



# ENGLAND HOCKEY ROADSHOWS 2006

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE SINGLE SYSTEM PROPOSALS

### 1. How have these proposals been developed?

- The proposals represent the second stage of a two year Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) project that has been led by a Working Group of volunteers, England Hockey staff and other partners with generic expertise in the development of young people in sport. An initial formal period of consultation was undertaken in Spring 2005 though informal consultation has been ongoing through workshops, meetings and presentations involving well informed and vastly experienced volunteers throughout the project.
- 16 other sports in England have also been developing their own Long Term Athlete Development proposals, including cricket, rugby, netball, girls football and a number of individual sports. The work has all been based on the consensus of research on how young people develop sporting ability.
- In parallel, England Hockey's new Performance Director has looked at the issues faced on the international stage. These two projects have made similar conclusions.

### 2. Why have we chosen 1 January age date qualification for all competitions?

- This will overcome confusion for players and parents in relation to differences between school and club competition rules for players born 1 September to 31 December
- Under FIH regulations, international selection is based on 1 January cut off date. England Hockey wants to ensure that a consistent approach is taken across the sport with a move for all selections and competitions to be 1 January. In a move towards a single system for the sport this seemed to be the most logical date to ensure grass roots development is in line with international performance.

### 3. How do we propose schools play across two year groups?

- It is anticipated that this would be adopted for school representative teams only. Inclusion of hockey in the curriculum would be unaffected.
- Often school team practices are already held at lunch time or after school. Therefore cross year group practice should pose less of a challenge in practice, though it is appreciated that this would represent a change from traditional organisation. It should be remembered, however, that in some instances talented players are already playing out of their year group.

### 4. Do we have a firm list of proposals with timescales?

- Yes. The proposals have been drawn up as a result of 2 years consultation and the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) research. These can be downloaded from the 'Single System (LTAD)' section of the England Hockey website at [www.englishockey.org](http://www.englishockey.org)
- There is still time to comment on these proposals. You have until 31 May to email your comments to [singlesystem@englishockey.org](mailto:singlesystem@englishockey.org). Accounting for feedback received, final proposals will go to the England Hockey Board for discussion in mid-July.

## **5. Why do the proposals suggest that juniors should not play in adult leagues?**

**(a) How will my club continue to run senior teams if they cannot use junior players?**

**(b) Is the timescale too ambitious?**

**(c) How could this be regulated?**

Currently we accelerate promotion of youngsters through to senior teams as soon as they show potential with core skills. Under the pressure of senior competition, they are more likely to revert to type/what's comfortable rather than try new skills/take calculated risks. The continued development of core skills can also be neglected in the desire to reinforce team tactics. The quality and execution of core skills under pressure has been identified as a weakness of players as they progress into higher levels of competition including at international level and this must be addressed throughout the player pathway.

(a) It is recognised that some smaller clubs may find it challenging but the research demonstrates it is in **the best interest of young people**. It will cause clubs to focus on their priorities.

It is intended that development competitions (mixing adults and juniors) may act as a stepping stone so potentially smaller clubs can exist perhaps purely as a development club. The competition for these clubs would be properly constituted toward development with the best interests of the youngsters paramount. This will help young players:

- Skill development (phased introduction of game skills and tactics)
- Take responsibility and learn leadership skills
- Play in peer group for longer, which research shows can help increase the chances of them continuing in hockey into adulthood
- Play more hockey closer to home, making hockey available to players regardless of needing substantial parental support
- Play in an environment where physical differences are less evident, enhancing safety
- Experience hockey in a single system environment, where all youngsters get similar experiences

(b) Competition for young players is vital to maintain their interest. Hockey will need to find suitable alternatives for young people before it can happen. There are good practice examples of this around the country where alternative competition networks have been established and this can be developed for use more widely.

It is proposed that this is phased in starting with U13's in 2007/08 season progressing to no U14's in 2008/09 season, continued annually through to U16s. In this way, the same year group of players and those that follow them will 'grow up' without the expectation of playing in open adult leagues. There are very few U13s who currently play in adult hockey and so this phased approach will avoid taking juniors who have played senior hockey previously and suddenly refusing permission for this to continue.

(c) It is hoped that over a period of time there will be sufficient understanding and buy in that peer pressure is brought to bear on those not adhering. Additionally, the introduction of a form of player identification could be considered but this may prove a disproportionate measure.

## **6. Are we providing adequate competition for young people if they can't play with adults?**

- The proposals would be phased in over a long period of time to give time to develop alternative competitive opportunities
- It is important to remember that the balance of training and competition must be addressed to help develop a training culture.
- There are already good practice examples where excellent networks of junior competitions are happening around the country; we would build on those good examples. Where possible, clubs/schools will be encouraged to work together to provide opportunities for young players
- As numbers grow, tiering of competition within peer group will become possible. This will be supplemented by competitions associated with each element of the pathway i.e. Local Development Centres etc, many of which already exist
- APPROPRIATE junior competitions are the key
  - In the short term, whilst networks of junior competition are developed, for very talented youngsters, playing out of age group may not be precluded, provided this is agreed as part of a managed process for the individual. This might include an assessment not just of playing ability, but social maturity, together with assurances that players will not also be required to play in their own age group team at that level e.g. an exceptional U13 player playing U14 at Local Development Centre 1 would not also play U13 at Local Development Centre 1
  - Playing more local intra club competitions, with travel further afield only where the quantity of pitch time for players is proportionate to travel time
  - Young players can also benefit from a variety of experiences i.e. coping with the expectation of being the best on the pitch vs being challenged at a higher standard

## **7. What other changes will there be to competitions?**

It will be important to provide a progressive structure for junior competition to support the proposed player pathway. As such, a comprehensive review of existing competitions will be required. Some of the main proposals are:

- Limit formal competition to nothing beyond a county round up to U14. This would not preclude friendly festivals or similar competitions being organised on a regional or national basis, but not as competitions to which teams will 'qualify' from a previous round. This will help maintain an appropriate balance of travelling distance to standard of play and reinforce a developmental philosophy
- Restructuring Regional representative activity to provide more appropriate assessment at younger age groups. Retaining tournaments at older age groups, where preparation in a squad environment for an intensive tournament is more appropriate
- Replacing the existing regional U21 tournament with a restructured competition based around regional academies in this age group in partnership with further and higher education.

## **8. Who will organise these 'extra' competitions?**

- The review of existing competitions is expected to rationalise existing competitions, so some 'new' competitions will, in effect, replace old ones.
- The enhanced effectiveness in use of volunteers' time expected through revised roles and responsibilities should also assist. For example, many counties currently have much duplication of in roles and responsibilities between girls, boys, mens and womens sections
- Additionally, there are networks outside hockey, particularly in schools, that will be able to assist. These include County Sports Partnerships, local authorities and a developing network of employed 'Competition Managers' based in schools
- The broader volunteer development strategy will also encourage and develop more volunteers, especially young people, in line with government's proposals for energising the nation's volunteer base

### **9. Who will organise LDC 1s/2s etc?**

- In the short term, the organisation(s) best placed to deliver against the specified criteria for each element of the pathway. This is likely to include a mixture of clubs, county, and regional associations.
- In the long term it is envisaged that they will be hosted/managed/run by clubs, as clubs are the only providers where players can participate in hockey lifelong. Clubs are also likely to be the only organisations that could make full use of a re-structuring of our sport to potentially create more professional opportunities in hockey through coaching and/or administration. In outline, long term responsibilities would be envisaged as follows:
  - LDC1/2 Clubs
  - LDC3 clubs/universities
  - Regional Academies under England Hockey’s auspices – in conjunction with clubs and regional associations
  - County/regional association roles would evolve from direct delivery to quality assurance and local governance of the single system

### **10. Is England Hockey looking to make county and regional associations obsolete?**

- No, but it is envisioned that their role will change to move away from direct delivery, refocusing towards quality assurance and local governance of the new frameworks.
- As part of this work, England Hockey will be encouraging Associations to follow a ‘fit for purpose’ route, via an accreditation system similar to the existing Clubs 1<sup>st</sup> scheme.

### **11. If there are no County and Regional teams what will young players aspire to?**

- It will be important to retain recognition for players’ achievements through representative ‘honours’. Given the tiering of the player pathway, this will remain possible, albeit the terminology associated with each tier may change from that currently used i.e. existing representative honours at county and regional level may be redefined/renamed.
- There will be alternative competitions through LDC 1s, 2s etc so in practice there will be little difference EXCEPT that the nature and format of the competitions will be connected/appropriate to what the players need at each stage of their development in terms of format and traveling distances.
- County/Regional boundaries will cease to define representation i.e. players go to their closest LDC1/LDC2 etc not necessarily the one in the county in which they live.
- Where possible, ease of access and strategic positioning will also dictate where they are located i.e. coverage nationwide, not necessarily county by county.

### **12. Is England Hockey trying to create super clubs? What’s in it for small clubs? Super clubs will take our youngsters but won’t give anything back.**

- Clubs are the heartbeat of hockey and developing a thriving club infrastructure is one of hockey’s key strategic objectives. The proposals are not intended to produce super clubs. It is anticipated that there will be a role for all clubs, albeit that roles will be more clearly defined.
- It is right, however, that those clubs that are committed to developing the hockey players of the future are supported to do so. The proposals set out a clear strategy that will enable better targeting of resources to help achieve this.
- Delivery of the pathway will be subject to clear criteria and service level agreements (SLAs) that will:
  - make the system more transparent
  - encourage clubs to work in partnership to provide opportunities for young people, with better resourced clubs assisting ‘smaller’ clubs e.g. a club appointed as a Local Development Centre 2 may be required to help a smaller, local club, with their coach development, or assist them to develop a school-club link
  - promote neutrality e.g. accessing coaching at a club-hosted Local Development Centre would not require a player to be a member of the host club
  - better target resources

### **13. Will the single system proposals be guidelines or compulsory?**

- Using feedback received during the consultation period, final proposals will be made to the England Hockey Board in July. The Board's decisions will form the basis of the vision/strategy for junior development, and resources will be deployed accordingly.
- The consultation process has so far demonstrated much acceptance of the need to address some of the fundamental challenges that face hockey in the development of young players. It is hoped that the hockey family will unite behind the Board's decisions and help to build a bright future for our sport

### **14. Will we need more volunteers to underpin the new single system?**

In the long term, possibly - because the target is to bring more young people into the sport so we will ultimately need more volunteers to support the increase in young people. However, the proposals should over time reduce existing duplication, and clearer roles and responsibilities will enable more effective use of volunteers' time. It should be remembered that the proposals are not additional to what is already undertaken – over time, the new system will replace the old.

Additionally:

- (a) A more organised, open and transparent system with clear roles and responsibilities will potentially attract new volunteers and some volunteers previously disillusioned by the old system
- (b) the broader volunteer strategy is also intended to help recruit and inform volunteers, including encouraging young players to volunteer too, a currently vastly untapped resource
- (c) the two-cycle structure will also potentially release some adults who concentrate on their own playing during their season to assist junior development in the 'second' cycle
- (d) there are other networks and initiatives both within and outside sport that can be utilised to attract and recruit volunteers
- (e) implementation of the proposals will potentially enable hockey to better access other professional networks, such as the new school competition managers
- (f) a more coordinated approach within hockey will also potentially encourage more coaches to consider the role as a profession

### **15. What about facilities?**

- The proposals will provide a framework for making decisions on where facilities are needed, if they do not already exist. Criteria for the facilities needed at every level of the player pathway will be clearly defined so England Hockey will be able to target resources where they are needed, for example through Community Club Development Programme funding, or assistance with local negotiations for Lottery or other funding.
- The proposals will help inform England Hockey's work on the development of a national facilities strategy in 2006.

### **16. Why is there is no mention of umpire, coach and administrator development?**

- The main thrust of the document is to outline proposals for a clear player development pathway and whilst the focus in the document is on the playing side of the game this cannot be considered in isolation. It is intended that umpiring, official, administration and coaching pathways will sit as integral parts of these plans.

### **17. What will be the role of schools in the new system?**

- It is intended that schools will continue to play an important role in the introduction and development of players through the curriculum. New resources for teachers and those delivering hockey in schools have been developed by England Hockey recently, and have been well received. More are intended as part of hockey's commitment to working with schools to develop hockey
- To reflect the desire to encourage young players into clubs as a means of lifelong participation, and to help develop our thriving club infrastructure, it is intended that school-club links will form a crucial part of hockey's development in schools.

- As part of the review of competitions it is likely that the tiering of school competitions will change to reflect the growing emphasis on school-club links. Particularly for U14s, 'schools only' competition is likely to refocus towards a local level as a result, reducing the potential for conflict over talented young players. Over time, schools will be encouraged to celebrate their role in the progress of talented young players as individuals within the single system, rather than the success of school teams per se.
- Working more flexibly with school sports partnerships to encourage more hockey to be played will be a primary focus. This is because many schools, particularly in the state sector, consider the entry level for existing hockey competitions to be too high. The overall effect of the proposals should be to ensure that more players from schools who are currently unable or unwilling to run 'school teams' will be captured by the sport.
- It is not inconceivable that in some areas schools, where linked appropriately to clubs, could host some parts of the player pathway.

#### **18. Will there be funding available to support implementation?**

- Potentially, yes, there may be funding available to support implementation. The multi-sport nature of the Long Term Athlete Development work in sport has increased the possibility of England Hockey accessing funding from relevant national and regional organisations. Additionally, the hosting of London 2012 has focused attention on the need to provide clear pathways for young people in sport.
- However, most of the existing systems for player development are self-financing and for the large part, this is expected to remain the case. Clearly England Hockey will also be committed to supporting the process in other ways such as assisting change locally and the production of resources such as a player syllabus.