

Dark Peak Juniors Round Table

Meeting 18/10/2020

Attendees

Lewis Ashton
Helen Elmore
Mark Whitworth
Alenka Brooks
Adam Taylor
Kristian Groom
Michael Griffiths

Return to running

Lewis outlined the provisions for a return the running. That we can run groups of up to 30, but with coaching ratios of 1:12 with Qualified Leaders. It is intended to return to having multiple groups of roughly 6-10 years and 11-17 years. There will be mandatory sign up ahead of the session. The spread of capabilities in the older group is really too large. Discussion of this led into broader discussions about purpose and objectives of the Junior Section.

The current demographics (predominantly based on 2019 membership):

Age : number of members

17:3
16:3
15:5
14:3
13:3
12:3
11:3
10:1
9:1
8:4
7:1

Discussions about numbers

The numbers are a bit too low in the 11 - 17 age range. Ideally this group should be split into at least 2. The challenge is in recruiting teenagers - typically this is an age range where drop off in participation is more common.

With a limited number of leaders and with all those currently involved having their own running careers, there is a reluctance to go out and do a hard sell for Dark Peak.

With the up take of training places for leaders & coaches in 2021, we should have more flexibility with group leaders by spring. For the last 2+ years the leadership of groups has fallen to a very small group of qualified leaders and some assistants. Additionally, we are exploring options to get more people DBS checked through England Athletic - that greatly adds to flexibility in group make up and supervision requirements.

It is important to understand that all of the current leaders and all of those looking to train in 2021 do not see coaching as their primary vocation. Management of responsibilities and time commitments must fit within this expectation.

Purpose of the group

It was felt that it would be useful to define what we think Dark Peak Juniors is for.

Lewis set out his personal view:

The purpose of the group is to provide broad capability fell and hill running experience, skills and leadership. The emphasis being on participation and very much learning skills and judgement. What the group does not currently offer is elite coaching - there is no reason that might not change in the future - but that would be dependant upon numbers, suitably keen leaders and available resources. The intention must be to maintain a diverse base of participants. It is important to provide the members with the experience and capabilities that would enable them to flourish in the senior ranks once they graduate.

Having a UKA affiliated racing capability has always been a key part of club membership.

Again, looking at the overall size of the group, we are keen to see Junior Members joining that don't necessarily have parents already in the club. The intention has always been to provide coaching and leadership for kids that don't necessarily have participant parents. Due to limited resources, we have never gone out of our way to advertise the group. The low profile of the group has meant that generally the kids that come along already have an understanding that getting wet feet is okay. This is a good starting point.

The increase in available leaders in Spring 2021 should give some flexibility to look to expand the group size some. As an ideal, the 11-17 group would have at least double the number of members. The ability to split the 11-17 group in two would be good, to address the spread of capabilities. There is also a desire to have the 15-17 group better integrated with the younger senior runners. Lewis and Megan (women's captain) have had multiple discussions about how to do this. A case can be made for supporting 20-something runners to gain coaching and leadership qualifications. Skills and qualification in leadership & coaching in the 20s group would enable them to develop activities that work for their peer group, as well as have the potential for these young leaders to act in those roles for the Juniors.

Alenka highlighted that there are a number of young qualified members, who coach in groups outside Dark Peak. We would welcome their input in to club activities.

In seeking to understand what DP Juniors should and could do, it is important to understand where we fit in the Sheffield running community. There is crossover with some key clubs. SYO have a very strong coaching capability, within a sport framework that is very focused on organisation and technical capabilities. Hallamshire Harriers have a strong youth coaching program. Their objectives are focused on Track and Cross Country. There is some crossover between both of these clubs. Those relationships can always be built on. This is something to be welcomed, but sometimes it can be difficult to get good intentions to solidify into activities on the ground. There are also some non-club based setups. Dark Peak are comfortable with members participating in these. Personal experiences across these vary.

There are a limited number of races for juniors in the local area. We are keen to support these and support the development of new races.

Social media

It was felt that having a greater social media presence would aid visibility of the group and enable some organic growth. A Twitter account and Instagram account have been created. Because of this, there is a need to create a photo / video policy that will allow everyone to feel comfortable with their own levels of media visibility.

The Twitter account is @DpfrJ

The Instagram account is Darkpeak_juniors

Structure and roles

The structure of the Juniors was discussed. There is currently only one formal role for Juniors. The Junior Co-ordinator (Lewis Ashton). This is a Committee role in the main club. It is also an EA recognised role. There is a desire to spread responsibilities within the juniors. No specifics of how this should be done. Lewis would say, please volunteer your skills, and if you feel the need wrestle control from Lewis.

Meeting feedback

It was felt that this discussion/meeting was worthwhile and should be repeated with some regularity. Despite web conferencing being somewhat impersonal, it does have the benefit of enabling us as parents to participate after bed time. In future, we'll make the meetings a shade later, but try to make it a bit shorter to compensate.

Please let us know your thoughts on any and all of the topics in this document. If all else fails, you can get hold of Lewis on juniors[at]dpfr.org.uk

Lewis

26/10/2020