



ENGLAND
HOCKEY

Talent Development
A New Way Forward

FAQs

It was great to get a feel for the direction of travel and intent in Ed Barney's letter. I would like to find out more, where do I go?

We hope the rationale for change has come through clearly. Many of the ideas, opportunities and issues that you talked about in the recent Talent System survey have shaped this. We have an initial direction of travel and look forward to progressing junior talent development and creating more truly exceptional talent development environments with you.

We want to work closely with all our stakeholders over the coming months to share ideas and develop a more detailed plan for the future. Our aim is that by late autumn, we can communicate a more detailed plan to everyone.

Is there any more information available on the planned changes at Academy Centre / school / club level?

At the early talent development level (11-14 years), our aim is to create a comprehensive network of local inspirational environments throughout England which enable players to prosper and for talented players to emerge.

Local Academy Centres have a role to play in this by providing a representative opportunity for 11-14-year old players (U13/U14/U15 age groups). This is an important aspect for many young people as they start their playing career. Academy Centre U16/U17 competitions still have an important role to play to provide age related competition for older players and help ensure they remain in the sport and continue to enjoy playing hockey. However, U16/U17 Academy Centre activity is unlikely to be a focus for the most talented players who are likely to have significant club commitments by this age.

Many clubs and schools also offer excellent training and competitive opportunities for these age groups. To encompass all these development opportunities within the talent system, a player will be able to choose which ones they attend, with each providing equal opportunity to progress.

How are the selection processes going to evolve and improve?

We have been developing a scouting programme. The aim of this scouting system is to collate more insight ensuring informed decision making takes place at selection points. The process will ensure that several scouts observe a player on multiple occasions. These observations will be systematically recorded and utilised in selection. We have also begun developing a 'new' player profile which will cover a broad range of qualities - this will aid our future talent development and identification.

We will need a group of exceptional people (in some instances coaches) to scout talent and a robust process of nominating and then observing players on multiple occasions. Clearly, it will be important that these scouts are as independent as possible and understand the biases, both conscious and unconscious, that can be involved in talent identification and selection.

Selecting on 'future potential', what does that really mean?

If we look at research and evidence across team sports such as hockey, football and rugby, we know that the highest performing players at a young age e.g. 13 / 14 years of age, are often not the players who go on to excel at a senior level. Therefore, it's important to consider a player's future potential as well as their current performance.

Several factors can be important when thinking about future potential. To bring this to life with a few examples: Consider a young player's attacking and goal scoring ability. They may get into great positions, reading the game very well, and have good technical ball skills, but due to their current physical development they don't hit the ball hard enough to consistently trouble the goalkeeper. However, your assessment is that they have high future potential given further physical development and growth. Another example would be a player who demonstrates several exceptional physical and psychological qualities but has only been playing hockey for a short time, so their skills profile is limited. However, they have shown a real capacity to learn and develop. Given this overall profile you may rate them as having high future potential, though their current performance is limited.

So future potential is in many ways about the lens through which we observe a player and make judgements.

Can you explain how the new system will develop a greater level of diversity in junior talent development?

We are determined to grow the diversity of the sport, particularly from an ethnic and socio-economic perspective. We do not have all the answers yet, but we want to think creatively and radically about this. By working with a variety of stakeholders we see targeted initiatives coming to fruition with clubs and schools. We need to see more frequent and high-quality contact time outside of the independent school sector and more robust selection processes. In addition, we need to think very carefully about the future locations of 'centres of excellence' ensuring that they are well positioned and accessible to all.

My Performance Centre offers me my best training environment. How will I access exceptional training when these changes come into effect?

If your Performance Centre is the best training environment you currently access, we want to ensure that future 'centres of excellence' exceed this provision, ensuring that you have access to this kind of environment on a more regular basis. We know that the most talented players need to be training several times each week in a high-quality training environment (without too many competing demands e.g., other hockey provision). The aim is for good geographical spread with the future locations of the 'centres of excellence', ensuring that all talented players can access high-quality training and competition.

How will you ensure the best coaches are available in the new centres of excellence?

The 'centres of excellence' will be appointed through a robust application process. Coaching philosophy and coaching credentials will be a key part of this as will a commitment to a collaborative player centred and inclusive culture and robust governance. A focus for England Hockey will be working with these centres in the support and development of coaching and to help them set new standards for talent development.

These changes don't look like they'll come into effect until 2021/22 for 11-14-year-old players. What happens till then?

Development Centre and Academy Centre delivery will continue. You will be able to access pathway activity through your local county association and it is important that you continue to use the opportunities that they provide.

These changes don't look like they'll come into effect until 2021/22 for 15 – 18-year-old players. What happens till then?

Nothing will change for the 2020-21 cycle. Players can still be nominated to Performance Centre by Academy Centres through their regional administrator. Futures Cup 2021 will take place in August 2021 with playing squads selected from the Performance Centre environment. Players should continue to strive to enter the Performance Centre environment and take the opportunity to develop within these environments.

When is more information going to be provided on these changes?

We will continue to work with all our stakeholders on the direction of travel and development of the detail over the next three months. We look forward to sharing more on the plans in a few months.

I would like to speak to someone about this, who should I contact?

If you have further questions, please email them to talent@englandhockey.co.uk