
3000m	08:35.00	08:45.00	08:48.00	08:52.00	3000m	09:49.50	09:55.00	10:00.0	10:05.00
5000m	14:51.00	15:00.00			5000m	17:15.00	17:25.00		
s/c *	09:20.00	09:30.00	06:18.00	06:22.0*	3k s/c (2k)*	10:42.00	10:48.00	07:05*	07:10.0
HJ	2.04	2.00	1.90	1.85	HJ	1.74	1.70	1.67	1.64
LJ	7.10	7.00	6.90	6.70	LJ	6.00	5.90	5.70	5.60
TJ	14.50	13.90	13.50	13.00	TJ	12.55	12.25	11.80	11.50
PV	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.10	PV	3.90	3.70	3.50	3.40
SP *	17.50	16.80	16.00*	15.50*	SP *	14.50	14.00	14.20*	13.50*
DT *	55.50	53.00	50.50*	48.20*	DT *	48.00	46.00	39.50*	38.00*
JT *	65.00	63.00	60.00*	58.00*	JT *	48.00	46.00	43.00*	40.00*
HT *	67.00	66.00	65.00*	60.00*	HT *	57.00	55.00	56.00*	52.00*
RW	23:00.0	24:00.0	24:30.0	25:00.0	5k RW	25:30.0	26:10.0	26:40.0	27:00.0
CE *	6700	6400	6000*	5600*	CE *	5000	4800	4600*	4400*

2. Performance Pathway Emerging

The **Emerging** tier supports athletes who are further along the pathway and beginning to train and compete at, or close to, international standards.



Support includes:

- ✓ Performance Pathway T-shirt
- ✓ Performance Pathway Diary
- ✓ Invitations to Performance Pathway events in Ireland
- ✓ Tailored S&C support
- ✓ Support from Pathway Event Leads
- ✓ Access to Performance Pathway **training camps abroad**

2027 Performance Pathway Emerging Level Standards

BOYS	u/20	u/18	GIRLS	u/20	u/18
100m	10.75	10.90	100m	11.95	12.10
200m	21.42	21.75	200m	24.30	24.60
400m	48.50	49.50	400m	55.30	56.50
110mH (.914)		14.40	100mH (.762)		14.40
110mH (.991)	14.10		100mH	13.98	
400mH (.838)		54.70	400mH		62.00
400H	53.10			60.00	
800m	01:51.44	01:54.31	800m	02:08.00	02:10.00
1500m	03:50.17	03:57.09	1500m	04:24.55	04:30.00
3000m	08:27.52	08:38.31	3000m	09:39.22	09:52.65
5000m	14:37.95		5000m	16:59.35	
2000mSC		06:08.05	2000mSC		07:00.00
3000mSC	09:16.36		3000mSC	10:41.49	
5k RW	22:30.00	23:30.00	5k RW	24:30.00	25:30.00
10k RW	44:29.46		10k RW		
HJ	2.06	1.97	HJ	1.76	1.71
PV	5.00	4.40	PV	3.90	3.63
LJ	7.28	6.97	LJ	6.08	5.85
TJ	14.85	13.95	TJ	12.70	12.15
SP (5kg)		16.86	SP (3kg)		14.54
SP (6kg)	17.75		SP	14.31	

DT (1.5kg)		52.58	DT	47.62	41.42
DT (1.75kg)	54.58				
HT (5kg)		63.27	HT (3kg)		57.10
HT (6kg)	66.24		HT	57.09	
JT (700g)		62.00	JT (500g)		45.05
JT	66.00		JT	47.99	
Decathlon (U18)*		6224	Heptathlon (U18)*		4806
Decathlon (U20)*	6853		Heptathlon*	5103	

* Due to the lack of opportunities for age group athletes to complete full U18 and U20 Heptathlon or Decathlons, athletes on application, may be assessed based on a combination of any Combined Events score(s) and results as well as a potential projections based on their age and stage, progression and SB and PBs

3. Performance Pathway Priority

The **Priority** tier supports athletes with clear potential or proven performance at international level.

Support includes:

- ✓ Performance Pathway T-shirt
- ✓ Performance Pathway Diary
- ✓ Invitations to Performance Pathway events in Ireland
- ✓ Tailored S&C support
- ✓ Support from Pathway Event Leads
- ✓ Access to **training camps abroad**
- ✓ Access to **targeted competition opportunities** (subject to meeting any required Q standards)



The Performance Pathway Priority Standards 2027 are as follows (based on performances in 2026):

BOYS	u/20	u/18	GIRLS	u/20	u/18
100m	10.45	10.65	100m	11.59	11.76
200m	21.13	21.51	200m	23.75	24.20
400m	47.06	48.29	400m	53.86	55.01
110mH (.914)		13.81	100mH (.762)		13.62
110mH (.991)	13.72		100mH	13.55	
400mH (.838)		53.49	400mH		60.54
400H	51.91		400H	58.99	
800m	01:48.88	01:52.11	800m	02:06.00	02:08.00
1500m	03:44.34	03:52.18	1500m	04:20.09	04:25.43
3000m	08:10.05	08:24.62	3000m	09:28.94	09:40.30
5000m	14:15.91		5000m	16:43.70	
2000mSC		05:56.09	2000mSC		06:50.00
3000mSC	09:02.71		3000mSC	10:34.98	
5k RW	21:00.00	22:00.00	5k RW	23:00.00	24:00.00
10k RW	43:58.93		10k RW		49:04.04
HJ	2.12	2.05	HJ	1.81	1.78
PV	5.19	4.80	PV	4.09	3.86
LJ	7.58	7.24	LJ	6.27	6.05
TJ	15.30	14.70	TJ	13.10	12.61
SP (5kg)		18.22	SP (3kg)		15.30
SP (6kg)	18.00		SP	14.62	
DT (1.5kg)		55.66	DT	49.25	44.85
DT (1.75kg)	56.16				
HT (5kg)		68.54	HT (3kg)		62.20
HT (6kg)	69.48		HT	59.17	
JT (700g)		65.00	JT (500g)		50.10
JT	68.00		JT	49.98	
Decathlon (U18)		6847	Heptathlon (U18)		5212
Decathlon (U20)	7305		Heptathlon	5405	

Performance Pathway Priority first consideration:

Any new or existing athlete will automatically be considered for selection as a PP Priority athlete if they achieve the criteria in the Championship Performance Matrix by attaining a championship medal/placing together with multiple performance results during the Qualification Period.

Performance Pathway Priority second consideration:

Any new and existing athletes that do not medal or achieve a placing at a championship may be considered for selection as a PP Priority athlete if they attain an (age/year) **Performance Pathway Priority Standards at least twice (2)** during the Qualification Period.

Championship Performance Matrix:

PP Medal	World U20 Championships World U20 Race Walking Cup European U20 Championships European U18 Championships World Youth Olympic Games European U20 Cross Country + no Perf Std European U20 Race Walking Cup European Youth Olympic Festival	Performance Pathway Priority Standard x 2 (by age)	Realistic Olympic potential for 2028 or 2032
PP Finish	Top 12 World U20 Championships Top 8 European U20 Championships Top 8 European U18 Championships Top 8 World Youth Olympic Games Top 16 World U20 Race Walking Cup Top 8 European U20 Cross Country + no Perf Std Top 8 European U20 Race Walking Cup Top 6 European Youth Olympic Festival		

Collaboration with the National U20 Relay Programme

The **Performance Pathway Programme** works closely with the **National U20 Relay Programme** to ensure aligned development opportunities for athletes.

Many of the programme's key activities are delivered jointly for athletes selected across both programmes. This collaboration supports the development of both individual and relay performance excellence within a cohesive national system.



As a guide the national relay programme will look to select athletes to develop U/20 4x100m and 4x400m squads for the 2027 season. Consideration & preparation will also be given to mixed relay and medley relay opportunities where deemed appropriate & viable



Our Performance Pathway relay coaches will continue in their roles;

- **Karen Kirk** along with her Sprints role, will continue as Boys u20 4x100m Coach
- **Olive Murphy** will once again be the Girls u20 4x100m Coach
- **Dermot McGranaghan** will coach both u20 Girls 4x400m & u20 boys 4x400m

Please Note: The following criteria is used for relay squad selection purposes only for 2027 season and not for individual selection to a championship event or to the Performance Pathway Programme as a supported individual.

Relay Squad Individual Performance Standards		
Squad	Event	Standard
U20		
Men's 4x100m	100m/200m	10.90/21.90
Women's 4x100m	100m/200m	12.20 / 24.60
Men's 4x400m	400m/400h	49.20/55.00
Women's 4x400m	400m/400h	56.00/60.00

Athletes who have achieved the relay squad individual performance standards above during the 2026 season may be considered. The following factors may also be taken into consideration:

- 2026 Performance Lists and performance levels (the consistency of performance during the indoor/outdoor season etc)
- Relay experience including but not limited to:
 - Individual experience at recent major championships.
 - Recent championship experience with relay teams.
 - Exchange proficiency as shown in previous squad sessions and relay competitions.
- Engagement, availability and commitment to the relay programme
- Support of the Relay Squad ethos & respect for any decisions (particularly around 'Strike 4 selections') made by the relay coaches
- Consistency and repeatability of performances during the 2026 season
- Injury and illness history during the 2026 season and previously
- Future relay team potential
- Other factors as deemed appropriate



A review of the relay squads will take place at the end of the 2026/2027 indoor season.

Athletics Ireland reserves the right to add squad members at any time during the season if by adding an athlete this will help to achieve the performance objectives/goals of the High-Performance programme.

Support for U20 Athletes (Born 2007) Transitioning to u23 & Senior

For the 2026 programme, **athletes born in 2007** — who were part of the U20 age group in 2026 — will be provided with **individually tailored support** as they transition towards **U23 and senior competition levels**, provided they meet the performance standards set forth by Athletics Ireland*



This transitional support recognises the importance of continuity and guidance for athletes progressing from the junior to senior performance environment, ensuring they remain connected to the national pathway while adapting to the demands of higher-level competition.

*See Sec 3, **Performance Pathway Priority** for relevant standards for 2007 born (who were u/20 in 2026)

Coach Engagement and Expectations



Coaches play a central role in the success of the Performance Pathway Programme.

Before applying for the Performance Pathway Programme, athletes should discuss the importance of collaborative working with their Personal Coach.

Coaches of Pathway athletes are asked to **actively engage with the programme**, demonstrate a **commitment to shared development goals**, & **collaborate** with Athletics Ireland staff & support teams & Performance Pathway staff.

This includes participation in coach workshops, communication around athlete planning and progression, and alignment with the principles of the **Athletics Ireland Performance Pathway Framework**. Strong coach buy-in is essential to ensure that athletes receive consistent, high-quality guidance & support across all training & competition environments.

Athletes who meet the relevant standards as set forth in this document, should apply through this link stating the level they are applying for and including their relevant qualifying performance(s)

[2027 Athletics Ireland Performance Pathway Application](#)

Injury Retention Clause: If an athlete who is at a given level on the Pathway in 2026, has a major season-impacting injury, they may apply for an 'injury-exemption' to be retained at the level they were at last year. Please fill in the application form above but request to be considered under the injury-exemption clause.

Any queries about the Performance Pathway Programme should be addressed to the Performance Pathway Manager, Jacqui Freyne jacqui@athleticsireland.ie or any of the Performance Pathway Event Leads