

# Young People playing in Senior Teams Guidance

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## INTRODUCTION

England Hockey (EH) believes that all players should be provided with opportunities to improve their hockey. 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 decisions can be made hastily without proper consideration for the young person involved.



## REGULATIONS

*'As agreed by the England Hockey Board in March 2011, the policy will remain as it is, with U13s restricted from participating in adult hockey leagues until they reach their 13th birthday, until further notice.'* (Juniors playing in adult leagues, 2016)

Whilst we understand that young people develop physically at different rates, we can be certain that their emotional and psychological state prior to the age of 13 is unlikely to be mature enough to support them adequately in adult competition. Furthermore, it seems sensible to have a concrete age to regulate participation and avoid subjective decisions.

## CONSIDERING THE YOUNG PERSON

All clubs should recognise that they have a duty of care towards all young members of the club. Young people need to be consulted before any decision is made to include them within an adult team.

**Over training** - young players may have their age group training session on top of an expectation to attend senior club training. Add to this school hockey training and matches causing a training overload meaning a risk of long term injury and fatigue.

**Willingness to play** – A young person's willingness to play can mean they switch between teams resulting in attending a number of away games in a row.

**Playing positions** - young players are often played in unfamiliar positions; for example a promising young defender may be played as a 'winger' in order to be 'blooded' into an adult team. Whilst learning all positions is to be encouraged as is interchange through playing lines, denying them 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.

**Parent Pressure** – It's essential that sports clubs communicate regularly with parents so that both coach and parent work towards the same goals. Guidance around how to achieve this is available at: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/parents-in-sport/>

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who is responsible for the young person?

Normally the Captain however this doesn't have to be. The nominated person needs to be someone who can communicate with young people and will support them whilst acting in their best interest in that playing environment (on and off pitch). Permission needs to be gained before giving lifts in a personal vehicle. Adults and u18's alone in a car is not recommended.

### Does the captain of the team require a DBS?

Yes, if the young person is likely to feature in the team for most of the season.

### What do you (as a club) need to consider?

Make parents aware of how young people involvement works within the club. Do you have development sides?

Are your Captains/Team Managers aware of the social environment the young person will be placed in e.g. involving alcohol?

If they are substituted or sent off, who supports them off whilst off of the pitch?

### Who is responsible for holding emergency medical information?

Either the captain or a nominated member of the team should be given all medical information when travelling to an away fixture.

## SUPPORTING GUIDANCE

**Photography** – juniors playing in senior teams are more likely to be involved in content that appears in newspapers or social media. For more information on this, see [Photography](#).

**Changing Rooms** – arrangements for changing pre and post game can vary especially when travelling to away games. See the [Good Practice guidance](#).

**Communication** – notification of selection/availability should always include parents when young people are involved. Further information can be found on [Good Practice Guidance](#).