

YOUNG PEOPLE IN ADULT HOCKEY

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England Hockey believes that all young people should be provided with opportunities to improve their hockey, aiming to inspire more, better, happier players.

Young individuals playing club hockey are often introduced to senior teams and development sides, allowing them to gain experience playing with and against older players. This step up can be pivotal to their hockey playing career; however, sometimes decisions can be made hastily without proper consideration for the young person involved.

It is important to remember that young athletes are not 'mini adults' and therefore certain considerations must be taken into account. This guidance intends to ensure that all hockey players, both adults and young people, can have a positive and enjoyable experience within hockey. So, what do you need to consider?

when they are playing in senior teams and to involve them in decision making. It is advised that, as a squad, you agree a set of guidelines at the start of the season that all players sign up to.

Who is a 'young person'?

"Young people are defined as children that have not reached their 18th birthday".

Definition – from SafeGuard

Hockey is one of the few sports where young people are able to play as part of a senior team. However, regulation states that young people cannot be part of a senior team until they have reached their 13th birthday (Juniors playing in adult leagues, 2016).

Clubs/associations should consider the differences between players of different ages, for example consider the following based on a 13-year-old player and a 17-year-old player:

- Physiological and psychological maturity
- Social media/networking
- Commitments outside of hockey – do they have exams at school, weekend or evening jobs, what else do they do?
- Impact of peer groups
- Readiness for increased physicality of senior game
- Appropriate language and behaviour
- Skill / technical ability
- Peer involvement

Young people mature at different rates, both physically and emotionally. Where an individual may be ready to play in a senior team, others may not be ready to make this step up. This should be considered on an individual basis. Consider who is responsible for making these decisions (coach, team manager, junior coordinator, Welfare Officer etc.) and what guidance they are basing their decision on, such as policies regarding inclusion and selection criteria, and make sure these are communicated to all players and parents/guardians.

Is it right for the individual?

When asked why young people play hockey, they answered for the following reasons: Inclusivity, fun, teamwork, communication, friendship. Even

in a senior team, these core values should still be prioritised.

Hockey aims to develop people as well as players. The Player Development model has been established to represent the hockey landscape and the segments that position the player at the heart of hockey and identifies the 'ideal' experiences and environments for players to come in, get better and stay in the sport. It shows how people enter, develop within and through, and interact, based on the needs and motivation of players. The emphasis is on providing great experiences and exceptional environments for players to be successful and stay in the sport.

What is the young players experience?

When young people are playing hockey in any capacity it is essential that they receive a positive experience, that they are encouraged to develop and that they are supported. The culture and environment within the club can have a huge impact on the experience young people have. Every player will have a different motivation and reason for playing therefore its essential to consider the following:

Age – Answer will be different between a 13-year-old and a 17-year-old. Some 13 years old are more mature physically and emotionally than a 14/15-year-old. Equally a promising 13-year-old may shrink in an adult environment and it might be better for them to play in their own age group with their friends.

Experience – Linking into the above, do 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? Do they play hockey to be with their friends? If so moving them away from that environment may not develop them as players even if they have the talent to play in senior teams.

Readiness to transition to senior hockey? – Is the young person ready to transition in a senior team and will they develop? If the young person is not getting any benefit from moving out of their own age group to play in a senior team the move is not justified. For some players transition to senior teams is essential and an important part of their development. Every player will be different and



transition decisions should be taken on an individual basis.

Decision to transition? - Transparency of the decision making process around transition is helpful for all involved. Who will make that decision? what factors that are taken into account? Clear guidance and communication of these factors are essential.

Culture - What is the attitude, language and behaviour towards young people like in your club? Are you creating an environment where young people can thrive? Changing rooms, social areas (e.g. bar area) and other social activities could be challenging environments for young people if they are perceived to be unwelcoming.

Support - what support is given to young people when they play in a senior team? Who is responsible for their welfare? Have someone, with the right skills, appointed to offer support both on and off the pitch and make the transition as smooth as possible.

Consider if the senior team is in a position for a young person to join - would it be productive and right for all involved? What else are they doing?

School - Does the young person also play for a school team? Consider if/when they are playing in school teams

Age groups - Are they also playing for their own age group? If playing/training for/with their own age group as well as in the senior team this will need to be considered

Other sports - Is the young person taking part in any other sports at school/club outside of hockey? Is hockey their only commitment? Young people will often take part in a variety of different sports and activities, do not assume hockey is their only focus outside of school.

Other commitments - What else is the young person doing outside of hockey? E.g. school exams, music, drama, other activities. Don't assume that hockey is the only commitment they have.

Talented players - for more details around EH's Talent System Framework

It is important to be aware of the signs of overtraining when working with juniors (both in age group and in senior teams). Young people are often enthusiastic and want to be involved in as many different activities as possible.

Willingness to play - As with any individual stepping into a new team, it is not uncommon that young people will show a willingness to learn and be involved in all aspect of the team. In this case, it is vital to ensure that young people do not over

- Has photography consent been gained for young people?

- Have the umpires/opposition been informed that there are young people playing?

Other considerations:

Playing positions and duration of play

Young players are often played in unfamiliar positions; for example, a promising young defender may be played as a 'winger' to be 'blooded' into an adult team. Whilst learning all positions is to be encouraged as is interchange through playing lines, denying young people the chance to develop their game within the increased pressure of a new environment is not helpful to their development. Playing minutes - sometimes a young player will be given brief shifts of a few minutes here and there. This is not helpful to their learning and is physically poor practice.

Appropriate language and behaviour

Players/coaches/supporters - language and behaviour

Coaching language and behaviour - should be positive, structured and inclusive. Consider how you would communicate with young people of different ages. Coaches, captains, team managers etc. Should consider how and when they communicate with young people. It may be wise to avoid singling the young person out or not communicating with them at all or making sure conversations are not 1-to-1 when speaking with young people, having someone else present may be better for both you and the young person. Would this be different for a 13-year-old and a 17-year-old?

On and off the pitch - from and towards young people

Avoid negative actions and swearing both on and off the pitch. Challenge young people if they display these behaviours. You could set standards expected of the team at the start of the season, get everyone to sign up and challenge each other if these standards are not upheld. Create a positive team experience regardless of whether young people are part of the team or not.

This also relates to changing rooms, club houses and any other social setting where young people are sharing facilities with anyone over the age of 18. Young people can become easily intimidated and feel uncomfortable in these environments. Consider the language used and behaviour towards young people - see EH's guidance on changing rooms for further guidance.

Reporting inappropriate language and behaviour
It is also important to ensure you report any behaviour that is racist, abusive, discriminatory or sexual in nature to the relevant people. Ensure that all club members and associated personnel (e.g. parents) are aware of EH's reporting policy and who they can contact if they have a concern.

Support network

Any individual who is in a 'position of trust' over a young person is considered to be in loco parentis for the time that young person is in their care. When the young person is on the pitch, this individual may be the coach, team manager, captain or a nominated responsible adult. However, it is important to consider who is responsible for any young people within a senior team when they are in social settings such as: changing rooms, club house/bar area and other social activities.

Clubs/associations may also consider appointing a mentor for young people playing within senior teams who can support and encourage them, both on and off the pitch.

Certain individuals working directly with young people, such as coaches, team managers team captains/nominated responsible adults will require safeguarding training and may require a valid DBS certificate. Find further information regarding safeguarding training [here](#) and DBS eligibility guidance [here](#).



What if a 'young person' (e.g. a 17yo) is elected to be team captain?

Consider agreeing guidelines on what the function of communication is and challenge if anyone is using it inappropriately.

Consider appointing a mentor / named supporter to the young person so they have someone they can speak to outside of the team if they are faced with making difficult decisions or they feel uncomfortable.

Leadership at a young age should be encouraged, work as a team to support the young person in the best way possible but remember, they may need more support in their role.

Think about what the player is responsible for but also who is responsible for them. Again, this may be different based on age.

Social events

Hockey is a sociable sport, bringing together a variety of people from different backgrounds, including those who are U18. The sociable side of hockey should not be discouraged, celebrating wins and learning from losses vastly improves team cohesion and can build lifelong friendships. If there are U18's playing in your team, consider the following:

- Who is responsible for junior members at social events? – identify an individual within the team (captain/team manager etc.) who is responsible for the safety & welfare of junior members when at social events.
- Are their parents/carers present?
- Do you have contact details for a parent/ carer of that U18?
- Is the U18 in a vulnerable position where they may be exposed to alcohol?
- Could you impose a curfew for U18s to prevent them being exposed to uncomfortable/inappropriate situations?
- How could you involve U18's in social events whilst ensuring their welfare is at the forefront?

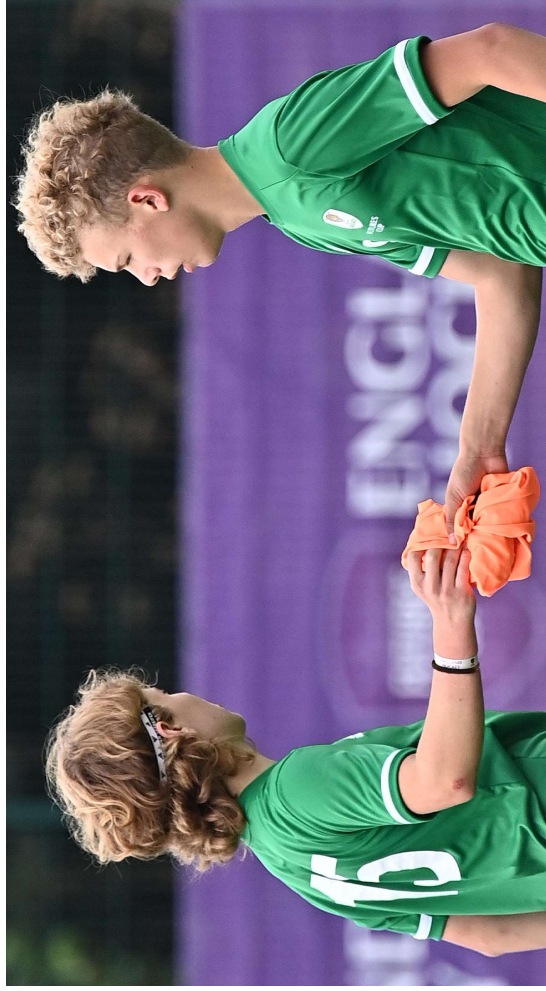
Guidance on alcohol

It is illegal for any person under the age of 18 to buy alcohol, to have an adult buy alcohol on their behalf or to drink alcohol in a licensed premise. Whilst we acknowledge that young people over the age of 15 can consume alcohol in the presence of a parent/ guardian/ carer or in a supervised environment we recommend that alcohol should not be provided to any person under the age of 18 within hockey. Alternative drink options such as soft drinks/ water/ squash etc. should be provided.



YOUNG PLAYER MOTIVATION

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It is important to consider how you can encourage and motivate young people in hockey to ensure they feel supported.

Punishments and 'Forfeits' will often discourage young people and can have many negative impacts, such as loss of confidence. It is essential to create an environment where young people feel support and that allows them to develop. If you are considering how to increase player motivation, consider the following:

Give players a sense of control

While guidance from a coach is important to keeping

belief in a player's abilities rather than laying out the consequences of not doing things, players are much more likely to get and stay motivated to do their work. At the end of the day, players will fulfil the expectations that the adults around them communicate, so focus on can, not can't.

Use positive competition

Competition in the coaching environment isn't always a bad thing, and in some cases can motivate players to try harder and work to excel. Work to foster a friendly spirit of competition in your sessions, perhaps through group games related to the tasks and create opportunities for players to show off their skills.

Offer rewards

Everyone likes getting rewards and offering your players the chance to earn them is an excellent source of motivation. Consider the personalities and needs of your players to determine appropriate rewards for your group.

Give players responsibility

Assigning players roles and responsibilities to build a community, connection to give players a sense of motivation. Players can see roles as a privilege rather than a burden and will work hard to ensure that they, and other players, are meeting expectations. It can also be useful to allow players to take turns leading activities or helping so that each feels important and valued.

Allow players to work together

While not all players will jump at the chance to work in groups, many will find it fun to try to solve problems, and work on skills with other players. The social interaction can get them excited about things in the session and players can motivate one another to reach a goal. Coaches need to ensure that groups are balanced and fair so that some players aren't doing more work than others.

Give praise when earned

There is no other form of motivation that works quite as well as encouragement. Even as adults we crave recognition and praise, and players at any age are no exception. Coaches can give players motivation by rewarding success publicly, giving praise for a

job well done, and sharing exemplary work.

Be excited

One of the best ways to get your players motivated is to share your enthusiasm. When you're excited about coaching, they'll be much more excited about learning. It's that simple.

Know your players

Getting to know your players is about more than just memorizing their names. Players need to know that their coach has a genuine interest in them and cares about them and their success. When players feel appreciated it creates a safe learning environment and motivates them to work harder, as they want to get praise and good feedback from someone they feel knows and respects them as individuals.

Help players find intrinsic motivation

It can be great to help players get motivated, but at the end of the day they need to be able to generate their own motivation. Helping players find their own personal reasons for working hard, whether because they find the sessions interesting, want to go to attend the coaching sessions is one of the most powerful gifts you can give them.

Manage player anxiety

Some players find the prospect of not doing well so anxiety-inducing that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. For these players, coaches may find that they are most motivated by learning that struggling with a task isn't the end of the world. Offer support no matter what the result is and ensure that players don't feel so overwhelmed by expectations that they just give up.

Make goals high but attainable

If you're not stretching and challenging your players to do more than the bare minimum, most won't seek to push themselves on their own. Players need and like to be challenged and will work to achieve high expectations so long as they believe those goals to be within their reach, so don't be afraid to push players to get more out of them.



Give feedback and offer chances to improve

Players who struggle with skill acquisition can sometimes feel frustrated and get down on themselves, draining motivation. In these situations, it's critical that coaches help players to learn exactly where they went wrong and how they can improve next time. Figuring out a method to get where players want to be can also help them to stay motivated to work hard.

Track progress

It can be hard for a player to see just how far they've come, especially with skills that are not that are difficult for them. Tracking can come in handy in the club or Performance Centre environment, not only for coaches but also for players. Coaches can use this to motivate players, allowing them to see visually just how much they are learning and improving as the year goes on.

Make things fun

Not all coaching needs to be a game or a good time, but players who see the coaching session as a place where they can have fun will be more motivated to pay attention and do the work that's required of them than those who regard it as a chore. Adding fun activities into your session can help players who struggle to stay engaged and make the session a much more friendly place for all players.

Provide opportunities for success

Players, even the best ones, can become frustrated and demotivated when they feel like they're struggling or not getting the recognition that other players are. Make sure that all players get a chance to play to their strengths and feel included and valued.

It can make a world of difference in their motivation.

Alternative options

Rather than performing 'forfeits' players could be given tasks to complete such as acts of kindness, such as:

- Filling a water bottle

- Collecting balls
- Carrying a bag
- Giving praise to another player

There is also an opportunity to flip the task so that the 'winners' receive a bonus – this could be double point for goals scored, a penalty stroke when given a penalty corner etc. This provides a learning focus for individuals and removes the 'punishment' element.

Sometimes, a group simply needs to know the learning focus and can be happy to self-review it based on simple targets. No need to add false motivation with consequences, the self-fulfilling drive of sensing and gaining progress should be enough - If your Motivational Climate is clear and healthy!

