

With the arrival of Junior Parkrun, setting up free races across the country, now adults and kids alike are more keen than ever to get involved in the sprint to the finish – and be much fitter and healthier for it too.

More than 100 kids are enthusiastically running 2km around a park on a chilly Sunday morning.

While some are racing to be first across the line, others are simply enjoying running with friends on a safe, traffic-free course.

Every one of them is excited to find out their official time and most are keen to beat their PB (personal best).

No, this is not a scene from a pipe dream thought up by Britain's leading child health experts.

It is one of the weekly Junior Parkruns at The Helix, near Falkirk, which attracts an average turnout of 98 youngsters.

Parkrun UK is part of a global fitness phenomenon for all ages.

The not-for-profit organisation have just created a separate weekly race for youngsters aged four to 14.

In King's Park in Stirling, a Junior Parkrun held on the same day at the same time of 9.30am attracts an average of 61 kids.

Now Scotland's third Junior Parkrun

in Glasgow has been launched and is expected to be attended by hundreds more young runners.

Liz Corbett is a volunteer ambassador for Parkrun in Scotland. She said: "Parkrun has been such a huge success worldwide since it started a decade ago.

"In Scotland alone many thousands run every Saturday in almost 20 events.

"One of the most impressive things is that whole families come along to take part in the free weekly races.

"We realised through this that there was likely to be a strong demand for children-only runs."

Following the same format as the adult events, Junior Parkruns are free.

Liz said: "A free event is very attractive, especially if you have a family. Many people can't afford to take their kids to lots of activities or enter races.

"And while Parkruns are free they still have all the results and more that you would expect from professionally-run events."

Parkrun provides an impressive array of data after each event.

Liz said: "Parkruns tell you your exact time, a comparison of your time to others and your percentage success according to your age.

"The website also keeps records of PBs and how many events you have done. Adults who run 50, 100 and 250



FAMILY TIME Dad and daughter team Henry and Joy race at the Glasgow Victoria Park event

“You can really push yourself and it's with your friends

KIDDING AROUND IN



FIONA RUSSELL

REWARD Youngsters who do 11 runs get half-marathon wristbands



parkruns receive a special T-shirt. Kids who run 11 runs or 22k are awarded a blue half marathon band, while there's a green 'marathon' band and an orange 'ultra-marathon' band for 50 runs (100km).

"We now do the same for the kids – and they love it as much as the adults.

"They can see all the same facts and figures and we encourage them to run multiple events by offering them coloured wristbands."

Liz added that motivating people to take part in more events is key to Parkrun UK's philosophy.

She said: "Although a wristband might not seem like a big thing, the kids covet them.

"They want to run more so they can be seen wearing a coloured band."

At the first junior run in Scotland The Helix, one of the volunteer organisers Lynsey Wallace is also amazed by the appetite for the events.

She said: "The first junior Parkrun had

87 kids and now we regularly get more than 100. Surprisingly the split is 50-50 boys and girls.

"They all come and run with huge smiles on their faces and, although there are some very competitive kids, the atmosphere is friendly.

"In an era where childhood obesity and lack of exercise regularly makes the news, it's great to see parkrun bucking trends."

Lynsey's son, seven-year-old Hayden, and daughter Beth, 11, are keen parkrunners.

Hayden, who has completed all but a few Helix junior runs, said: "I like to try to beat my time each week and I want to get faster and faster.

"When my sister runs as well I want to try to beat her. My best time so far is 10 minutes and 21 seconds."

Beth likes to run with her friends at the junior parkrun.

She said: "I like running when it is fun to do and Parkrun is like that.

"Before our junior event Hayden and I would run with our parents at the adult parkruns. I prefer the shorter distance

