



TRIATHLON  
ENGLAND

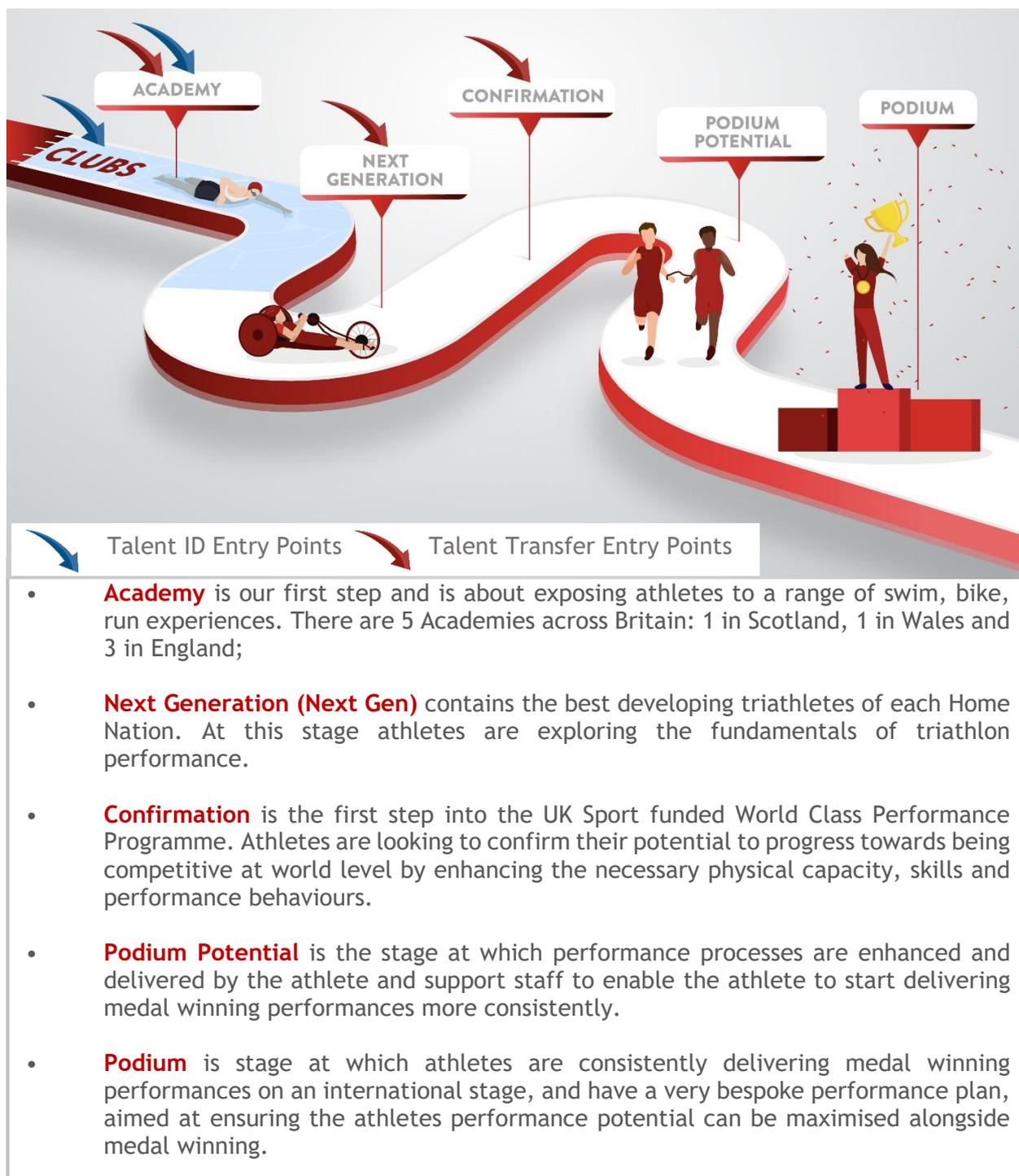
# ACADEMY HANDBOOK



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## 1. PURPOSE & AIMS

The purpose of the Academy programme is to identify and then expose athletes to a range of positive, fun and engaging swim, bike and run experiences. We aim to support an athlete's development by:

- Establishing a functional & supported triathlon specific Daily Training Environment (DTE),
- Beginning to develop the technical skills for swim, bike and run,
- Exposing athletes to the triathlon basics (training/racing/performance behaviours),

- Beginning to understand impact of impairment on swim, bike & run eg training & equipment adaptations & prosthetic needs,
- Engaging & educating parents & partners,
- Beginning to transfer single discipline skills into the triathlon context,
- Exposing athletes to the excitement and demands of multi-sport racing,
- Inspiring them to choose to identify as a triathlete.

## 2. What is the Academy?

The role of coaches and staff working within our Paralympic Pathway is to support and develop athletes who may long term have the potential to achieve selection to the British Triathlon World Class Performance Programme (WCPP). The first stage is through our Academy programme which is here to provide guidance for athletes who aspire and have the the potential to compete at the highest level in Paratriathlon. It is also there to support the coaches, clubs, parents and partners of the athletes. The Academy is run by a Lead Coach who is the direct link and a bridge between the Academy and the wider pathway.

Across Great Britain there are five Academy's, split across the Home Nations (England, Scotland and Wales) and athletes will access the Academy in the area in which they live. The Academy coach will be the primary point of contact in the programme for athletes. Each squad and coach will operate in a way that works most effectively for them, their athletes and situation.

- Scotland
- England North
- England Midlands
- England South
- Wales

The Academy will operate in two distinct ways to support athletes in meeting the programmes aims:

- **Establishing and supporting the Daily Training Environment (DTE)**

The DTE is the place where athletes spend the vast majority of their time and as such it is absolutely key to athlete development that this is established to be as effective as possible for each athlete to allow them to flourish. Every athlete who enters the Academy programme will come with a different set of experiences and skills and it is crucial that these are at the centre of establishing the most effective environment for each athlete as they progress. Athletes may receive the best possible support from one triathlon club, or it may be most effective to work with a number of different single-discipline clubs and coaches.

For those athletes who have already set up an effective environment then the Academy Lead will be there to support and guide the athlete and their existing coach(es).

- **Provide supportive, challenging and inspiring group sessions**

Each Academy will run in a way which best meets the needs of the athletes within it with the Academy coach using a blend of group and individual session delivery as they see appropriate. This could vary over time as the coach seeks to deliver the best possible learning experience for the athlete group through the various periods of the year. The coach will look to guide Whole Athlete Development in line with our principles through a combination of experiences to allow them to explore and enhance the following:

- i. Performance behaviours,
- ii. Their skills, knowledge and understanding of triathlon,
- iii. Their physical, psychological and emotional capabilities and robustness,
- iv. Stage appropriate performance standards.

### **LEARNING TO BE A TRIATHLETE**

At Academy level athletes will receive education into the fundamentals of how to be successful. This will include education sessions to build the foundations of a number of key topics which will help each athlete to reach their potential. As athletes progress through the pathway we will build on this education and they will begin to receive support which is more bespoke to their specified individual needs. Some of the areas we will look at will be:

- Strength and Conditioning
- Performance Behaviours
- Nutrition
- Life Skills
- Injury prevention
- Injury management
- Impairment management

Our coaches and wider support team will also work with athletes to look at any specific adaptations and differing requirements they may need in relation to their impairment. This may mean helping them to find the best possible prosthetist or equipment manufacturer or it could be advising on adaptations which could be made to training or equipment to enable athletes to train and compete as effectively as possible. Every athlete is different and the Academy is there to help guide them through all of the exciting challenges which come with competing in the sport.

### **3. Who is the Academy For?**

The Academy programme will support and develop eligible athletes from every Paratriathlon category.

Athletes need to be classified before entering the Paratriathlon Pathway. This allows us to establish if they are eligible to compete in the sport and if so in which category they will race. Find out more about our classification structure and how to apply for a [classification here](#). The paratriathlon pathway is open to athletes who are starting out on their journey as a triathlete, whether they are young athletes or older athletes moving from another sport or moving into paratriathlon after acquiring an impairment which makes them eligible to compete in the sport. Athletes can be members of the Academy for between two and four years, depending on their stage of development.

Paratriathlon is relatively new as a Paralympic sport (2016 was the sport's debut at the Paralympic Games) and a sport with huge variety and opportunity. This means that we have seen athletes being successful from a wide range of backgrounds and ages. As such our Academy squads cater for everyone from 14 years old through to approximately 35 years old. It is expected that athletes will spend anything between two and four years as part of the Academy. If you are under 14 years of age then we recommend that you engage with your local club and, if appropriate, we will support you to find a suitable training environment. During this time we would also recommend that you engage in local racing opportunities.

## 4. How to join an Academy

There are two key routes to being selected for the Academy:

- Through selection from a [Talent ID](#) event
- Through invitation from improving results in our [Paratri Super Series](#)

After being selected through either route athletes will then undergo a six-month Pathway Confirmation. The Pathway Confirmation allows both the athlete and programme to check that they are a good fit and to ensure that they can establish ways of working which will help to develop each athlete effectively. We will take time to really get to know each athlete and understand how we can best support their development. Athletes will be supported by the Academy Coach throughout this period and we will ensure that they get the full range of Academy experiences. We will also work with athletes to start benchmarking their progress most effectively. As each athlete will come from a different background this will look different for each athlete.

The key element for the programme at this stage will be how well the athlete engages with the programme in line with the commitments and expectations laid out below. We will support the athletes to meet these and will educate athletes on what we see as key Performance Behaviours which we would look for athletes to develop as they move through the stages of the Pathway. Athletes' will formally join the Academy at the completion of the Pathway Confirmation stage.

## 5. Commitments & Expectations

Academy Coaches work hard to create “added value” training days/camps for all Academy athletes and full attendance is an expectation. It is also expected that athletes and their personal coaches will be flexible to work with and welcome the Academy coach into their DTE on a regular basis. There is an understanding that athletes can have busy schedules competing across three disciplines as well as triathlon, therefore should a clash of dates arise for squad sessions then a timely conversation with the Academy Coaches should occur to discuss potential clashes and options available to the athlete. Reasonable pre-authorised absence for relevant/required competition/commitments is obviously allowed. Part of Academy membership requires athletes to begin to identify and specialise as Triathletes and so with this prioritise Academy activity over other sporting commitments.

As athletes progress they will be expected to focus their triathlon racing commitments on the British Triathlon Paratri Super Series, details of which can be found [here](#). During the Pathway Confirmation stage, the Academy Coach will work with each athlete and any of their coaches to help them establish how they work across the three disciplines of the sport in terms of both training and competing to help maximise their development as a triathlete.

## 6. Competition

At this introductory stage of the pathway there will be a real variety in the competitions athletes can access. The key is that competitions are where athletes have the chance to see how well training is progressing and also to discover the areas in which they need guided support to develop. Competition should also be great fun and a chance to get out, meet new people and experience what it is like to put all of the hard work into action.

The enormous variety which triathlon offers is some of the beauty of the sport and what brings so many athletes into the sport. The wider “multi-sport” family includes a number of variations which each athlete may enjoy and use for their development as they get started or as they progress through the sport and look to try different things:

- **Triathlon**      Swim - Bike - Run
- **Duathlon**      Run - Bike - Run

- **Aquathlon** Swim - Run

At this stage there are a range of different types of competitions in which athletes may compete:

- British Triathlon Paratri Super Series
- Local multi-sport competitions
- Single discipline racing

How much each athlete competes as they start to develop will vary enormously depending on their background but may also be impacted by impairment type and experience of competing in multi-sports.

Initially racing may be made up more of races in the single disciplines (swim, bike and run) as athletes test specific fitness and skills in each discipline, as well as learning how to tactically race in each aspect. At this stage may only compete in a few multi-sport competitions as they start to experience what it is to put the individual disciplines together in one race.

By the time athletes are ready to move on to the Next Generation stage of the pathway they will be competing in a larger number of triathlons each year, many of which will be part of our [Paratri Super Series](#). Athlete may still also compete in a number of single discipline events as they look to further their experience and to also gain the great joy which competition can bring.

The Paratri Super Series is designed to give athletes the chance to race at a high (national) level on multiple occasions. It provides excellent opportunities and is a key part of a suite of experiences we feel are necessary to support athlete development as they develop through the Academy. Where possible races are spread out across the country and evenly through the season. Course design and venues will vary and this can also help athletes to develop as they experience how to maximise their potential in a range of different environments which they may face as they develop through the Paratriathlon pathway.

## **7. Safeguarding, Welfare & Clean Sport**

### **SAFEGAURDING**

We work hard to create environments for all Pathway athletes that are fun, engaging and support athletes effectively. To achieve this, athletes should always feel safe and be treated with respect whilst taking part in Academy programme activity, while similarly showing respect to others.

If athletes/parents or partners are at all worried about that way they, or any other athletes in the environment are being treated by others please speak to a trusted adult involved in the programme. For athletes this could be a parent, their coach or the Academy Welfare Officer, who will be identified when you join the academy, or for a parent or partner it might be the coach or welfare officer. If a situation is more serious, the relevant Home Nation Welfare Officer or the BTF Safeguarding Manager may also be contacted.

If there is not an adult that a young athlete feels comfortable talking to or trusts in the environment, they can call Childline on 0800 11 11 or visit [Childline's Website](#). If any athlete or parent/partner believes they or someone else is in immediate danger from an adult or other young person, please contact the Police on 999.

BFT have created a resource for young triathletes to refer to in order to help you identify what behaviours are not appropriate, how to treat others and who to contact if they feel unsafe in any way. The resource can be found here:

<https://www.britishtriathlon.org/britain/documents/about/child-protection/help-and-advice/young-persons-guide-2018>

BTF have also created a young person's resource to help them stay safe online. It can be found here:

<https://www.britishtriathlon.org/britain/images/safeguarding/online-guide.jpg>

### **MENTAL HEALTH REFERRAL PATHWAY**

It is very normal (and healthy) for humans to experience a whole range of emotions in daily life. It is important to be aware of how anyone might spot the difference between normal, functional emotions and a mental health problem.

Mental health problems are characterised by symptoms (including but not limited to things such as low mood; feelings of anxiety; dampened emotions) that last longer than two weeks and that have a significant impact on daily life (including but not limited to things such as significant change in sleep patterns; change in eating behaviours; withdrawal from social situations).

If athletes have concerns about their mental health, we would recommend they speak to trusted adults such as a parents, partners, coaches, or the Welfare Officer. If they need further support, then we suggest that visiting their GP to explore further help.

Young Minds website is a useful resource to help young people to identify their feelings, give tips on how to cope and to reach out for further support if needed.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/>

Mind website is a similarly useful resource

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/>

If athletes find themselves in an emergency struggling with mental health, dial 999.

### **CLEAN SPORT**

British Triathlon works with UKAD and World Triathlon to promote clean sport and the values of the UKAD's 100% Me programme. All athletes at Next Generation level will be provided with regular anti-doping education appropriate to their age and stage of performance development via either their Academy or Next Generation Programme.

Everything you need to know on anti-doping including prohibited lists, the use of and how to check medications along with testing procedures along with a lot of other useful information can be found [here](#) on the British Triathlon Clean Sport pages.

and/or

You can download UKAD's Clean Sport app for [apple](#) or [android](#)

We'd also recommend getting the Global DRO [app](#) to check any medication you are required to take.

Athletes under 18 will not be tested without parental approval and testing will always be conducted with a chaperone present.

Reporting any concerns about antidoping in triathlon can be done via our website [here](#) or you can go directly to UKAD's site [here](#). Or alternatively you can get in touch with us through this email address [cleansport@britishtriathlon.org](mailto:cleansport@britishtriathlon.org)

## **8. Equipment & Kit**

Competing in triathlon can require a lot of different equipment as athletes train and compete across the three disciplines. There is no expectation that athletes have the latest or most expensive equipment and in fact it is often great to develop using more basic equipment as they learn the sport, knowing that they can develop their equipment alongside their physical development as they move through the pathway. We believe that athletes should focus on their own longer-term development as a priority.

In many cycling and triathlon clubs there tends to be a good second-hand market for bikes and we would certainly encourage this, especially with growing and developing athletes. The Academy coach will be able to help steer athletes towards the most appropriate equipment for their stage of development. There are often grants which can be accessed if athletes need to buy new pieces of equipment, so while kit can be expensive we will work with athletes to minimise these costs so that they have the greatest opportunity to develop their physical potential.

Impairment specific equipment (eg prosthetics, splints) should be sought as early as possible in order to enable training across swim, bike and run with the least discomfort. This can be a tricky area to negotiate as athlete's get started in the sport. Depending on the nature of an athlete's impairment there can be many variations as to what they might need. Again there are ways of looking at grant funders to support prosthetics if necessary, but the key as with bikes and racing wheelchair is to look at what is functional to get started in the sport, rather than getting the most sophisticated prosthetics at this stage. As athletes grow, develop and get stronger what they want from a prosthetic may also change. Many of our more experienced athletes are also very keen to share their own experiences to help guide new athletes in their equipment choices.

[Link to list of grant funders](#)

## **9. Principles behind training**

Paratriathlon is a very physical endurance sport and athletes will have to do many hours of training consistently over a number of years to build up the fitness and skills if they aspire to be successful at an international level in the future. A key element to future success is the ability to really love training and racing and to embrace it. It is common that athletes develop this love over time, but it is an essential part of the sport.

As athletes enter the Academy stage they should begin by working to develop a weekly routine where training takes place across all three disciplines (swim, bike and run) at least once a week. The amount of training in each discipline will initially be shaped by the athlete's previous experience in sport. Where athletes have significant experience in one or more disciplines, the focus should be on devoting more time to developing technically in the disciplines they are relatively weaker in, while they may use the discipline(s) they are more experienced in to continue to develop their fitness.

The Academy coach will support athletes in setting up a local DTE, which may involve the use of single discipline clubs and coaches where appropriate. Coaches will be on hand to help athletes develop a consistent weekly routine, supporting them to develop a balanced and sustainable programme which can provide a strong foundation to build from as they develop in the sport.

Athletes should look to spend a large percentage of their training time working with coaches to develop the fundamentals of good technique across all three disciplines, working to understand the impact of their impairment and start to work towards minimising that impact.

Depending on an athlete's previous experience within single discipline sports they should begin to understand the difference between 'types' of training (eg. aerobic, interval, speed) and start to develop an ability to appropriately pace efforts on the RPE scale (1-10). Technology such as GPS watches or bike computers may begin to play a part here in helping to understand the relationship between effort and pace as athletes progress and they may use an online training diary platform such as Training Peaks to plan and track progress.

As athletes start to develop a consistent training routine, they should begin to understand how their body reacts to different types of training. Athletes may also notice impacts specific to their impairment and combining this personal knowledge and understanding should work with their coach to make decisions that ensure they are maximising the time they are able to train consistently for.

Within the first three months of the athlete's Pathway Confirmation period they should look to carry out some single discipline time trials or test sets in order to set some benchmarks. This information can then be used by the athlete and coach to set some goals or targets for improving across all three disciplines. As athletes move towards the triathlon season they should also look towards setting goals around putting their single discipline strengths together in a full triathlon.

## **10. Personal Development**

We believe that taking a long-term view to developing each athlete is the best way to help them achieve their potential and go on to be athletes who can enjoy a long successful career in sport. We know that every athlete will exit the pathway at some stage, be that at the end of the Academy stage or as a multiple Paralympic medal winning athlete retiring after a successful triathlon career. In each case it is our goal to help prepare athletes to thrive both in and out of competitive sport.

### **Athlete and their Impairment**

We acknowledge that future potential medal winners in paratriathlon will come from a range of backgrounds and experience of disability - congenital and acquired impairments, education and upbringing, support needs and independence. Our aim is to develop athletes towards their individual potential including specific life skills appropriate to potential medal winning paratriathletes.

### **Work & Education**

We view each athlete through the lens that looks at and prepares them for their future outside of the competitive sport, aiding us in providing a development journey that prepares athletes to move onto the next phase of their life. It is really important to us that when athletes enter our pathway they have the opportunity to develop themselves as well as their athletic potential. The value of education and personal development is really important to us at British Triathlon and we want to ensure that athletes feel supported to develop every aspect of themselves.

We will have a number of athletes who have already gone through formal education and are in the world of work. We recognise the importance that this has on personal development, as well as an athlete's ability to support themselves and their family. We will support

athletes to combine work and training, as well as home life and so that they can continue to maximise personal development.

### **Athlete Support Network**

Additionally we fully acknowledge the vital role that parents, partners and personal coaches can play for athletes, on their personal and athletic development and also on helping to facilitate the training it is necessary to put in to achieve their athletic potential.

We will endeavor to work with each athlete's personal support network through the Pathway Confirmation period through their induction into the squad and we will look to maintain this as they progress through the pathway.

## **11. What's Next**

The next step in our Pathway is the Next Generation squad. Find out all about the "Next Gen" squad in the relevant booklet [here](#).

Below we have outlined the selection guidance so people can understand what is required to progress to the Next Generation stage of the pathway:

### **Under Development**

If an athlete has not progressed sufficiently to progress onto the Next Generation programme by the end of their time in the Academy, then the Academy Coach will support the athlete with their transition off the programme. Leaving the pathway does not mean that an athlete cannot continue to enjoy the sport; they are able to continue their development in their club environment and keep progressing and then be selected back onto the Pathway at a later date through demonstration of progress through their race performances.