



Wimbledon Hockey Club – U18 Membership & Alignment Policy

1. Purpose of this Policy

This policy sets out Wimbledon Hockey Club's approach to U18 membership and alignment between junior and adult programmes. It is rooted in our commitment to Self-Determination, Belonging, and Inclusivity, and aims to protect the quality, fairness, and meaning of the junior hockey experience for all involved.

While this policy applies specifically to U18s, its intent is broader. It aims to ensure that individual choice does not unintentionally undermine collective experience.

2. Our Values

This policy is guided by our three core values:

- Belonging – We recognise that being part of a team and a club comes with shared responsibility. We are part of something bigger than ourselves.
- Inclusivity – Rules and structures should support access and opportunity, particularly where they are genuinely needed.
- Self-Determined – Players should be empowered to make informed choices about their hockey, while understanding the impact of those choices on others.

3. England Hockey Context

England Hockey regulations allow junior players to play for different junior and adult clubs. The intent behind this rule is positive and inclusive:

- To support juniors at clubs that do not have adult teams at the appropriate level
- To ensure juniors playing adult hockey can still access meaningful junior competition

At its best, this flexibility helps players find the right environment to develop and enjoy the game.

4. Our Observations of the applications of this ruling

We believe that, in some cases, the ideals behind this rule are being stretched beyond their original purpose.

This includes:

- Clubs creating junior teams primarily to win competitions
- Juniors attempting to construct 'best of both worlds' bespoke experiences across multiple clubs

The cumulative impact locally is that U18 competitions are becoming watered down by too much choice.

5. Impact on Players and Competition

When U18 teams are diluted:

- Competition becomes less meaningful
- Team identity and continuity are weakened
- Remaining players experience reduced challenge and engagement
- Some players ultimately choose to opt out altogether

At Wimbledon Hockey Club, we do not believe this is fair on the players who remain committed to their teams. Our value of Belonging reminds us that individual decisions can have collective consequences.

6. What This Means for Wimbledon U18 Members

Playing for Wimbledon U18 Teams

If you wish to play for Wimbledon Hockey Club U18 teams, you should also be participating in our adult programmes.

This alignment helps ensure:

- Clear club identity
- Stronger team cohesion
- A meaningful pathway between junior and senior hockey

Caveats and Recognised Exceptions

We recognise that there are legitimate circumstances where flexibility is required. These include:

- Existing members who attend boarding school and are only home at weekends
- Players whose school sport commitments on Saturdays limit their ability to participate fully in adult hockey

In these situations, the club will apply the policy with understanding and pragmatism.

Playing for Wimbledon Senior Teams

Equally, if you wish to play for Wimbledon Hockey Club senior teams, you should also be playing within our U18 programme.

This two-way alignment reinforces belonging and avoids fragmented participation.

7. What This Means for External Players

We welcome players who wish to join Wimbledon Hockey Club, but this policy clarifies the expectations around U18 and adult alignment.

Players Joining from Clubs Without U18 Teams

If the club you are joining from does not have a U18 team:

- You are welcome to play for Wimbledon U18s
- This should be understood as part of a transitional move to the club
- We will not recruit or select external players solely to strengthen the competitive performance of a junior team

Players Joining from Clubs Without Suitable Adult Teams

If the club you are joining from does not have an adult team at the level you require:

- It will be expected that you join Wimbledon Hockey Club as an adult member
- Access to our U18 teams will be part of a broader commitment to the club

8. What This Policy Is (and Is Not)

This policy is:

- About protecting the integrity of U18 competition
- About fairness to committed players
- About strengthening club identity and pathways

This policy is not:

- About limiting ambition or development
- About criticising England Hockey regulations
- About preventing genuine, needs-based flexibility

9. Shared Responsibility

Maintaining strong, meaningful U18 teams requires shared responsibility between players, parents, and the club. By aligning junior and adult participation, we help ensure that Wimbledon Hockey Club remains a place where:

- Teams matter
- Commitment is valued
- Players grow together, not in isolation

10. Review

This policy will be kept under review and informed by feedback from players, parents, and coaches to ensure it continues to support a fair, inclusive, and sustainable U18 environment.