

Ealing HC Junior Participation in Adult Hockey Policy

This policy outlines the criteria and guidelines for juniors (players under 18) to participate in adult hockey matches, in line with England Hockey's recommendations. The objective is to ensure that juniors are integrated safely and appropriately into adult games, balancing player development with health and safety considerations.

1. Eligibility and Assessment

- **Minimum Age:** Players should typically be at least 13 years old before being considered for adult hockey. However, exceptions may be made based on individual maturity and ability, subject to coach assessment and safeguarding protocols.
 - **Player Assessment:** Coaches, in consultation with safeguarding officers, must assess a junior's suitability for adult games based on:
 - **Physical Maturity:** The junior must be able to cope with the physical demands of adult hockey.
 - **Emotional Maturity:** The player should be able to handle the competitive nature and potential pressures of adult-level matches.
 - **Skill Level:** The junior must have the necessary skills to contribute positively to the game.
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2. Safeguarding and Consent

- **Risk Assessment:** A risk assessment must be conducted for each junior before their inclusion in adult matches. This includes evaluating the safety of the environment, the standard of the adult league, and the potential risks posed by playing with physically stronger and more experienced players.
 - **Parental Consent:** Written consent from a parent or guardian is required before a junior is permitted to play in adult matches. Parents must be fully informed of the associated risks and benefits.
 - **Coach, Parent, and Safeguarding Oversight:** Integrating juniors into adult teams requires a joint agreement. Before selection, the lead coach, parent/guardian, and Welfare Officer will agree on the appropriate level of play, making the junior's welfare the first priority. The coach is then responsible for consistent monitoring and communication to ensure the junior is developing positively and managing the emotional and physical demands of the adult team. The Welfare Officer provides a final layer of oversight.
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3. Game-Day and Transition

- **Supervision:** A responsible adult, such as the coach or another safeguarding-trained individual, must be present during the game to monitor the junior and intervene if concerns arise.
- **Appropriate Placement:** Juniors should not be placed in games or divisions where the physicality and competition level significantly outmatch their abilities. The team's adult players must also be briefed on the junior's participation and the importance of maintaining a safe playing environment.

- **Transition Pathways:** Juniors can be introduced to adult hockey through structured development programs like "Badgers" or "Vixens" leagues where available to ease the transition.
 - **Regular Review:** The junior's progress and suitability for continued adult participation should be reviewed regularly by coaches, parents, and safeguarding officers. Adjustments should be made if any concerns regarding their well-being arise.
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4. Player and Parent Responsibilities

- **Priority of Junior Hockey:** A junior player's participation in adult hockey must **always be secondary** to their commitment to the junior section. To be eligible for selection in adult matches, the player **must prioritize, attend, and actively participate** in their designated junior hockey training and matches.
 - **Availability Notice:** Junior players and their parents must provide advance notice of availability for adult matches via Teamo. A notice period of **10 to 14 days** is required to allow for effective team selection and planning.
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5. Injuries and Safety Protocols

- **Injury Reporting:** Any injury sustained by a junior during an adult hockey game must be reported and logged according to England Hockey's injury reporting guidelines.
 - **Protective Equipment:** Juniors must wear appropriate protective gear, including mouthguards and shin pads, and any other equipment deemed necessary by the coach or safeguarding officer.
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Conclusion

This policy ensures a safe, supportive, and progressive environment for juniors transitioning into adult hockey, in line with England Hockey's safeguarding and development frameworks. All decisions must prioritize the welfare and development of the junior player while maintaining the integrity of the game.

Review: September 2026