

## Report on the Youth Leagues and Performance Development Group 2024

All Youth Leagues within the County, the 'Zonal Cricket' system, together with Youth work in the Community and Schools, come within the Group's remit. We comprise representatives of each of the six Youth Leagues (Gloucestershire Youth Cricket League, Bristol, Cheltenham & Gloucester, Cotswold, Leaden Vale, and Stroud). The GCF is represented by Kieran Slade, Harry Watts, and Chris Munden. We have oversight of the Gloucestershire Youth League, County Rounds of the Boys Vitality National U13 & U15 KO Cups, the Gloucestershire Leagues U10 Festival, and the NatWest U16 & U19 T/20 Gloucestershire Competitions.

Thank you to everyone involved with the Group including the GCF Staff, who work tirelessly across the County with excellent results. Thank you also to everyone involved in many areas of youth cricket across the county. Hundreds of matches and training sessions take place safely through the summer, and increasingly at other times, week in, week out, largely through the commitment of (often unsung) volunteers.

2024 was a season where the weather varied almost week by week. The National Cup Competitions ran successfully, and the Leagues generally reported numbers of teams holding up well.

The Under 10 Leagues Festival, again kindly hosted by Beaudesert School and sponsored by Martin Berrill Sports, was a couple of times interrupted by poor weather. However, once again the volume of cricket played provided ample opportunities for the promising young players to gain more experience and to show their potential. Finding volunteers from the participating Leagues who have sufficient time to lead the coaching was challenging for most, and we were very grateful that the GCF Coaches came in to provide excellent support where required. And a big 'thank you' also to GACO, who provided experienced Umpires, and again created the opportunity for inexperienced Umpires to stand alongside them for a really helpful learning experience. It is also very interesting and rewarding to recall the names of some of the young players who have appeared in this Festival over the years, and watch for their names then appearing regularly in the Performance Age Groups, and then, often into Senior Cricket in later years.

The on-going challenge of finding sufficient volunteers to run Leagues across the County continued, and there are potential changes under discussion in 2025, looking towards creating a more sustainable situation at youth level by 2026 and into the future.

Jim Donaldson

Chair