



## Canterbury Hockey – Junior Competitions Strategy 2020 & Beyond

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### Introduction

The Junior Hockey competitions administered by Canterbury Hockey have a long and traditionally well regarded history of both attracting individuals to the sport and developing them into skilful young athletes. From 2012-2015, Canterbury Hockey successfully implemented Hockey NZ's Small Sticks programme, through the in-school hockey exposure programme and alignment to recommended junior competition playing formats. As a result, junior playing, volunteer and club numbers have continued to grow.

In 2015, a draft Junior Hockey Strategy for 2016-2019 was developed. The objectives of this strategy were to align the junior competition with the overall Canterbury Hockey policy of promoting player pathways through our hockey clubs. With playing facilities at capacity, a high turnover of Junior Management Committee (JMC) members and Canterbury Hockey staff changes, this strategy was put on hold.

In 2018/2019, Canterbury Hockey, and it's now Junior Advisory Committee (JAC) have conducted a review of this strategy and developed a new strategy for 2020 and beyond, with the goal of providing 'quality participation opportunities for all'. This strategy (detailed below), aims to provide a pathway into hockey through Canterbury Hockey's junior competitions with the inclusion of both club and school teams.

### Strategy Objectives

- To maximise the opportunities for junior athletes to participate in a quality hockey competition and develop a love for the game
- To enable clubs and schools to invest further into the development of hockey and expose more children to our sport
- To create fair and equal opportunity for school and club teams to participate in Canterbury Hockey competitions
- To utilise all club and school resources available to support the continuous growth of hockey in Canterbury
- To ensure the best interests and age appropriate workloads of all of our junior players are aligned and supported
- To provide schools with an organised and structured approach to support both participant engagement and development



## **'Quality participation opportunities for all' Strategy Action Points**

In 2020, Canterbury Hockey and the JAC wish to implement and action a new strategy that aims to provide 'quality participation opportunity for all'. The only major change from our current competition is to give clubs and schools equal rights in Canterbury Hockey junior competitions. This change will mean schools who choose to continue their investment into hockey and the development of their athletes and resources, can continue to provide their teams with the same quality participation experience that club teams currently receive.

In order for this strategy to be actioned there needs to be processes in place to ensure both meaningful and consistent competitions are delivered. This means that club/school teams will all be positioned into the Kwik Sticks 11 a-side grades based fully on their ability, as opposed to the club ranking criteria utilised in the past. This will remove alignment to our senior division one and premier grades (who have the same teams playing in these divisions every year), but will better fit the purpose of a junior competition which sees a much higher turnover of players and less predictable team abilities year after year.

The second action point is to design and implement a process that will align primary schools by creating a development plan for their players, coaches and umpires. Schools entering into Canterbury Hockey competitions will need to support or deliver the likes of a 'Fun sticks programme' for their year 1 and 2 students and ensure they provide engagement opportunities for students who are not already involved with hockey. This development plan will also need to include targets around coach and umpire development and a structured athlete development pathway right through the junior grades.

On top of an alignment process for schools already participating in Canterbury Hockey competitions, there needs to be an application process developed for any other schools looking to join. This application and integration process needs to be consistent with current protocol for new clubs who have staged entry into the junior 6 and 11 a-side grades. Schools will be required to provide evidence that they can develop a player base from the bottom up and ensure all top teams are supported by sufficient playing numbers below.

The last action point is for Canterbury Hockey to develop a process that better equips primary schools to support their junior player's transition into youth/secondary school hockey. The biggest benefit of enabling schools to participate in our junior competition alongside clubs is that this creates the biggest 'catchment zone' for participants. If this 'catchment' of players is not well-managed and supported through their transition into the secondary school/youth age group, then all participation increases have the potential to be lost through player drop off. To limit this player drop off, school hockey programme leaders will need to take interest in, support and report on where their year 8 students will be attending high school. They will also need to provide details around their student's interest in continuing their involvement in the sport, whether that's for a secondary school or club based youth team. Canterbury Hockey will endeavour to make this as easy as possible for these programme leaders.