

GLOUCESTERSHIRE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Junior Festivals Organiser report for GHA AGM 27th May 2021.

Covid-19 has had a major impact on this season with the Festivals in November, January, February and March all cancelled. Those that did go ahead in October, December and April saw smaller numbers of entries even from those clubs still willing to participate. Indeed across all the clubs the responses were very varied in the face of Covid-19 with some deciding not to play at all whilst others were initially very tentative, but then became very enthusiastic; whilst others were the opposite. The attempt to hold some final events in May failed due to the impact of summer sports.

There have been a total of 14 Festivals this season with them taking place in October, December and April. The U8 mixed had 2 events with a total of 11 teams; U10 girls had 4 events with a total of 24 teams, U10 boys had 2 events with a total of 12 teams; U12 girls had 3 events with a total of 25 teams and U12 boys had 3 events with a total of 22 teams. My thanks to all the clubs, their organisers, the team managers, the officials and the players and their parents for their perseverance and forbearance in delivering all this.

I would like also to thank the schools; Bournside, Cheltenham Ladies College and Dean Close for their support and understanding in working with us to put on these events in the face of all the restrictions and limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic prevention measures. Mind you I think I have never generated so much documentation and written so many regulations, guidance documents and risk assessments as were required this season. I just hope I never have to do anything like this ever again. In this regard though the information and guidance provided by England Hockey has been exemplary and made the job a great deal more manageable.

The In2Hockey competition was eventually entirely cancelled by EH and with lockdown not ending until 12th April the decision was taken to not have any local competition due to the number of clubs deciding to end their season without further involvement.

The future of junior hockey competition under the new governance structure is currently being explored at both Area and National level. There is a West Junior Competitions Transition Group on which Angie Pearce is representing GHA. This group has been collecting detailed information on the current activities in West as well as thoughts for how it might be structured in the future. The counties have all been polled and a meeting held to review the results. The clubs have also been polled to get an understanding of their position and intentions as well as participating in the national discussions. West currently is ahead of most other Areas in this activity.

The current direction of travel is to have the same level of junior competitions as exist now with possibly some expansion at U14 and U16 with an Area league or possibly Part-Area leagues. All the counties in West want to continue their roles of sponsoring junior hockey competitions and probably even expand. Angie Pearce has more detail of all this.

Ian Harvey, GHA Junior Festivals organiser
6th May 2021