



Athletics Trust Scotland Young People's Forum Cohort One Report 2023



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The Athletics Trust Scotland Young People's Forum (ATS YPF) was created to advise **scottishathletics** on engaging with young people more effectively around developments within athletics and the wider sport. The ambition was for the Young People's Forum was to play an active role in **scottishathletics** initiatives, to widen their impact, coverage and assist with decision making which impacts young people within the sport.

scottishathletics is committed to supporting the Young People's Forum by giving its members the skills and initiative to progress in both athletics and sport more broadly.

In October 2022, **Athletics Trust Scotland** announced their sponsorship support for the Forum.



Background

When the recruitment for the inaugural Young People's Forum was advertised in October 2021, 40 applications were received. Due to ongoing restrictions with COVID-19, the interviews took place online, with 15 young applicants being successful in gaining a place on the Forum. Two additional young people, Erin Gillen and Natalie Sharp, were also invited to join the Forum. Erin brought with her a wealth of experience having been involved with the **sportscotland** Young People's Sports Panel and Natalie Sharp was there as part of her university placement.

The members of the YPF Cohort One were:

- Sophie Allan (Dunfermline Track and Field Club)
- Callum Ballantyne (Red Star / Cumbernauld AAC)
- Darcie Black (Dunfermline Track and Field Club)
- Finn Boyd (Maryhill Harriers / Glasgow Front Runners)
- Naideen Dailly (North Ayrshire Athletics Club)
- Dylan Dickie (Aberdeen AAC)
- Chloe Emordy (Springburn Harriers)
- Erin Gillen (Springburn Harriers)
- Oscar Logan (Law and District AAC)
- Morgan McBurnie (Kilmarnock Harriers)
- Luke McCabe (Cumbernauld AAC)
- Erin Quinn (Victoria Park City of Glasgow)
- Darren Reilly (Springburn Harriers)
- Jessica Robson (Law and District AAC)
- Katie Sandilands (Fife AC)
- Heather Scott (Central Athletic Club)
- Natalie Sharp (Kilmarnock Harriers)



The induction took place online in December 2021 with the first in-person meeting being held in January 2022. During the first in person meeting, the group agreed the following aims:

- **The mental health of young people in athletics**
- **The retention of young people in athletics**

The group also developed an action plan for the following two years (Appendix A).

Meetings

Eight key face-to-face person meetings took place, with some additional subgroup meetings taking place online in between when required. The in-person meetings allowed the members to work together on a number of different topics which helped them to bond and share ideas. To assist the Forum with their aims, experts from external organisations were brought in to lead on several sessions. These sessions were also designed to help with the personal development of the members.

One session was delivered by **Guy Richardson** from **Eiger Performance** on *Leadership with Impact* which was aimed at giving the young people the strategies and confidence to speak to their peers and influence decision making within their clubs.

Robert Nesbitt from **SAMH** delivered three sessions to the group looking at mental health in sport. Jessica Robson was also invited to be part of the SAMH working group, who were looking to pull together a number of resources on eating disorders.



To support the YPF members who are staying on as Mentors for Cohort Two, **Victoria Clark** from **Active Advantage** delivered a workshop on *Introduction to Mentoring* which was positively received. The opportunity was offered to all Members.

Cara Shearer, who was a National Club Manager with **scottishathletics**, delivered a session on *Changing Lives*. This session concentrated on moving the mindset away from the sport and onto the participant and provide the Members with tools and techniques that they could take back and be applied to their clubs.

National Club Manager, Lindsay McMahon, and Executive and Equalities Officer, Francesca Snitjer met with **Kate Seary** and **Mhairi MacIennan** from **Kyniska Advocacy**, to find out how they could work in partnership. This led to Morgan McBurnie, Heather Scott and Jessica Robson being invited to become part of a working group tasked with pulling a female health survey together. Heather Scott has since become their social media lead and Jessica Robson is a content writer for Kyniska Advocacy.

Online meetings were also held with a subgroup to help with the planning of the first ATS YPF Conference, which was held in March 2023.



Opportunities

It became clear earlier on, that the YPF Members weren't aware of what goes on behind the scenes at **scottishathletics**, who the different departments were, or what other opportunities were available for young people to stay involved in the sport once they stopped training or competing. The Members were offered a number of opportunities to volunteer at **scottishathletics** events such as:

- **scottishathletics** National Club Conference (annually)
 - Assisting with registration
 - Delivering a workshop
 - Leading on Round Table discussions
- Volunteer at **scottishathletics** events, including:
 - U12 SUPERteams at the Ayrshire Athletics Arena & the Emirates Arena
 - 4J Studios **scottishathletics** Senior & U17 Championships, Grangemouth
 - 4J Studios **scottishathletics** U13/U15/U20 Championships, Aberdeen

These volunteering opportunities led three members of the forum to go onto become qualified technical officials:

- Chloe Emordy and Erin Quinn are now qualified as Level 1 Field Officials, and Erin is currently working towards her Level 2 Field Officials qualification
- Callum Ballantyne gained his Level 1 Starters Assistant qualification.

Outside of volunteering opportunities with scottishathletics, Callum has become a licensed coaching assistant and now coaches regularly at his club. Jess has carried out interviews with athletes at events for the **scottishathletics** Communications Team.



Through their involvement with the forum, the Members have had further opportunities to get involved within the work of **scottishathletics** and other organisations:

- Members were invited to be part of a *Run, Jump, Throw Scotland* re-branding working group. **Julie Shaw-Binns** from **Brand Oath** also attended one of the YPF meetings to gather further feedback.
- One YPF member met with the Glasgow FrontRunners and Leap Sports Scotland
- Members were invited to attend **sportscotland's** Celebration Event *Lead to Succeed* at Stirling University
- Members were asked to take part in a consultation with Eilidh Doyle on young people as leaders with **sportscotland**



Achievements

One of the biggest achievements that the Forum achieved was planning and delivering their inaugural Athletics Trust Scotland Young People's Forum Conference in March 2023 at the Emirates Arena, Glasgow. The theme for the Conference was *Strengthening the Future – Our Vision for Young People in Athletics* and it was led by young people for young people.

Over 45 young people aged 12-23 years, representing 27 different clubs attended a fully packed fun and educational day.

scottishathletics Chair, **David Ovens**, and CEO **Colin Hutchison** opened the Conference. Double Olympian and multiple medallist **Eilidh Doyle** was invited as the guest speaker. There was also a Q&A with **Paul Forbes**, **Derek Rae**, **Diane Ramsey**, **Annabel Simpson** and YPF Member Natalie Sharp making up the Panel at the end of the day.



The young people from the forum were involved in the pre-conference planning and on the day, carried out the registration of attendees, directed the attendees to their workshops and led the focus group discussions. Erin Gillen was the compère for the day while Jessica Robson led the Panel Interviews.

Two workshops were delivered by **scottishathletics** staff on *Roles within Sport* and *Changing Lives*. **SAMH** delivered a workshop on *Stress and How it Can Affect Us*.

A successful application to **Athletics Trust Scotland** helped to finance the conference with further sponsoring secured from **Roon the Toon**, **Tunnocks** and **Run4It** also donated goodies to those attending.



Other achievements that the Members have been involved in are:

- Writing articles for ATS Transforming Lives project and Parkrun
- Writing articles on their volunteering experience for the **scottishathletics** website
- Writing articles on eating disorders which were published in the PB magazine and on the **scottishathletics** website
- Organising an online webinar on eating disorders which three clubs were invited to attend
- Producing and carrying out two surveys on mental health and the retention of young athletes which was distributed to all **scottishathletics** members under the age of 23. The results of the survey were used to shape the focus groups at the YPF Conference.
- Producing information sheets based on the survey results and focus group feedback from the Conference
- Young People's Working Group with Scottish ClubSport

Benefit to Clubs

The knowledge and learning that the young people have gained from being part of the forum has benefited their clubs:

- Two members now sit on their club Committee/Board
- One member leads on their club's social media
- Three members have created a Young People's Development group within their club
- One club has introduced a buddy system for new younger members (older juniors support the new member) which was proposed by a YPF member
- Another club has introduced a buddy system for competitions (older athletes support younger members) which was proposed by a YPF member

Personal Growth and Development

When the first cohort of the Young People's Forum came together, some were quiet and unsure of what was expected of them, others were lacking in confidence. However, two years down the line, the change in these young people has been the biggest achievement. They are more confident and willing to get involved and take themselves out of their comfort zone. At the start of the Forum, they would never have dreamed of being able to stand up and talk to groups of their peers or adults but that is exactly what they have managed to do at both the National Club Conference and the ATS Young People's Forum Conference. It has been fantastic to see them all grow both together as a group and individually.

Being on the forum has had significant impact to some of these young people. This can be demonstrated by Erin Quinn's mum (Appendix B).

We are delighted to be retaining nine members for Cohort Two. Three members successfully reapplied to stay on as members. Six members will be the Mentors for the new group commencing in December 2023. We look forward to continuing working with them all.



Appendix A – ATS YPF Action Plan 2021-2023

GROUP DETAILS

Name: Young People's Forum

Address: c/o **scottish**athletics, Caledonia House, Edinburgh

Web address: www.scottishathletics.org.uk

ABOUT THIS PLAN

The members of the Young People's Forum have developed this action plan. It recognises that there is the requirement to develop a robust plan that will focus on the retention of young athletes within the sport in Scotland as well as looking at the Mental Health of young athletes:

ETHOS

To be inclusive and respectful of everyone's views

Take every idea seriously and be welcoming of all thoughts and opinions

Be determined and persistent to put ideas into action and implement change

VALUES

- Communication
- Equality
- Respect
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving

CORE OBJECTIVES

- Provide a route for young people to suggest ideas and solutions to issues in athletics in Scotland.
- Work together to ensure athletics provides young people with a positive and enjoyable experience.
- Act as an accessible and approachable group to receive thoughts, suggestions, and opinions from young people within athletics.
- Recognise, promote, and advocate young people within athletics in Scotland.
- Support young people in getting involved in administrative and management level positions within the sport.
- Raise the profile of young athletes, coaches, and officials.
- Provide inspiration for all young people involved in athletics.
- Provide critical feedback on any resources produced by **scottish**athletics that will be accessed by young people.
- Provide feedback regarding the development of the **scottish**athletics / UKA recruitment and retention project for young technical officials.
- Help to identify event volunteering opportunities and raise their profile amongst young athletes in Scotland.

STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT DELIVERY

The YPF will create a sustainable structure to support the development of athletics across four core themes – Young Officials, Young Coaches, Young People in Clubs and Support for Young People. This action plan and sub-groups will provide the mechanism to support effective implementation.

OBJECTIVE ONE - TO RECRUIT YOUNG PEOPLE INTO OFFICIATING							
Ref No.	What We Will Do	What The Tasks Are	How Will it be Done	Who Will Do It	When Will It Be Done	What Will It Cost	Outcome
1.	Target exiting young people and provide them with the opportunity and training to become active officials	1. Target existing young people in clubs to increase awareness and opportunities	Posters, Emails, Blogs, Facebook, PB Magazine, SAL Website	YPF SA NCM's SA Comms Manager	December 2022		Increased awareness of opportunities for young officials and support that can be provided
		2. Identify and promote shadowing opportunities within events	Social Media Emails	SA NCM's SA Officials Development Officer YPF	December 2022		Increased awareness of what is involved in/ for officiating
		3. Provide introductory training as well as Level 1 Officiating qualifications to existing athletes	Provide at least one Assistant Officials course specifically to new young officials	SA Officials Development Officer SA NCM's	March 2023	Tutor & Facility Costs – Courses potentially free – Funding?	Min 1 Assistant Officials Course per annum. Min 6 new young official per annum
	Promote progression of young officials from Assistant Official to Level 1	4. Improve the awareness of opportunities amongst existing athletes of opportunities within officiating	Social Media Events	SA Officials Development Officer YPF SA Comms Manager	December 2022	Time – No Cost	Increased awareness of young officiating opportunities to all athletes in clubs

OBJECTIVE TWO - TO RECRUIT YOUNG PEOPLE INTO COACHING

Ref No.	What We Will Do	What The Tasks Are	How it Will be Done	Who Will Do It	When Will It Be Done	What Will It Cost	Outcomes
	Target young people and provide them with the opportunity and training to become active coaches	1.Target existing young people in clubs to increase awareness and provision of opportunities	Posters, Emails, Blogs, Facebook, PB Magazine, SA Website	YPF Subgroup SA NCM's SA Coaching Coordinator	December 2022	Limited cost – possibly posters SA staff time	Increased awareness of opportunities for young coaches
		2.Provide introductory training and coaching qualifications to existing athletes and other young people involved in the sport	- Provide courses nationally tailored specifically for new young coaches -Promote the courses through the YPF	SA Coaching Coordinator SA NCM's YPF Reps	April 2023	Tutor & Facility Costs – Courses potentially free – Funding?	More courses per year for young coaches More trained young coaches
		3.Ensure young coaches are mentored appropriately within club environments	- Work with SA NCM's to ensure trained young coaches are mentored within clubs - Encourage all clubs have a coaching representative on their committee - Promote CPD opportunities e.g., regional jumps & throws development days to expand coaching knowledge and networking opportunities	SA NCM's SA Coaching Coordinator YPF Reps	April 2023	No Costs – Staff Time	Improved retention of young coaches within club environments
		4. raise awareness of other coaching opportunities for young coaches e.g., local authorities/ trusts or within other clubs if moving away e.g., university	- Social Media and YPF	SA NCM's SA Coaching Coordinator YPF Reps SA Comms Manager	Ongoing	Staff Time	Improved retention of young coaches in the sport as a whole

OBJECTIVE THREE – HOW TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE’S INVOLVEMENT IN CLUBS

Ref No.	What We Will Do	What The Tasks Are	How it Will be Done	Who Will Do It	When Will It Be Done	What Will It Cost	Outcomes
1.	Representation of YPF at National Club Conference	Deliver a workshop on the work of the YPF	Attendance at conference	YPF members	October 2022		Increased awareness of the YPF and it’s aims and objectives Clubs being informed about the YPF
	Representation of YPF at events	Attend various events and competitions throughout the year to increase awareness and opportunities the YPF	Attend events and competitions Social Media	YPF SA NCM’s SA Comms Manager	Ongoing		Increased awareness of YPF and opportunities to be involved
	Recruit young people onto club committee/ boards	Encourage clubs to recruit a young person’s rep for the committee/ board.	Awareness raising of the benefits of having a young person on the committee/ board Submit a nomination and attend club AGM	SA NCM’s YPF Clubs	Ongoing		More young people representing the views of young people within their club Views of young people being represented
	Recruit a young person onto the Scottishathletics and ATS board	Encourage young people to consider representation on the SA and ATS board	Raising awareness of the benefits of having a young person on the committee/ board Submit a nomination and attend club AGM	YPF	September 2023		Raise awareness and increasing knowledge on these topics e.g., inclusion, nutrition
		Liaise with club committee	Workshops (face to face or virtual)	YPF members SA NCM’s Clubs	April 2024		

	YPF representatives identifying workshops to be delivered within their club e.g., inclusion, nutrition Increase the visibility of the YPF	Identify relevant topics and deliverers Introducing podcasts and increase social media presence	Podcasts Emails Social Media Platforms	YPF SA Comms Manager SA NCM's	Ongoing		Reaching a wider audience to raise awareness of the work of the YPF
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OBJECTIVE FOUR – FURTHER SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Ref No.	What We Will Do	What The Tasks Are	How it Will be Done	Who Will Do It	When Will It Be Done	What Will It Cost	Outcomes
	To investigate why young People, drop out the sport	1. Conduct a review with SA to establish key reasons why athletes drop out of the sport between 14 and 20 and provide potential solutions to these issues	Work with SA NCM'S to conduct research on reasons for drop-out at targeted age groups	SA NCM's YPF Reps Club Athletes	February 2024	No Costs – YPF/ Staff Time	Solutions provided to help improve retention rates of young people in Scotland
	Create a route to sign post young people to for mental health awareness	1. Spread awareness through Sharing personal experiences and provide information on sign posting to relevant organisations 2. Develop a partnership with SAHM and provide appropriate information relating to various topics including male mental health 3. Develop resources for coaches and athletes to	Monthly newsletters Social media posts Create articles Workshops – for all Make helpful cards to be available at competitions/ events Information cards	SA NCM's YPF Reps YPF SA NCM's YPF SA NCM's			Develop a range of information and sign posting for young athletes

		help keep athletes motivated if e.g., an athlete is injured					
	Deliver a conference aimed at young people	To book a suitable venue Identify topics and deliverers and promotion of the conference.	Delivered face to face	YPF SA Development team	January 2024		Engagement with more young people and informing them of the YPF and allowing them to have a voice Increased opportunities to develop YPF through securing further funding
	Research funding opportunities to help the YPF develop it's aims and objectives	Identify funding opportunities through Funding Scotland, Sport Scotland and ATS	Research Websites	YPF SA NCM's ATS	Ongoing		Increased support and information for young people Young people's achievements recognised and encourage retention of more young people within sport/ clubs.
	Develop partnerships	Identify other partners who can provide support and enable the YPF to deliver its aims and objectives e.g., Kyniska Advocacy	Contact identified partners and develop a partnership agreement	YPF SA NCM's	Ongoing		
	Awarding Young People for their volunteering	To identify reward schemes and volunteering programmes e.g., DofE, Saltire Awards	Establish a list of volunteering reward schemes	YPF SA NCM's	Ongoing		

Appendix B – Erin Quinn

Erin Quinn – Cohort 1 (By Erin's mum, Laura Quinn).

Erin joined the Young People's Forum as part of Cohort One in December 2021. At that time her athletics standard was good – she was training at least three times a week at Kilbarchan and Carlisle for hammer and discus and had a local gym membership provided by the regional council as a talented athlete. She represented Scottish Schools for discus at SIAB in September 2021, all was good. In December that year, however, she took unwell with a seizure. Within the next few months, the seizures continued, she had several hospital admissions and they kept sending her home with unknown cause. Her mood got very low as nobody could explain what was happening. She was training as much as she could but had to miss lots of sessions as the aftereffects of a seizure were exhausting (extreme tiredness, headache, blurred vision, pain throughout the body).

Erin continued to attend as many athletics events as she could despite the constant worry of whether a seizure would occur in addition to her aching limbs. By summer 2022, Doctors had told her to give up all sports - so training stopped and life as she knew it changed dramatically.

This was the worst possible time for Erin as she went from being very active to being forced to relax and rest as much as possible. Her mood suffered and she felt excluded from everything. Things were hard at school as every time she had a seizure, the class had to be evacuated. Other pupils were mean and derogatory about something she couldn't control.

This is where the YPF was a lifesaver. Athletics was the main thing in her life and when training and competing were removed, she had a huge void to fill. By attending the online and face-to-face meetings, Erin was able to stay involved in the sport. She saw friends and got to be an athlete again for that brief time at meetings. When the YPF got the opportunity to help at Kilmarnock for SUPERteams, she jumped at the chance. This was something she could do within the boundaries set by the doctor.

Erin loved being on the field helping the young people and said she'd quite like to try officiating. When the opportunity came up to shadow officials at the National Championships in Aberdeen she was delighted - it meant she could then be there amongst friends without the pressure of competing but still abiding by what the doctor had asked her. Through this, she found her new love of the sport and was determined to become a qualified Field Official. Erin has since qualified as a Level 1 Field Official and is loving the role. She is now working towards her Level 2 Field Official qualification.

Erin continued to attend YPF meetings, volunteer at athletics events locally with the Active School's Team, help friends with training and do whatever she could that didn't involve exercising herself. She was involved as much as possible, and this got her through the bad days of multiple scans, tests and appointments.

When she was eventually diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder in spring this year, she was allowed back to gentle training and the first thing she did was head to the track to throw a discus.

If it hadn't been for the YPF then Erin would have been at a total loss of what to do with athletics being removed. As an individual, Erin's confidence has grown with attending in-person meetings, conferences, video calls with the forum (including a planning meeting with Eilidh Doyle), athletics competitions etc. This made a huge difference to her mental wellbeing. The speakers she met at meetings; the friends on the YPF; the scottishathletics staff; others in the sport - all these people made a huge difference at a time when it was desperately needed.

As a member of the YPF, she has been given opportunities to meet other people, speak in public, carry out tasks she wouldn't have tried before. She has passion for the topics discussed e.g. mental health and the retention of athletes, and is keen to promote these whenever she can. She always enjoys listening to the guest speakers and uses what she learned in other aspects of her life.

Through the YPF and people knowing who she is, Erin often receives messages from other athletes. It's a boost to her self-esteem when they send a message and if she can't think of a way to answer them, she advises where they can find the information.

When Erin had permission to start training again, the fact she was still involved with the sport (although it was in a different capacity) meant the return to training was much easier than it could have been. If she hadn't had the opportunities with the YPF and therefore still part of athletics, she may not have returned to the sport.

Erin is now back training for discus and had the courage to pick up a hammer again for a memorial competition in memory of her coach John Little's wife. Small steps for some people but a massive hurdle for Erin knowing what she has been through the past couple of years. Her seizures are currently controlled but the pain and exhaustion is still there so she takes one day at a time and volunteers whenever she can.

Many thanks for all the encouragement and opportunities the YPF have provided.

