Junior to Senior Transition Policy

1. ***Purpose & Core Philosophy***
   a. Alton Hockey Club (AHC) is committed to providing a structured, safe, and supportive pathway for junior players to transition into senior adult hockey. This policy ensures player welfare, consistent skill development, and a positive, inclusive club experience while balancing physical safety and competitive progression.

1. ***Eligibility Criteria & Regulations***
   a. Minimum Age Requirement: In strict alignment with England Hockey regulations, players must be at least 13 years old to be considered for senior training and league matches. Under-13s are strictly restricted from participating in adult hockey leagues and attending adult training sessions.
   b. Prior Experience: Players must have completed a minimum of one full season of junior hockey at the club before progressing, unless exceptional circumstances apply.
   c. Readiness Assessment: Progression is based on demonstrated skill, physical capability, emotional resilience and game awareness at the junior level.

1. ***Progression Pathway Matrix***
   a. The matrix below outlines the strict requirements and clear pathways for moving from junior ranks into the various senior squad tiers:

Criteria	Junior to Senior (U14-U18 → Senior 3rd/4th XI)	Development Squad → 2nd XI	Performance Squad 2nd XI → 1st XI
Minimum Age	13+ (Coach + Parental Approval)	14+	16+
Skill Level	Competent at junior level, good basics	Strong technical ability	Advanced tactical & elite skills
Fitness	Baseline fitness for adult hockey	Strong endurance & agility	Match-fit, elite intensity
Commitment	Weekly Junior & 1x Senior Training per fortnight.	1x Junior Training per week. 1x 1st XI Training per week.	1x Junior Training per week. 1x 1st XI Training per week.
Evaluation	All Juniors will be invited to attend Senior 3/4s Training. Senior Coaching team to evaluate suitability and liaise with the Selection Team.	Senior Coaching Team assess suitability	Approval from all the following: ● 1st XI Captain ● Section Lead ● Senior Director of Coaching
Pathway	Invited to Senior 3/4s Training Session following 13th Birthday	Selected for development squad matches	Called up for 1st XI opportunities

1. ***Selection & Assessment Process***
   a. **Identification & Nomination:** Junior coaches following the players 13th Birthday will invite the player to attend Senior Training (Senior 3/4s) and inform parents of the appropriate details. The Junior Coach will notify the Senior Coaching Team and Section Lead and copy the Junior Chair within the communications.
   b. **Match Selection:** Senior coaches will assess their performance and team integration over a minimum of 3 weeks (unless exceptional circumstances apply). Selected players will participate in senior matches and feedback provided by Senior Coaching to the Section Lead in preparation for Selection Meetings.
   c. **Feedback:** Collaborative feedback will be provided to both the player and parents by the appropriate Team Captain, Senior Coaching Team and Junior Chair.
   d. **Ongoing Development:** Fully integrated players are supported with dual-training opportunities (both junior and senior sessions).

1. ***Safeguarding, Welfare & Best Practice***
   a. **Consent & Mentorship**
      i. **Parental Consent:** All players under 18 must have formal parental consent (via the Teamo platform checkbox) before attending senior training or matches.
      ii. **Senior Mentoring:** Every player under the age of 18 must be assigned a designated **mentor** within their senior squad to provide guidance and provide pastoral support and aim to ensure an inclusive playing environment for the junior player.
   b. **Duty of Care & Match Selection**
      i. Selection must prioritise player safety and long-term development over immediate team needs. Captains and coaches must actively prevent over-training by tracking players' external hockey commitments.
      ii. **Workload Management:** To prevent excessive physical fatigue, junior players are strictly limited to playing **no more than two full matches per weekend**.
      iii. Captains must avoid selecting a young player for a consecutive run of multiple away games.
   c. **Facility & Changing Room Protocols**
      i. Adults working with young teams, including volunteers, coaches, umpires or staff, should not change or shower at the same time when using the same facility as young players.
      ii. If young players play for adult teams, they and their parents must be informed of the club's policy on changing arrangements. [this is on the club website and in captains safeguarding handbook]

iii. If young people are uncomfortable changing or showering in public, no pressure should be placed upon them to do so. Encourage them to do this at home.
iv. Young players who play for adult teams must be allowed to change and shower separately from those players over 18. Ideally, if separate changing rooms and showers are not available then either the young players change and shower before or after the rest of the adult team.

d. **Supervision Rules:**
   i. If adults and young people need to share a changing facility, the club must have consent from the parents that their child/children can share a changing room with adults in the club.
   ii. Adults must never spend time alone with a young player in changing areas. There must be another adult present at all times
   iii. Match briefings or debriefings held in changing rooms must be kept strictly separate from changing times.

e. **Communication, Travel & Digital Safety**
   i. **Email & Data Privacy:** All digital communications must go through the parent's email/Teamo account. If direct team emails are sent to a player under 18, parents *must* be copied in. To comply with GDPR, all group emails must use blind copy (BCC).
   ii. **One-to-One Meetings:** Parents must be invited to all 1-on-1 coaching meetings. If parents cannot attend, a second adult player must be present. Direct contact via personal phone calls must be avoided.
   iii. **Social Media & WhatsApp:** Officials and adult players must not accept under-18 players as friends on personal social networks (e.g., Facebook, Snapchat). Team WhatsApp groups must be restricted to users aged 18+ and used strictly for formal team info.
   iv. **Transportation:** Parents hold ultimate responsibility for junior players travel to/from matches.
   v. For away fixtures, captains must ensure clear arrangements are made to return the young player directly to the club or a mutually agreed parental collection point. Young players must never be left unaccompanied at drop-off points.
   vi. Young player will not travel with an adult player alone. Another adult or other young players must be present.

f. **Welfare & Support Contacts**
   i. If a player or parent is unhappy about a selection, workload, or safeguarding issue, they should approach contacts in the following order:
      1. **Team Captain / Coach**
      2. **Junior Chair / Senior Section Lead**
      3. **Club Welfare Officer:** Jo Ryan

Last reviewed: July 2026 (DGR)