

# Chelmsford Hockey Club

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

2024-25

### **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 regular 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 are aged 13, junior players are eligible for senior training and potential selection for league matches. An exception is that there are some designated "Development Teams" from other clubs in the lowest level of the senior leagues who may include 12 year-olds in their team. Chelmsford does not currently run such teams.

### **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 can progress to attending senior training. 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. From that point they may be invited to play in a senior league match where senior coaches and captains think they are ready. It is not always the case, but often girls start to play senior league 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 safeguarding concerns and reporting a concern can be found [here](#) and more child protection information 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 [welfare@chelmsfordhc.org.uk](mailto: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 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. The Club's Selection Policy does not mandate that players must attend senior training to be selected for matches (with the possible exception of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> teams). If a junior player has the right player qualities (hockey skills, physical capability, game understanding etc.) then they will be considered for selection for 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 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. In total approximately 2.5-3 hours for a home game. Away matches would have additional travel time so for some matches it can 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).. Parents are very welcome to join us for teas too.

### **How do the juniors get to matches?**

Lifts from other players will often be available to away matches for players whose parents cannot take them. We understand that parents may have other children that also need to be 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!

### **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 (e.g. Blue Sky printing in the Meadows in Chelmsford). 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?**

Juniors may not be selected to play matches straight away. When they are selected, 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 players may be selected to play for higher teams, either from the start or at any point during the season. Selection is based on ability and not on age so younger players may play in higher teams than players older than them. 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 non-league 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 from the Developmental Selection Policy:

- 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 also periodically consult with the Junior age group coaches (U14s and U16s). 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.

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

Selection starts from the top, all the way up in the 1<sup>st</sup> 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. Availability and selection will run through Pitchero.

### **How much time will they get on the pitch?**

League hockey is played to be competitive, and coaches and captains have wide discretion on the structure of their teams and the playing time of individuals. At the senior levels, squads can often be larger and playing rotations more frequent, reflecting the intensity of how the game is played. Playing time can be dictated by both on pitch requirements (position and structure) and individual performance within the team. In lower leagues match considerations are generally less of an issue and captains tend to rotate more evenly. Most coaches or captains will have a broad approach that should be known by the team. The general, but not prescriptive approach, is that no player (junior or senior) should be asked to play for a squad if they would not play at least half a game. Players stepping up a team may get slightly less time as they fit into the squad, but once established there they should be treated the same as any other player. In practice, an established player in any squad should expect to get approximately equal playing time over the course of a number of games.

### **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 group. Parents should ensure that they get included in a group as messages about cancellation of training and games are often put out first by WhatsApp. If the junior player has not yet been selected for matches

this remains important and the junior player should be included in the lowest ranked team's WhatsApp group (M8 and L7s).

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.

### **What if I / my child have questions about selection or playing time in a senior team**

In the first instance please do speak to the captain or the coach of the relevant team. If there is a continuing concern, then get in contact with the relevant Chair of Selection. While the Club always aims to resolve any perceived or actual issues through an amicable discussion, the Club's Selection Policy has a set procedure if there are disagreements where a player feels they are not getting the right opportunity or playing experience.

If it is a welfare / safeguarding issue (selection is not a welfare issue) and you cannot speak to the captain or coach please contact the welfare office: [welfare@chelmsfordhc.org.uk](mailto:welfare@chelmsfordhc.org.uk)

### **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 and their age group coach 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  
Jas Goddard (ladies): [jasmine.goddard@ntlworld.com](mailto:jasmine.goddard@ntlworld.com); 07930 637120  
Richard Ross (men): [richardross686@btinternet.com](mailto:richardross686@btinternet.com); 07715 705067