

POLICY ON JUNIORS PLAYING ADULT HOCKEY

England Hockey's Guidance "Young People in Adult Hockey" recognises the value to juniors from gaining experience playing with and against older players, but emphasises the need for proper consideration for the young person involved. There should not be an automatic age qualification for adult hockey, but rather the club's coaches should consider each case individually. This policy aims to outline the factors which should be considered in each case to determine whether and when it is appropriate for the individual junior to play adult hockey, to enable them, and the adults, to have a positive and enjoyable experience.

Age – this will be a key factor but not determinative of itself, since some younger players are more physically and/or emotionally mature than players one or two years older; boys may develop at different rates from girls.

Playing ability – does the junior have a sufficient level of skill to be able to play and improve at the likely standard of hockey in the relevant adult matches?

Physical maturity – will the junior's size and physical development enable them to participate safely and effectively in adult matches?

Emotional maturity – will the junior be able to behave appropriately and thrive in an environment involving adult teammates and opponents?

Experience – consider whether they have enough experience in their own age group. Are they going to have a better experience playing in a senior team?

Peers – what are their friends doing? If they play hockey to be with their friends, will their friends also be playing in the adult team? If not, will there be other juniors of similar ages in the team?

Other hockey – will they also be playing hockey at school or for a club junior team, so that they retain the benefits of playing junior hockey as well? Are they likely to be able to cope with playing both?

Other sports and commitments – are they playing different sports or taking part in other activities too? If so, are they likely to be able to cope with the different commitments? Do those other sports/commitments provide experience of adult teams and interactions?

Culture – is the culture in the adult team suitable so that there is a friendly and supportive environment in which the young player can thrive? Are there any steps that can be taken to make their transition to the adult team easier, such as ensuring someone is responsible for introducing them to other players and providing mentoring if appropriate? Is the range of social activities appropriate for juniors?

Adult team – is the adult team in a position for a young person to join? What position(s) would they play? Would it be beneficial for all involved?

Parent/ Guardian expectations – do the parents understand the level of commitment involved? Is help available from other parents, for instance, with travel to matches?

Continuing review - once a junior has started playing for an adult team, this should be monitored and kept under review, to ensure that it remains a positive experience. It is important to be alert to the possible risk of enthusiastic juniors over-training.

