



# AUCKLAND CENTRAL HUB PROJECT – SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION OF JUNIOR ATHLETES TO SENIOR CLUBS

CASE STUDY



## OVERVIEW

The problem we are trying to solve is the drop off in membership in-between junior and senior athletic clubs. The Central Hub was created for clubs located in Central Auckland. Auckland City Athletic Club is the key senior club in central Auckland and our goal is to encourage and support athletes from the five junior clubs located in central Auckland to join the senior club when they reach the appropriate age. Statistics from Athletics New Zealand (quantitative) and Athletics Auckland (qualitative) has identified a number of key issues and reasons for this drop-off including:

- Key time of change in the members life as they move into and out of intermediate school
- Lots of sport choices and the perceived need to begin 'specialising' or getting 'serious'
- Some coaches, athletes and parents may have the "winner takes all" mentality and culture as they get older
- Some feelings of isolation. For example, more independence expected by parents; breakdown in peer groups; preference for more team sports

All of this prompted us to ask ourselves, is what we are offering what our younger members need or want? The Auckland Central Hub project aims to address this.



## CHALLENGE

1. Lack of communication and integration between some junior Clubs and key senior Club on managing member transition.
2. The offering of some Junior and Senior clubs is not catering well enough to 'Intermediate School age' kids (11-14 years)
3. No clear pathway for members through later years of a Junior Club and into a Senior club



## SOLUTION

1. A joint strategy was developed between all clubs involved in the Hub, regular meetings are held between club reps, and a WhatsApp group was set up between members of the Central Hub clubs.
2. The creation of the Central Hub sprint and distance coaching squads for 11-14 years, drawing from all 6 clubs in the Central Hub.
3. Central Hub clubs working together to manage athletes transitions and pathways.



## RESULTS

### 1. Strategy agreed

- Organise the structure for athletes to transition from the junior to senior club.
- Increasing the number of effective coaches in the Central Hub
- Boost the numbers of older kids in junior clubs by 5% per

### 2. Central Hub Coaching squads

- 20+ paying members in the sprint coaching squad for 11-14 years, run by Bailey Stewart for 2 x 10 week blocks this year.
- 10+ paying members in the distance coaching squad for 11-14 years, run by Phil Clode for 2 x 10 week blocks this year.

### 3. Athlete Transition and Pathways

- Clubs working closely together to discuss and manage individual athlete transitions
- Senior Club Welcome Series in November for 12+ year olds who may be transitioning out of their Junior Club into a Senior club in the next 1-3 years
- Free transition between Central Hub Junior clubs and Senior club



## PARTNERS

Members of the Central Hub include:  
Auckland City Athletics Club  
Ellerslie Athletic and Harrier Club  
Roskill South Amateur Athletic Club  
Point Chevalier Amateur Athletic Club  
Eastern Athletic and Harrier Club  
Hillsborough Athletic Club

The project has also been supported by Athletics New Zealand as part of the Club Development Programme.

## KEY LEARNINGS

- We initially were too reliant on Athletics NZ. We learnt we needed to drive this more ourselves, with their support.
- We tried to solve too many problems at the start e.g. coaching programmes to help drop off in earlier years at Junior clubs.
- Everyone could see the value in the concept for the Hub but these things take time due to:
  - o Existing structures and ways of working
  - o Limited time. The volunteers involved with the Hub also had to manage their own clubs!
  - o The need to establish trust between the clubs
  - o Limited resources

## SUMMARY

It is still early in our journey but we starting to see some great initial results with athletes engaging.

Could we get to point where 50+ athletes are transitioning from the five junior clubs into the senior club every year?

Ultimately, we want to implement 'sustainable systems' both from a financial, time and resource point of view.

