

## Draft GHA Response to England Hockey's Talent Development Strategy

Dear Clive,

The GHA official response to the England Hockey Talent Development Strategy is below - sorry it is so long - our 4 line response is at the very end in case you need it.

Without further information from England Hockey on how the new Talent Development Strategy will work operationally, GHA does not currently support the Talent Development Strategy proposed by England Hockey over the summer.

GHA strongly believes that creating a coaching "Centre of Excellence (CoE)" at stronger hockey club and/or school in Gloucestershire will be detrimental to increasing the participation in and diversity of hockey in Gloucestershire because

- In all likelihood, the strategy will only be relevant to one or two players in Gloucestershire at best (assuming the proposed strategy continues to focus on the top 500 15 to 18 year old players nationally). Changing the whole way hockey operates in a county for the sake of a couple of players seems to be disproportionate to what EH is trying to achieve.
- Most of the larger clubs in Gloucestershire are running at full capacity. If a club or school in Gloucestershire did apply for 'CoE' status, our experience in dealing with the clubs and schools on a regular basis is that they would struggle to administer and run this operationally and politically. Only one club in Gloucestershire has Clubmark and that club is highly unlikely to want to become a CoE.
- It is unclear what would happen if a 'CoE' club or school decided to withdraw from their 'CoE' status - how would this impact the players or clubs?
- In the current AC cycle in Gloucestershire, players come from 11 clubs. 6 of these clubs provide 10 players or more. We believe that assigning 'CoE' status to any club in Gloucestershire will have a detrimental effect on all the other clubs not in this category - the better players are likely to try to migrate to the 'CoE' club - given the capacity difficulties, they are unlikely to succeed unless the CoE starts to exclude its existing, less able players - we do not believe that this is an acceptable ethical position for the 'CoE' to adopt
- state schools in Gloucestershire are highly unlikely to want to be involved in becoming a hockey 'CoE' - this immediately creates a divide between private schools and state schools

- hockey only plays a small part in school selection - players with potential hockey talent aren't likely to change schools just for a marginal difference in hockey coaching
- The new strategy focuses on the top 500 15 to 18 year olds in the country and expects Academy Centres to continue to run for 13 to 15 year olds. Coaches at Academy Centres that are also coaches at 'CoEs' could be put in a position where they could be faced with actively promoting the movement of an AC player to a CoE club (or, less likely, school) which the coach is affiliated to. We believe this would be in breach of the England Hockey Code of Ethics. The only way we would be able to resolve this would be to exclude the CoE coaches from AC coaching.

If England Hockey do press ahead with this, GHA considers that the following principles would have to be adopted in Gloucestershire.

- **Any** player at a school or club that is assigned 'CoE' status would be considered to be on a separate talent pathway to the county/regional player pathway for the entire season - this appears to be in line with the strategy as it states that Academy Centres would work alongside 'CoEs'.
- **Any** coach that coaches at a 'CoE' would not be eligible to coach at county Academy Centres

4 line response

GHA does not support the Talent Development Strategy proposed by England Hockey over the summer because

- a) England Hockey have not provided any information on how it will work in practical terms.
- b) In its current state, the strategy is ethically questionable.
- b) the existing county volunteer network in Gloucestershire is unlikely to deliver it because they don't believe in its principles
- c) it won't achieve its stated goals because it won't deliver greater participation or diversity

James Doughty

GHA Youth Coordinator