

Chelmsford Hockey Club

Junior to Senior Transition Guidance for Parents, Junior Players and Coaches

Why should parents consider letting their child playing senior hockey?

At Chelmsford Hockey Club, we actively encourage participation in senior hockey by junior players for multiple reasons:

- Firstly, it is a natural progression as we don't offer age group hockey for years 12 and 13.
- For many players it is a great opportunity to play more regular games of competitive hockey in addition to age group hockey, especially those not getting hockey in a school environment
- It is often a way to stretch players, allowing them to develop their hockey to a higher standard
- Whilst playing with peers is still important, for some players finding a nurturing senior team may suit their needs better than their junior age group
- It is a great opportunity for juniors to develop social skills playing alongside adults
- Last but not least it is of particular importance to help our senior sides, including our performance sides compete through the addition of young talent

When can a junior start playing senior hockey?

In line with East Hockey League rules, all players playing in the Essex league must be 13 years old or over. As soon as they're 13 they can play.

How does the club know when is it best for a junior to start playing senior hockey?

This depends on a number of factors including their hockey skills, their physical capability, their game understanding, their emotional maturity and their own interest and desire to play senior hockey. Their junior age group coach will take into account these factors and will consult the child and their parents when the coach thinks they are ready. When everyone is in agreement the parents' details will be passed to the senior coaches and the junior will be invited to the appropriate training session. It is not always the case, but often girls start to play senior hockey earlier than boys. This is partly due to the difference in physical capabilities between 13-year old girls and senior ladies being smaller than the difference between 13-year old boys and senior men.

How can parents be sure their child will be safe playing with and against adults?

As per our [Developmental Selection Policy](#) coaches will not advise that juniors play in a division that is dangerous for them to play in and the priorities of umpires are always about safety. Every Chelmsford team should have a first aid trained player and carries a first aid box as a precaution. Gum shields and shin pads are essential and players should have their own facemasks for defending penalty corners. However, parents should remember that danger cannot be completely eradicated from sport and if they are concerned, they should chat to coaches and watch some senior hockey with their child to ensure they are comfortable.

What safeguarding precautions have the club taken for juniors playing senior hockey?

Our coaches and senior captains undergo safeguarding training. As a club we abide by the England Hockey [policies](#) on ethics, behaviour, safeguarding and inclusion and diversity. We also have a clear [WhatsApp policy](#) and [Changing Room policy](#). Further details about child protection can be found on our [website](#).

If a player or parent has any concerns at any time they should speak to the relevant coach or captain or contact our welfare officers at junior_welfare@chelmsfordhc.org.uk

When is training and do juniors have to attend senior training as well as junior training?

Training times are on the [club website](#) and is once a week for most senior teams.

Attending both junior and senior training will give players a variety of hockey experiences that will undoubtedly assist their progression as a hockey player and we would encourage regular attendance at both sessions. However, we understand that teenagers have other demands on their time and there are other factors such as studying and family logistics to consider. We therefore most coaches do not mandate that players must attend senior training to be selected for senior matches or junior training to be selected for junior matches (with the exception of the 1st and 2nd teams). If they have the right player qualities (hockey skills, physical capability, game understanding etc.) then they will be considered for selection for junior and senior matches. That being said, being present at training sessions does enable coaches and captains to better assess a player as they develop, and all things being equal with another player, attendance at training may then play a role in selection. We are also mindful that some players have school hockey, may play for the County and also at a Talent Academy. In these situations we are very conscious of players not 'overplaying' and coaches will work alongside parents and players to find the right balance that works for them.

When and where are the matches played?

Matches are played on Saturday mornings or afternoons. Home matches are at Chelmer Park and away matches, for most of our teams, tend to be in the South-East area of the East of England so typical opposition clubs are Colchester, Braintree, Southend, Witham, Maldon, Brentwood, Waltham Forest, Basildon, Romford. Matches start mid to late September and run until just before Easter. There is a break at Christmas.

How do the juniors get to matches?

Lifts will often be available to away matches for players whose parents cannot take them. We understand that they may have other children that also need dropped off and picked up from other sporting fixtures, so we try and help as much as possible. For away matches there will usually be a meeting time at Chelmer Park as well as at the away pitch to give options. Adults and children should travel in groups so that no child travels alone with an adult. In emergency situations where this is unavoidable club policy is that the child must sit in the back of the car.

Will they be expected to play every week?

Each team will usually have about 22 matches in a season and it is impossible to expect players to be available for every game. But regular availability helps to establish a player in a team and create a good team spirit and way of playing. It also helps the player develop their hockey and they are more likely to progress to higher teams if they are regularly available. Communicating your availability to captains is key. A communicative parent or player is a huge asset to a captain of a senior team!

How much time does it take up on a Saturday?

Teams meet up to an hour before a match starts. Matches last 35 minutes each way then all players are expected to stay for teas after the match. So in total approximately 2.5-3 hours for a home game. Away matches would have additional travel time so for some matches could be between 4-5 hours in total.

Hockey Teas

Hockey teas are an important and fun part of senior hockey. Home match teas are in our clubhouse at Chelmer Park straight after the match. A lot of our away matches are not played at the same venue as the teas are served but they're usually very close by. We have something to eat to refuel, vote a player of the match, chat about the game, celebrate our win (hopefully) and collect match subs. Parents are very welcome to join us for teas too.

Do juniors need a different kit?

All Chelmsford teams wear the same green Adidas kit so no new kit would be needed. However, they will need a number on their shirt and a number should be requested from Intersport (which maintains the club's list) when any kit is ordered. Intersport can put the number on as well. If you have unnumbered kit already then ask Intersport to provide a number and you can arrange to have that number put on the playing top locally. Intersport's email is office@gameforlife.co.uk.

How much extra does it cost?

There is no additional charge to attend senior training. Match subs for junior players are £8 per game. (£12 for adults.)

Which team would they play for?

U14s may not be selected to play matches straight away. To start with U14 junior players new to senior hockey will most likely start in the lower senior teams. However, selection is based on ability, availability and squad requirements and individual players may be selected to play for higher teams, either from the start or at any point during the season. At the time of writing there are 8 men's teams and 7 ladies' teams. Usually there will be at least several juniors in each team.

How does selection work?

When a junior player starts to attend senior training, they may not be selected for a team straight away if they need more time to get used to playing with adults. When they are ready, then the senior coach and/or captain of the relevant team will contact the parent.

Pre-season training and pre-season friendly matches may also be used to assess junior players and they may well be asked to 'play up' giving the coaches the opportunity to see how the player responds to playing at a higher standard in a less competitive environment.

The [Club's Selection Policy](#) should be referred to in order to understand how selection operates. Selection criteria will include (but not exclusively) an individual's hockey skills, physical capability, game understanding, teamwork skills and mental skills including emotional maturity, but will be balanced with many other factors. In general, the selection criteria apply equally to juniors as seniors with the following caveats:

The [Developmental Selection Policy](#) outlines the key considerations in providing playing opportunities for young players. The key points for selection for senior matches are:

- Young players will not be called upon to play in adult only competition until it is in the best interest of the young player. If an adult team is short and the only option is a young player who is not ready mentally or physically or socially, then the team will play short
- Careful consideration will be given to ensure that the distance travelled is proportional to the likely pitch time for the young player. As a guide, it is generally suggested that players who will play less than half a game should not travel for more than 60 minutes
- Young players are given the opportunity to play and train at the right level for them without being overplayed

In addition, the following points from the [Clubs' Selection](#) policy should be noted:

- Depending on the stage of an individual's playing career a junior player is more likely to develop faster than a senior player and, all things being equal, including actual match day performance, may be promoted to a more senior side ahead of an adult player of otherwise equal ability;
- The Club does not run junior teams in its senior league sides (which typically require a match day coach and a core of adults willing to play in such a designated squad). Accordingly, the

total number of junior players in a squad may have to be limited to allow for the orderly management of a particular squad; and

- The Club is mindful that some players within its junior programme often have multiple opportunities to play hockey (including school and England Hockey programmes) while a senior member may only have a single playing opportunity each week. Selectors will therefore be mindful that, where availability is high, denying a senior player a playing place in favour of a junior player may have a disproportionate impact on senior players, particularly in the lower sides of the club.

For the avoidance of doubt junior players who only participate in the Club's senior hockey sides are treated for selection in every respect the same as adult players, other than the considerations outlined in the Developmental Selection Policy and for those also identified as potential future high performers.

Who makes the selection decisions?

Senior club coaches and team captains make selection decisions and they work with the Chairs of Selection (one for the ladies and one for the men) who help co-ordinate selection across the club. They will consult with the Junior age group coaches (U14s and U16s) and the Youth Academy coaches. Whilst this seems like a lot of people to include in decision making, multiple eyes on junior players in different situations allows a rounded view of a junior's current and potential capability. It also helps us as a club provide the right 'hockey diet' of different experiences of stretch and comfort for the individual whilst guarding against overplaying.

Does playing in the Youth Academy make a difference to selection?

The Academy coaches will share their views on Academy players with the senior club coaches and captains which may have an impact on which team they are considered for. As the Academy is made up of players with high potential it is very likely they will be considered for selection in senior sides.

When do players find out which team they are playing in each week?

Selection starts from the top, all the way up in the 1st teams. They pick their team first, then the second team select from who is left available, then the threes then the fours and so on. We usually like to have all our team selections sent out by Wednesday at the latest and have players confirm their availability on the same evening. This allows us to tweak any teams on Friday before the matches on the Saturday. Maybe say most teams use the SPOND app for availability and selection.

What do parents need to do once a junior has started training or playing senior hockey?

Once a junior player attends senior training their parent/s are added to a team WhatsApp and the SPOND app. Parents should respond promptly to availability requests for both training and matches. Being asked doesn't mean they will be selected but it starts the process. Supporting with transport for matches is not essential but can be helpful. We really encourage parents to speak to coaches and captains if they have any questions or concerns.

What happens if a junior isn't ready?

If the coach, the child or parent decides the child is not ready for senior training then the coach will provide feedback to both the player and the parent so they know what they need to work on should they wish to work towards playing in the senior club. However, there is no pressure to play senior hockey and a child can continue just to play for their age group. Please note we do not have U18s teams as by that age most children are playing senior hockey and we have found it very difficult to get teams out for fixtures.

Where to find out more information

Parents and players should first of all talk to their junior age group coach if they have any questions and are interested in playing senior hockey.

The coaches may also refer you to the Chairs of Selection who are
Tony Cole (ladies) a-cole@sky.com tel 07582 661619
Richard Ross (men) richardross686@btinternet.com tel 07715 705067