



GUIDANCE NOTE ON KENT'S ANTI-POACHING RULES

Introduction

At the end of November 2020, the Kent clubs approved a new set of rules aimed at preventing the poaching of junior players between clubs. At the time of writing, the rules are awaiting approval by the Kent Senior Committee, and the clubs will be notified when that takes place. However, the rules are to be followed in the meantime.

The most important headlines to note about the new rules are:

1. they impose quite serious fines for non-compliance;
2. they place the burden of compliance on everyone associated with the club – junior and adult players, parents, coaches, officials – not just club officials.
3. the rules are all about transparency: if a junior player is considering joining from another club, that club must be notified and given the chance to speak to the player first; and
4. there is a strict prohibition against coaches and officials using opportunities within the player pathway to recruit new players for their club.

Kent Hockey rules

1. *Clubs are accountable for the behaviour of their coaches/managers/players/umpires/officers and parents (both paid and voluntary).*
2. *No coaches/parents/players/clubs or umpires may approach or entice a player who is already at a club without informing the player's parents and the player's current club before making an approach to the player's parents (i.e. not the player directly).*
3. *No coach can advise or recommend that a player (at another club) joins their club. If the player requires a greater challenge they should be advised to join "a club of standing x", and they should be referred to the County Association for help in that selection.*
4. *It is reasonable for a club to promote themselves and seek to recruit players who are not affiliated to a club. But not when coaching or officiating within the player pathway. Any unaffiliated player will be advised centrally by the county guidelines.*
5. *Players play for one club only - no shared clubs (it is too complex) - unless it is agreed by all three parties.*
6. *These rules apply to players from U13 to U18 (as defined by the player pathway definitions). Under that age - this policy does not apply, but the principles should still be followed.*

Kent Hockey notes as to procedures

The process for moving clubs shall be the following:

- (i) *If a player wants to move from one club to another the player's parent(s) must notify an officer of the child's current club before approaching the new club using a standard form.*

- a. *The current club will then notify the potential future club of the proposed transfer, giving them the green light to have discussions with the player.*
 - b. *If (a) above does not happen within 14 days, the player's parent may forward a copy of the completed form as evidence they have notified their current club.*
 - c. *Where the present club does not feel that the move is in the player's best interests, it may recommend that the player seeks advice from the County Association before making a final decision, and may notify the County Association of its concerns*
- (ii) *If a player approaches a club without having notified their current club, the new club will advise the player's parents to notify their current club as stated in (i) above. They will have no further discussions about choice of club with the player or the player's parents until they have received such notification.*
 - (iii) *If a player or parent approaches a coach, or a teacher who is a member of a club, or a coach for a club about choice of clubs, the coach must point the parents to a county approved document – "Advice to Parents on Selecting a Club". For further advice they can also contact juniors@kenthockey.org.uk.*
 - (iv) *If a club identifies a player they believe would benefit from the development opportunities offered at their club, an officer of the club must approach the player's current club stating its intentions before it approaches the player's parents. No approach may be made directly to a junior player.*
 - (v) *If any email is not replied to within the time allocated, the club that the player is looking to join is required to inform the county association in writing for full transparency (juniors@kenthockey.org.uk).*
 - (vi) *Any approach directly to a junior player will be treated as a violation of safeguarding guidelines.*

Kent Hockey penalties for non-compliance

Level	Definition	Sanction
<i>Level 1</i>	<i>A coach/club may have broken the rules. It is not something that can be proven with written evidence (as many approaches to players are verbal or passed through intermediaries/other parents or players).</i>	<i>The offending club and individual (coach, official, manager, player or parent) will be warned as to their future behaviour and reminded of the potential future sanctions.</i>
<i>Level 2</i>	<i>A coach/club have clearly broken the rules, and it has written or verbal evidence (testimony from a parent) that supports this.</i> <i>Or</i> <i>A club or an individual receives 3 written Level 1 offences within a 2 year period.</i>	<i>The club may be subject to a fine of up to £500 payable to the club from which the player was poached.</i> <i>The individual (coach, manager, umpire, official, player or parent) may be suspended from participation in all county hockey activity (playing, coaching, umpiring or supporting) for a period of up to 14 days.</i>
<i>Level 3</i>	<i>A repeat of a level 2 offence within a 2 year period.</i>	<i>The club may be subject to a fine of up to £1500 payable to the club from which the player was poached.</i> <i>The individual (coach, manager, umpire, official, player or parent) may be suspended from participation in all county hockey activity (playing, coaching, umpiring or supporting) for a period of 3 months.</i>

Guidance for HCKP

This guidance is given by HCKP and applies to all players, parents, coaches and officials associated with the club.

It is important that everyone complies with the rules, not least to avoid significant penalties being imposed. The rules indirectly incentivise complaints being made (75% of any financial penalties go to the club which loses the player) and a club which is attractive to new members faces greater risks. So it is also important that we are able to demonstrate compliance with the rules, potentially in circumstances where there could be a factual dispute about what happened, who said what, etc, before a player joined the club.

If you are approached by a junior player who is not a member of HCKP, or by their parents:

- (a) unless it is already obvious that they are (eg if you have just been playing against them in an inter-club match), you must first ask whether the player is a member at another club; if they are not, they are not caught by the policy, but we still need to record that we were told that they were not a member of another club;
- (b) if the player is a member of another club, they must be told that you cannot speak to them at all about joining HCKP until the required procedure has been followed: the player's parents must notify their current club using the standard form; then,
 - (i) either the current club will contact HCKP giving them the green light to have discussions with the player.
 - (ii) or, if (i) above does not happen within 14 days, the player's parents may forward a copy of the completed form to HCKP as evidence they have notified their current club; HCKP will then inform the county association (juniors@kenthockey.org.uk) that this has occurred, before being able to hold discussions with the player.
- (c) after holding any initial conversation with a potential new player, you must send an email as soon as possible to hckp.discipline@gmail.com with a record of the conversation: who you spoke to, whether the player is a member of

another club, and if so, what they were told about the need to notify their existing club before being able to discuss joining HCKP.

This is the approved wording of the standard form to be sent by the parents to the existing club:

Standard Form for movement from one club to another as requested by a parent

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please be informed that I am currently looking at alternative hockey clubs where my child (insert name) may play. If you wish to discuss this please drop me a line within 7 days.

thank you,

[name]

For coaches:

- (a) Whilst coaching on the player pathway, you must not, in any circumstances, speak to any players about joining HCKP; if an approach is made to you by any player or their parents, you must send an email as soon as possible to hckp.discipline@gmail.com with a record of the approach;
- (b) if you are approached on any other occasions outside the player pathway, please follow the guidance applicable to everyone set out above. Additionally, you should give, or send, the player's parents a copy of the attached document which incorporates the approved "*Advice to Parents on Selecting a Club*" document;
- (c) if you wish to approach a player from another club about joining HCKP, you must first contact the existing club using the approved wording of the standard form below. Before speaking to the parents of the player, you must then wait until either you have received the green light from the existing club, or 14 days

have passed without a response and you have notified the county association (juniors@kenthockey.org.uk).

Standard Form for request to approach a child from another club as requested by a different club

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please be informed that I would like to approach the parents of (insert name) with a view to them playing at my hockey club. I feel that their overall development would be enhanced by a change of club. If you wish to discuss this please drop me a line within 7 days.

thank you,

[name]

Club

Role

ATTACHMENT: document to be handed or sent to any potential new junior members who already belong to another club