

AGM Player Pathway Report

2020 - 2021 Season

COVID affected the entire season but we were able to run selection sessions from September through to December (with the exception of November).

8 squads were selected thanks to the efforts of the coaches during challenging times. Unfortunately no squad was able to play or train from January onwards and as such the season has been a write off.

Players selected to Academy level were given the opportunity to purchase a hoodie and 60 players took advantage of this.

England Hockey Talent Development Strategy

The first draft of this strategy was released in August 2020 and there has been much debate on this ever since. The role of county hockey in the future has been the focus of our attention and various committee members have attended the online forums and engaged directly with relevant managers at England Hockey. A huge thank you to those that have taken the time to read all of the relevant documents and contribute to the debate.

To save you reading the 100+ pages, here is our interpretation of the fundamentals

- England Hockey will replace the current Performance Centre structure with Talent Academies that will be based in eligible hockey clubs
- England Hockey will introduce the concept of club based Talent Centres
- England Hockey will introduce the concept of a school based Talent School.
- England Hockey will continue to recognise the value of county hockey which will run alongside the Talent Centre(s) and the Talent School(s)

Whilst we acknowledge the importance of multiple entry points to elite hockey, we have come to the conclusion that the currently planned implementation of the proposed strategy risks putting Club Talent Centre based players and coaches in a position of a potential conflict of interest in Gloucestershire.

We appreciate that the strategy is still evolving but equally we believe that we need to make our position clear at this moment in time given the knowledge we have of the new strategy.

Talent Academy - Club

We will endeavour to work with any 'local' Talent Academy on the basis that we currently work with the existing Performance Centre based in Bristol. We do not believe that any Gloucestershire Cub will qualify to become a Talent Academy (we might be wrong on this)

Talent Centre - Club

Our current position is that should a Gloucestershire hockey club choose to become a Talent Centre and be successful in becoming accredited, it will mean that players and coaches that are part of the Talent Centre will not be eligible to be nominated for, play at or coach at Gloucestershire county hockey sessions.

The rationale behind this is that the Talent Centre club players and coaches in question will have made a conscious decision to follow a different talent direction for their players and their coaches than the county hockey route.

Talent School

We do not currently have a similar policy for schools because the decisions involved in choosing a school for a student usually go well beyond whether the school are considerably more diverse than choosing a hockey club.

Player at the Centre

The new strategy places a considerable amount of emphasis on the player being at the centre of everything we do. Whilst this is an objective that we fully support, at present there is no mechanism to practically do this at this moment in time.

As the Player Pathway lead for Gloucestershire, I have come across many examples of schools not knowing which clubs their players are at and many clubs not knowing what schools their players are at. Sharing information about players between clubs, schools and the county is virtually non-existent.

Furthermore, the interpretation of the standard required to succeed at Academy Centre and beyond differs significantly between stakeholders.

Gloucestershire Hockey

Gloucestershire Hockey goes way beyond what other counties typically deliver. Most counties just use the 11 or so dates allocated by England Hockey for Academy Centres (AC) and then run a Development Centre (DC) to feed that AC Cycle. Gloucestershire Hockey runs training for a further 25+ dates in the season as well as running the DC.

For the 2021-2 season we have received over 300 nominations from 40 different sources for 40 AC places at Under 14 Level.

This is not sensible or effective. The administration time alone is a huge commitment, especially since the systems provided by England Hockey are not really fit for many of the purposes required to run this.

County Hockey Development Role

The new strategy clearly states that county hockey has a development role to play. We have approved a schools outreach programme that we piloted this season when we were able to do so. We will expand it next season to schools that have less access to coaches.

The Future

As a step to start to tackle some of these issues, over the summer GHA will be consulting as many Gloucestershire clubs and schools as it can to help shape junior hockey in Gloucestershire for the future. Please contact the GHA Chairman, Ian Harvey, to register your interest.

2021 - 2022 Season

We have started planning for the 2021 - 2022 season. We will run a reduced DC offering in May and June. This is because we are still coming out of lockdown during those months and we are mindful of the fact that county hockey players can come from a wide geographical area. We are also mindful of the fact that the England Hockey age group cut off dates lead to mixing academic year groups in the same session. However it has recently been announced (12th May 2021) that the age banding will revert to academic years from September - this will cause another administrative challenge.

We will run selection sessions in September and these may extend into October.

Additional Support

Finally, I would like to welcome Helen Jefferies to the Player Pathway team. Helen will be involved in various aspects of the process and is a valuable addition to GHA.

Valedictorum

This season we say goodbye to two lead coaches who are moving on to new challenges.

- **Charli Roberts** who has been leading, administering and coaching for 8 years at GHA is starting her NQT year as a newly qualified teacher.
- **Rich Owen** who will be coaching Bristol Ladies 1st XI on Mondays and cannot be in two places at once. Rich will however be leading the schools outreach programme.

We wish them all the very best in their new roles and thank them for their support.

James Doughty
Helen Jefferies