

Introduction

Kent Hockey Association prides itself on the high standards of the clubs in Kent and the great community of clubs that exist.

This advice has been put together by Kent Hockey Association, in consultation with all clubs in the county, with the sole aim of being an independent resource for parents wishing to select a club for their child.

Your child is at the centre of the decision making process and the choice of where they play is yours.

Further advice can be sought from the county on more specific details of the clubs that may suit your child. Any advice offered is done with the intent of fairness and what is best for your child.

Note: It is very rare in hockey for there to be issues of bullying, racism or other significant welfare issues relating to children. If any of these apply - please notify the county association immediately. If you feel that your child is unhappy - please speak to the club's welfare officer in the first instance, but you can always request further help from the Kent Hockey Association or England Hockey.

When considering if your child is at the right club - you need to consider several factors.

Playing Standards : Is the standard of the junior or senior league/cup/matches better than where they are?

This is often cited as a reason to move from one club to another, and it may be a valid reason to move. But it is not the whole story and the only reason to move. Players often flourish in an environment that works for them, and this is an important consideration. You will see more on this later in the notes.

Progression : Why are you looking to move?

Often the lure of selection for a representative level is the reason that players look to move i.e. selection for Kent, Performance Centre, Futures Cup or England? Selection for any representative level is not guaranteed - and the move may not bring that achievement. Are you being "sold" something? In Kent, no coach can guarantee selection to a Kent team, nor promotion to the Performance Centre.

Affiliation : If it is a coach or teacher that has approached your child, you need to ask if they are promoting their own club? If so - you need to be sure that they have your child's best interests at heart (and not their own personal gain). Does their advice feel independent? Have they spoken about the levels a player should be playing at and potential alternative clubs that they may consider; or did they just recommend their own club? It should be noted that England Hockey's Policy explicitly states:

Ensure that when in a position of authority this privilege will not be used to exert influence over participants to gain personal benefit for themselves

Advocacy : When being approached by a teacher or coach to join their club you need to understand what happens if they leave that club? What happens to your child's advocacy, will they still be promoted/selected? Mostly it is coaches that approach players, and coaches do move on from clubs and schools.

Development Pathway : When considering a move, you may want to think about where this will take your child?

What is their development pathway beyond next year. Where will this put your child in for example 3, 4 or 5 years time? You may want to look at the club and see if they can demonstrate a similar path for players of a similar age. Can they demonstrate a pathway that has been taken before? How many young players are there in the teams? Will my child be too good for this club and have to move again to develop?

Culture : Have you looked at the culture of the club? Is this a club that tries to attract players in at the top or develop them from within? Both approaches have value and merit - but you may want to decide what is best for your child. Are there openings in teams that will develop your child? If they are a goalkeeper - how many Goalkeepers are ahead of them. If your child is being brought into a club - because they are better than a player already there - what will happen if the club finds another even better player?

Have you spoken with the club chairman or club captain to see what the club values? What are its aims and ambitions? How does it operate? What are the people like? Does that culture seem right for your child?

Development and Coaching : Is my child improving / achieving?

If they are improving then that signals that things are heading in the right direction. Are they improving enough? That is a more difficult question to answer as many players develop at different rates at different times and so it has to be viewed with a slightly longer perspective.

Are they part of a coaching group that is right for them? Do the coaches speak to them individually about their performance (not just the team). Do they have a voice in their development, and do they have a two-way dialog with the coaches? If they do this is a positive environment. A one-way dialog is not constructive.

Wellbeing : the most important facet we have placed last to ensure that it is not forgotten. Sometimes people lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with the whole child, not just a player. The ambition and drive to succeed in hockey needs to be balanced with the understanding of the child's other needs. For example - does your child have close friendships and how will they cope with the break of these when they move to a new club? How far is the new club to travel to? Will your child have exams and will this impact their time on their studies or other activities? Again - is the culture right for you child at this stage of their development.

Summary

As you can see there are many factors to think about.

Sometimes it is right that players move on to new clubs, and although that is not always an easy thing to do - it may be right for your child's development. By everyone being transparent in their reasons and working together it usually ends in the right decisions being made.

The initial lure of being singled out and sought after can be intoxicating, but this should be balanced with other considerations. Equally, providing challenge and growth for our children is also valuable. We hope this document has helped to raise some of those considerations.

The final choice of which club a player plays at - belongs to the parent and the child.

For and on behalf of Kent Hockey Association

Tom Hamilfon

Kent Hockey Vice-President - Juniors

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