

STATEMENT FROM THE BOARD OF ENGLAND HOCKEY ON THE SINGLE SYSTEM FOR HOCKEY PROJECT

Statement begins

The Single System for Hockey proposals set out a long term vision for a consistent, open and transparent system for hockey in England. Some readers may be familiar with the term Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD). This is a concept based on evidenced research about how young people develop sporting ability. This research has, for many years, been used to underpin physical education teaching. The Single System for Hockey proposals are the result of a two year project considering whether and/or how adopting the principles of LTAD may be of benefit to hockey in England.

The Board of England Hockey considered a report on the recent Single System for Hockey consultation at its meeting on 18 July. The consultation process was the second consultation on this project, the first being undertaken in Spring/Summer 2005. The most recent consultation began in late February and was concluded at the end of May 2006. There was much constructive debate in meetings and written feedback, and the Board of England Hockey would like to express its thanks to all those who engaged in this important consultation process.

In total, approximately 1400 people attended the 7 National Roadshows or 40 additional meetings in Regions where the Single System proposals have been discussed. Almost 4900 downloads of the Single System and FAQs documents have been made from the England Hockey website and a further 3200 hard copies have also been distributed. Written feedback has been received from 280 respondents.

This statement details the Board's decisions on its considerations of feedback received during the consultation process and the resulting recommendations made by the Single System Working Group. A separate document summarising feedback received through the consultation process has today been made available via the England Hockey website.

From October 2006 England Hockey will begin detailed discussions with our partners from regional and county associations, league organisers, clubs and other key stakeholders to consider how we can work together to implement decisions taken regarding the Single System proposals. These discussions will include detail of the financial resource that would be made available through sources of revenue funding secured by England Hockey.

The decisions made by the Board are as follows:

Player pathway

I. Subject to the discussions detailed above, the proposed structure of the player pathway (Appendix A) is adopted from Summer 2008, with earlier implementation to be considered where practical

It is considered that this provides opportunities to increase participation through enhancement of School-Club links and also represents an evolution of the existing county and regional player pathways. As such it should create a clear and consistent approach to both player and coach development, and provide opportunities for development of officials. It will also ensure a system of tiered representation and competition is retained, being important for inspiring young players to play hockey. This is also to be reflected in changes to original working titles in the pathway i.e. Development Centres, Academies etc (Appendix A)..

2. A player development syllabus for young hockey players should be developed, with supporting coaching resources, by the start of the 2007-8 season

This to include consideration of players of all abilities, with the objective of assisting them to achieve their full potential, regardless of whether that be as a school, club, county, regional or international player. It will provide further guidance to coaches as part of England Hockey's growing portfolio of coaching resources through inclusion of development priorities for all ages and outline schemes of work.

3. England Hockey will invest in developing other appropriate resources to support the Single System on a rolling programme with the first resources due for completion in early 2007

These support resources to include:

- An effective model of delivery for School-Club links
- A model for delivery of effective Further/Higher Education-Club links to help address 16/18yrs+ dropout
- A facility strategy that is driven by the need to improve or provide new facilities to deliver the player pathway (Appendix A)
- Revised talent identification protocols to support progression through the player pathway, with guidance for nomination to assessment. This will help maintain consistency nationally regardless of the route for nomination e.g. school, club, county etc
- Provision of sports science workshops for players to support delivery throughout the player pathway
- Recommendations on frequency and maximum training and match commitments to assist with individual management of players
- Resources for players, coaches and managers to assist with the management of individual players e.g. training diaries

Structuring and extending the season

Following consideration of feedback regarding the proposal to extend the season and concerns regarding increasing volunteer commitments, and potential for conflict with other sports, the Board agreed that:

4. Subject to the discussions with our partners as detailed above, an outline priority list is refined for implementation from Summer 2008. This to reflect a two cycle season through 'pre Christmas' and 'post Christmas' separation of activities for junior hockey. This will include consideration of an extension of the season of up to 6 weeks of pre-season preparation in late Summer, provided that this extension is not considered compulsory for all, nor adversely affect the interaction of schools and representative programmes for nomination and assessment purposes

It was accepted that clearly structuring the season in this way should:

- Reduce conflicts by providing clear priority dates throughout the season
- Provide more time for meaningful preparation for, and organisation of, competitions
- Support deselection of players throughout the pathway. This means that players deselected from any tier of the player pathway would continue to be supported in their development
- Maximise players' development through clear structuring of training and competition
- Provide an opportunity to formalise the late Summer (pre-season) extension to junior hockey activity that is already prevalent in regional and pre-county development centres, without making such provision compulsory for clubs
- Support the development of transparent and consistent assessment between tiers of the player pathway

Roles & responsibilities

The Board accepted the recommendation that an evolution of roles and responsibilities of organisations delivering hockey could be of benefit in relation to making more effective use of existing resources. As such the Board agreed that:

- 5. Criteria are developed to guide delivery for each tier of the player pathway e.g. LDC1, LDC2 etc. These should form the basis of short-to-medium term decisions on which organisation(s) might be best placed to co-ordinate delivery locally. Draft criteria to be completed by October 2006 to help shape discussions with partners**
- 6. Quality assurance and consistency should be fostered through the introduction of an appropriate accreditation scheme linked to player pathway delivery. This accreditation scheme to be available from 2009-10 season**

The criteria guiding delivery of the player pathway would include information on the nature of facilities, coaching/umpiring/administration requirements and other resources. This will encourage greater consistency of delivery nationally. Adopting clear criteria will also facilitate an open and transparent process for selecting the organisation(s) best placed to co-ordinate delivery locally e.g. regions, counties, leagues, clubs, schools or other stakeholders.

As a long term objective, an accreditation scheme is proposed for quality assurance purposes. An accreditation scheme for clubs (Clubs 1st) has been in operation for some time, but there is currently no equivalent for other hockey providers such as county and regional associations. A new scheme is therefore proposed to address this. The new scheme will be linked with the Clubs 1st accreditation process to ensure that any clubs wishing to deliver other activities within the player pathway e.g. LDC1s will not be required to duplicate evidence demonstrating their suitability.

This should be supported by the adoption of realistic, and if necessary, phased, timescales for introduction.

Competition

Adequate, appropriate, competition for young players is essential to support development and retain interest. The Board considered recommendations made by the LTAD Working Group in light of feedback received and agreed the following:

- 7. A revised calendar of junior competitions will be developed by the joint Youth / Competitions Working Group to reflect revisions to the player pathway (1. above), increased structuring of the season (4. above) and provision of junior-only competition. The earliest changes to any junior competitions will be in 2007-8 season**

In respect of Regional competitions:

- 8. That the original proposals are amended so that the ultimate focus of U14 and U16 activity becomes high performance assessment camps, with U15 and U17 activity remaining tournament focused. At all age groups match play and practice will be integral to delivery**

These changes reflect:

- A commitment from England Hockey's Performance Team to engage in national assessment of players from U14 through the Regional Academies and high performance assessment camps, and in parallel, the development of Regional coaches
- A need to ensure that the first exposure to national assessment for U14 players is through a mechanism that provides for assessment within both training and matchplay environments
- Avoidance of high pressure Regional Tournament commitment in the major exam year at U16. The inclusion of a high performance assessment camp at this age group does ensure continuity of support and assessment to players deselected by Regions between U15 and U17 squads; players maturing later in their careers, or joining the sport later in life

In respect of schools competitions:

- 9. A separation of the club/representative and schools competition programmes. In relation to age qualification, this means that:**
- a. schools only competitions will retain 1st September age qualification
 - b. all other hockey to use 1st January for competition purposes from 2007-8 season
- 10. That as far as practicable, schools competitions are prioritised for midweek delivery in order to reduce fixture congestion and potential of conflict for players' time**
- 11. That, as part of the work undertaken by the Joint Youth/Competitions Working Group, a programme of schools competitions be developed in consultation with state and independent schools' representatives**

The schools competition programme will reflect a desire to:

- Encourage more local level schools competitions through emerging School Sports Partnership networks of competition
- Retain an attractive portfolio of schools competitions to provide opportunities for young players not involved with club and representative hockey
- Maintain the interest of those schools already providing, or with the potential to provide, extra curricular hockey
- Manage individual players within the recommendations on maximum training and match commitments
- Consider ways in which the tradition of schools playing Saturday fixtures, particularly within the independent sector, might be accommodated within a schools competition calendar

In respect of Juniors playing in adult leagues:

Much of the feedback received throughout the consultation process concerned the proposed phased exclusion of juniors from playing in adult leagues. The Board considered at its meeting survey data from a sample of hockey clubs. This provided information on the number of junior players currently playing in adult teams and gave an indication of the likely impact of the Board's decision. As a result of its discussions, the Board agreed that:

- 12. The principle of restricting junior players from playing in adult only leagues is accepted**
- 13. The original proposal is amended to apply this principle to U15 (not U16) players i.e. players of 14 yrs and that the same policy is applied to boys and girls. This decision is subject to the following:**
- from season 2007-8 U13s will not be allowed to play in adult only competitions. U13s defined as being under 13 years of age on 1 January 2008
 - that an additional, full impact assessment be undertaken with clubs in England regarding the extension of this principle to U14 and U15 players in future years
 - that this impact assessment be undertaken within a timescale that allows the findings be submitted to the Board for decision in March/April 2007
 - discussions are undertaken with league organisers regarding the feasibility of introducing / revising existing league structures to include development division (s) from season 2008 /9. Development divisions intended to address the inclusion of teams comprising both junior and adult players to help address the concerns of those clubs unable to sustain junior only or adult only teams due to size or location

In making these decisions, the Board acknowledges the current culture of introducing junior players into adult teams, and the potential challenge to small and/or rurally based clubs. However, the Board also considered the quality and consistency of such practice to be variable, with reports of players as young as 8/9 years old included in adult competition.

In addition to developmental factors, only a proportion of young players involved in junior club based activity can currently be accommodated in this way. This naturally favours the more talented and/or physically mature players, and there are concerns that this practice does not encourage the organisation of alternative junior activities for those junior players not considered capable of playing in adult teams at a young age, contributing to mid-teens dropout.

The revised timescale for this decision also reflects the Board's acceptance that the development of alternative networks of junior competition is both essential and a medium to long term objective.

Statement ends

Any questions relating to this statement should be directed to the England Hockey Regional Development Managers based at the Regional Offices. Contact details available on the England Hockey website.

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Regional Secretaries
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**APPENDIX A
PLAYER PATHWAY STRUCTURE**

