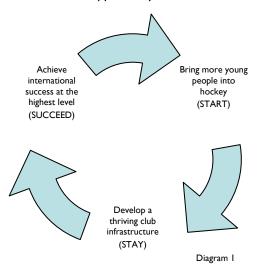
A SINGLE SYSTEM FOR HOCKEY

Introduction

As one of only a few Olympic team sports, London 2012 provides a unique opportunity for the whole of hockey in this country. The Games will help enhance hockey's profile and attract new players to the sport. Hockey in England must be ready to make the most of this opportunity.



This document sets out a vision for a single system for hockey in England. This will help hockey prepare for 2012 but also lay the foundations for success well into the 21st century. It is the culmination of two years of research, debate and consultation with the hockey family and other partners. It draws on a consensus of research into growth and maturity as it relates to learning and developing sporting skills. This is aligned to a proposed system of delivery that could bring wide reaching benefits to all levels of the sport, helping achieve the three development objectives of hockey's strategy (Diagram I).

There is much that is good about hockey in England already. The challenge is to build on this to develop a consistent approach to player development that links players, coaches, training and competitions cohesively with schools, clubs, counties, regions and international providers.

This document sets out exciting proposals for the long term future of hockey that are intended to help hockey achieve it's vision of being 'the most dynamic, vibrant and successful sport for all'.

Background

A single integrated system that will enable all players to achieve their full potential, whether that means playing for club or country, must be based upon sound principles. Along with 17 other sports, hockey has been reviewing the usefulness of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) for this purpose. LTAD is a framework for athlete/player development that can be used as a basis on which to build a more cohesive, consistent sport system. It is based upon a consensus of evidenced research about how young people develop sporting ability. These are principles that have been widely accepted and used to underpin physical education teaching for many years. Following consultation in 2005, it has been agreed that these provide a suitable platform from which to develop a single system for hockey in England.

A single system for hockey - the principles

The underpinning principle is that we should take a long term view of a player's development. Research undertaken in the arts and sport, including hockey, conclude that it takes 9-10 years of deliberate practice to become an expert performer. The complexities of hockey as a sport require that players learn core skills, then how to apply them in game situations, a constantly changing environment. This demands good decision making, often within the context of team tactics. Then there are aspects of fitness and psychology that also contribute to performance. It is not surprising, then, that it takes years of practice to gain the skills and experience to reach our potential!

The principles for a single system for hockey are as follows:

- Long term taking a long term approach to player development, recognising that players may not reach their potential until early or mid 20s
- **Common philosophy** a common set of values and principles that will guide the development of young players and all those involved in their progress, using the consensus of scientific research as a basis
- **Openness** a system that enables all players to reach their potential, regardless of whether they are 'early' or 'late' in their physical development, or whether they have come to hockey from an early age or later in life
- **Consistency** providing a consistency of opportunities to play hockey that ensures players are not disadvantaged simply because of where they are born or raised, or the need for significant parental support. Also providing consistent quality and content of coaching for young players that creates a systematic player development structure nationwide
- **Transparency** an approach to talent identification that provides transparency at all levels and considers a broad range of factors that contribute to potential, not just performance in age group competition
- **Training culture** guidelines for ratios of training to competition that will assist players to progress at an appropriate rate according to their stage of development. Utilising structures of competition that will enhance development.
- **Effectiveness** greater clarity of the roles and responsibilities of all partners at whatever level in the sport, leading to a more effective use and targeting of resources. All partners working together for the development of players and our sport

ONE SPORT...ONE VISION...ONE SYSTEM An integrated system of playing, coaching and competition, based upon these principles, building on current good practice, will provide a system with clear guidance, planning and prioritisation that can help players achieve their potential, whether that be as a club or international player. Together with appropriate school, club, county, regional and national structures this will, in the long term, attract more young people into hockey, and help to bring systematic success from grassroots to international teams.

A single system for hockey - the proposals

To develop these proposals, a review of the strengths and weaknesses of our current systems has been undertaken. It is clear that there is already much good practice in the development of our young players, but this is not consistent. The challenge, then, is to make this good practice standard nationwide.

Adopting good practice alone cannot solve some of the issues that hockey faces. Sometimes good practice is not sufficiently supported by systems of competition, calendar planning, talent identification and coaching provision. Hockey has many proud traditions and we must not lose the heritage that this provides. However, times change and hockey must be ready for the challenges of the 21st century. These proposals set out a vision for re-aligning all aspects of our game to form one cohesive system that can bring long term success for our sport.

Player pathway

A truly player centred hockey system must be underpinned by its player pathway. Utilising the principles of growth and development, the player pathway must be based upon the phased, long term development for a hockey player. This is described at Diagram 2.

FUNDAMENTALS 6 – 8/9 yrs (+/-)	HOCKEY SKILLS 8/9 – 11/12 yrs (+/-)	TRAIN TO TRAIN / 2 - 5/ 6 yrs (+/-)	TRAIN TO COMPETE 15/16 – 21 yrs (+/-)	TRAIN TO WIN 21+ yrs
			Applying basic tactics	Developed approach to team tactics (results now the focus)
	Introduction to core hockey skills	Basic application of core skills in games (learning how to apply core skills in formal game play)	in games (introducing and applying team tactics. Results gradually becoming key focus)	Game play refinement (application of tactics)
FUNdamentals (basic movement skills e.g. running, changing direction, hand eye co-	(developing core hockey skills through coaching and fun games) Hockey	Core hockey skills (further development of core skills)	Application of core skills in games (continued refining of core skills in games)	
ordination etc)	FUNdamentals (application of FUNdamentals to hockey)	Hockey FUNdamentals (refining application of FUNdamentals in hockey)	Core hockey skills (continued refining of core skills)	Maintenance of core skills (continued practice of core skills)

Note: x/y yrs denotes female/male difference in ages. Females, on average, develop earlier than boys.

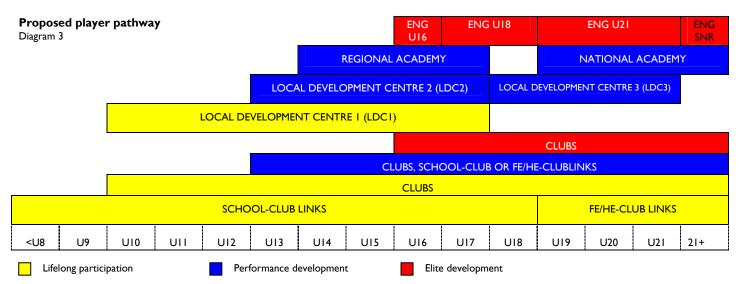
Diagram 2

The delivery of this player pathway will provide:

- Structured development for all players
- Access to quality coaching and competitive opportunities with travel times and distances proportionate to standard at each stage. This will help to develop a 'training culture' by having more hockey closer to players' homes, minimising traveling

and be:

- Supported by training and competition structures that deliver the desired outcomes at each stage of development
- Open so that it does not discriminate against late developers, or those coming to hockey later in life
- Tiered to provide opportunities for talent identification
- Underpinned by a player development syllabus providing guidance for teachers and coaches at each stage
- Supported through appropriate coach education and development, including coaching workshops and resources
- Supported by established criteria for talent identification and assessment, including guidance and training for coaches



Each element of the player pathway will have a specific role to fulfil as follows: Table I

Pathway	Ages	Numbers	Role
National Squads	U16 U18 U21 Senior	2 squads per age group (one of each sex)	Training programmes tailored for specific international competition programme
National Academy	U19 - Senior	Senior – tbc in Performance Plan U19-U21 Up to 5 centres nationally	Elite training for performance athletes providing training tailored for international competition requirements U19-U21 based at Further/Higher Education clusters
Regional Academy	UI4- UI7	10 centres nationally	Providing performance coaching for approximately 20 players of each sex at each age group = 400 players Players nominated from Local Development Centre 2 or Clubs Players in training at Regional Academy are assessed and top 100 are: U14/U15 nominated to a High Performance Assessment Camp U17 prepared in squads for tournament play England Hockey Performance Unit led with Regional Academy Coaches included for performance coach development opportunities U15 provides assessment for England U16; U17 for England U18
Local Development Centre 3 (LDC3)	UI9– U2I 2I+	20 centres nationally	Providing high quality training for approximately 20 players of each sex = 800 total Act as a 'safety net' for late developers or those coming to hockey relatively late in life Players nominated from Clubs Provide an assessment opportunity for National Academy
Local Development Centre 2 (LDC2)	UI3 - UI7	42 nationally (approx I per county)	Providing local, quality training for approximately 30 players of each sex at each age group = 2520 players Players nominated from Local Development Centre I, Junior Clubs or School-club links according to established criteria Provide assessment for nomination to Regional Academy at U14-U17
Local Development Centre I (LDCI)	UI0 – UI7	126 nationally (approx 3 per county) at each age group	Providing local, quality coaching for approximately 30 players of each sex at each age group = 7560 players Players nominated from Junior Clubs and School–club links according to established criteria Provides early opportunity for basic assessment and nomination to Local Development Centre 2
FE/HE – club links	UI9 – U23	Approx 80	Formal links between FE/HE institutions and local clubs to reduce dropout at 18yrs resulting from FE/HE being unable to accommodate all new players
Junior Clubs	U7 - U18	Approx 400 nationally	Providing quality development for junior players, with appropriate competitive opportunities throughout a player's development Supported to form links with School Sports Partnerships
School – club links	U8 – U18	Approx 400 nationally	Junior Clubs linked with School Sports Partnerships, not individual schools

Adopting this player pathway will help to provide a consistency of approach nationwide, enabling all those involved in a young player's development to do so in a co-ordinated fashion. The proposals will also facilitate the development of a parallel coaching pathway.

Player pathway and a structured season

Scientific research has shown that learning and sporting development is most effective when structured. In schools, learning is structured through a phase of lessons, then knowledge and understanding is assessed through exams. In the same way, peak sporting performance has been shown to be achieved through a phase of structured training (preparation) followed by a phase of competition. In education, students are not exposed to the pressure of exams all year round. Similarly in sport, it is impossible for players to maintain peak performance all season long. In sport, repeating the pattern of training (preparation) and competition twice a season has been shown to significantly assist learning, development and ultimately, competitive performance.

For this reason, it is proposed to adapt the junior season as follows (illustrated in Diagram 4):

- Extend the junior season to 10 months, though in practice this is already the case for our most talented young players •
- Divide the 10 month season into two 5-month cycles
- Subdivide each 5-month cycle into phases of preparation and competition followed by rest

Diagram 4

Diagram 5

J	F	М	А	М	J	J	А	S	0	Ν	D
CYCLE I					CYCLE 2						
Preparation Competition Rest		Preparation Competition				Rest					

Note: This example is for illustrative purposes. Exact timings will vary and must account for academic exam periods.

Structuring the season in this way would not restrict matches only to the competition phase, or training to the preparation phase. In education, understanding is assessed through informal interim tests between formal exams. In the same way, a preparation phase in sport may include training matches or monthly friendly festivals to assist learning. This will also help to retain players' interest. Training in a competition phase will be used specifically to prepare players for their appropriate competitions. Maintaining a clear focus in each phase of preparation, competition and rest will assist the development of players and provide a clear framework for junior competitions.

In addition to the expected benefits to development and competitive performance, extending the season in this way will:

- Enable more hockey to be played in Summer thereby Combined with other proposals potentially enable reducing conflict with football for pitch time
- further professional opportunities in hockey

Allow for a lengthened indoor season

This structuring will also help to reduce overcrowding competition schedules for junior players. By utilising the two cycles, different elements of the player pathway can be off-set to minimise the potential for conflict, especially for talented players. This can also support a player's progress through the player pathway e.g. cycle of Local Development Centre I is followed by Local Development Centre 2, then Regional Academy (Diagram 5).

Diagram 5							
UI3		UI4		U	15	UI6	
CYCLE I	CYCLE 2	CYCLE I	CYCLE 2	CYCLE I	CYCLE 2	CYCLE I	CYCLE 2
						England U16	
			Regional Academy		Regional Academy		Regional Academy
		Local Dev'ment Centre 2		Local Dev'ment Centre 2		Local Dev'ment Centre 2	
	Local Dev'ment Centre I		Local Dev'ment Centre I		Local Dev'ment Centre I		Local Dev'ment Centre I
School/Club	School/Club	School/Club	School/Club	School/Club	School/Club	School/Club	School/Club

Notes: 1) To encourage a truly open system, with a consistent approach to talent identification, players could be nominated directly to any element of the pathway if they demonstrate the necessary attributes.

2) Calendar planning would manage players involvement both at their club and within the performance pathway in the same cycle i.e. talented players will always have involvement with their club but will sometimes have a priority to be at a development centre

Structuring the season in this way:

- Supports the tiered nature of the pathway for talented players
- Enables players to be assessed at least twice in a season. This assists players who may be late physical maturers and/or the youngest in their peer group
- Minimises opportunities for conflict by clearly defining priorities
- Uses the scientific evidence showing that a planned approach better supports sporting development
- Helps young players to avoid injury and burnout

The potential to conflict with summer sports would be overcome by the openness of the system allowing players to be nominated to any element of the pathway if they demonstrate the necessary attributes. This would enable young players to be involved with hockey only in one cycle until such time as they choose to specialise. Conversely, in the summer, hockey may potentially attract young players who play a different sport, such as football, in the winter.

Competition

Competition is the lifeblood of the sport. It is crucial for retaining the interest of young players. To be successful, a single system for hockey would require a competition structure that:

- Provides a progressive structure for junior competition in support of the proposed player pathway
- Provides appropriate opportunities for all ages and abilities
- Ensures talented players are not overplayed to the detriment of skill development
- Minimises potential conflicts between school, club, county, regional and national programmes
- Balances the need to develop a 'will to win' with short-term 'winning at all costs', particularly in the early years
- Where appropriate in their development, provides opportunities for talented players to prepare for, and experience, competition in a form associated with elite performance i.e. tournament play and/or 'must win' matches

To support progressive development, the following sizes of team are proposed:

FUNDAMENTALS	HOCKEY SKILLS	TRAIN TO TRAIN	TRAIN TO COMPETE	TRAIN TO WIN
6 – 8/9 yrs (+/-)	8/9 – 11/12 yrs (+/-)	/ 2 – 5/ 6 yrs (+/-)	15/16 – 21 yrs (+/-)	21+ yrs
5 a-side*	5 a-side 7 a-side	7 a-side 11 a-side	II a-side	II a-side

* New game currently being developed – 5 a-side with no goalkeepers (to reduce expense for schools and clubs introducing hockey)

To support the competitions structure, and prevent burnout, players would only be permitted to play in one age group in any given cycle. This would still provide flexibility for talented players to be fast tracked, where appropriate to them, considering factors other than simply their ability on the pitch e.g. ability to cope outside peer group. Although calendar planning should help reduce instances of conflicting commitments, priority would be clearly given to the 'highest' standard to which a player is selected at any given time.

Additional proposals for competitions are:

- An increased emphasis on local level junior competition, with expanded networks of junior competitive opportunities
- Limited use of tiered competitions, i.e. county to region to national, with no competitions above a county round until U14. This is to maintain an appropriate balance of travelling distances with standard of play in the development pathway
- Age date qualification of 1st January for all competitions at all levels. The combined effect of other proposals will reduce the dependence of the system on school year as the defining peer group for young players
- Regional level competitions will be structured for U14/U15 to include a High Performance Assessment Camp. This will provide an appropriate and comprehensive mechanism for selection to junior international teams, together with high performance coach development
- Restructured University competitions to support both the development of FE/HE-Club links and competition for National Academy players in this age group. National Academy competition would replace the existing Regional U21 tournament
- Age restrictions on juniors playing in adult leagues for reasons of their development and health and safety. This is a long term aim as it would be unrealistic without suitable alternative junior competitive opportunities in place. Strong consideration is to be given to the use of formal development/badgers competitions, mixing adults and juniors, in a specific development driven environment that enables young players to progress whilst retaining peer group contact
- Future revisions to elite adult competitions to better account for the time and cost of travel relative to standard of play, and the needs of clubs and players aspiring to European and International competition

These proposals will help to underpin a development led single system for hockey and would need to be phased in over many years (see Implementation section).

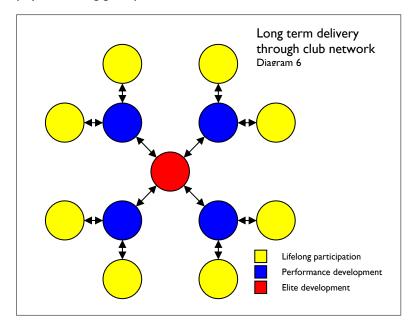
Delivery structure/roles and responsibilities

It is vital that the player pathway is delivered consistently nationwide. For this reason, each element of the pathway will have clear criteria setting out development objectives and requirements for facilities, coaches, officials, training, competitions etc. Delivery will then be made through partners who are selected from applications made against these criteria. Involvement would be subject to service level agreements to provide quality assurance, and would be time limited to give opportunity for developing partners who aspire to be involved. This will also provide a framework for targeting national and local resources effectively.

Long term

Clubs are the heartbeat of hockey. They give a sense of belonging, as well as all the practical things needed for lifelong play. **Developing a thriving club infrastructure is one of hockey's key strategic objectives.** It is therefore proposed that in the long term, most of the practical delivery of the player pathway would be undertaken by, or through, a network of quality, accredited, clubs. Assistance will be provided through a tiered support system. This will enable resources to be targeted where they are most needed, and reward those clubs who invest in hockey's future by developing young players.

Within a reasonable travelling distance, it is proposed that a network of clubs is developed (Diagram 6). Each will support particular elements of the player pathway e.g. Local Development Centre I or 2 etc. Some clubs would undoubtedly be able to deliver more than one element. Emphasis will be placed on collaborative working to provide access and opportunity for young players, sharing good practice.



A principle of neutrality will be critical, enabling players to access elements of the pathway delivered at other clubs without being a member of that club.

County and regional associations have for many decades provided neutrality in talent identification and development for young players. It is proposed that in the long term, this would remain their role through coordination, leadership and enhanced local governance of the system rather than as direct providers of hockey playing opportunities. Associations would also play an important role in the facilitation of supporting services such as coaching, sports science workshops and child protection. An accreditation scheme for county and regional associations will help to provide quality assurance.

Schools will retain an important role in the introduction and development of players through the curriculum and in conjunction with school-club links.

Short/medium term

Clearly, it will take many years for a national club based player development system to evolve. In some areas, clubs may need significant support to be able to play their part in the single system. In the short to medium term it is proposed that hockey begins working to the principle of an integrated system by identifying which partners are most appropriate to deliver each element of the pathway in any given location. For example, using the specific criteria for delivery of a Local Development Centre 2, it may be that in one location this might be best delivered by a club, but in another a county association could be better suited to undertake this role. Provided the criteria for quality and quantity are met, which partner delivers is less important.

Clearly aligning the delivery structure and associated roles and responsibilities to the player pathway in this way enables hockey to make the most effective use of its resources. These proposals will:

- With planning and co-operation between providers, increase quality provision within a reasonable travelling distance, helping establish a training culture
- Help to identify any gaps in the system that would allow more targeted use of precious resources
- Maximise potential for pitch sharing, coach development and professionalisation plus commercialisation of services
- Provide clear rationale to support negotiations with partners for resources at national and local levels (e.g. Sport England, local authorities, etc)
- Provide competitive opportunities at an appropriate level within a shorter travelling distance
- Assist individual management of talented players to reduce conflict
- Minimise duplication of effort

Implementation

Implementing such ambitious plans to develop our sport will take many years. Some proposals will need to be piloted to ensure that they achieve the required objectives. Some will require a phased introduction over a period of years. Supporting resources will need to be developed for others. Roles and responsibilities will evolve as hockey lays the foundations for success for the 21st century. An outline of the major milestones is provided below:

	2006	2007	2008	2009-12	2013+
Pathway	 School club link pack launched Player syllabus piloted Developmental core skills DVD FUNdamentals for hockey developed Consult on performance plan 	 Player syllabus launch Regional Academy launch Local Devt Centre 3 piloted/partner selection FUNdamentals for hockey workshops launch Two cycle season development FE/HE-Club link pack developed 	 Two cycle season begins Extended indoor season introduced Local Devt Centre I & 2 partner selection Local Devt Centre 3 launch Further support resources developed for coaches FE/HE-Club link pack launch 	 Further development of two cycle season Further support resources developed for coaches 	• Further implementation of proposals as dictated by experiences 2006-12
Competitions	 5 a-side game pilot Pilot of national framework of school compns for primaries 	 Begin developing structured calendar Development/badgers league proposals Develop network of U13s compns No U13s in adult leagues Changes to U14/U15 Regional compns Changes to U19-U21 compns Continued development of nat framework of school compns 	 Development/badgers leagues begin Develop network of U14s compns No U14s in adult leagues Changes to domestic adult leagues 	 Develop network of U14, U15, U16 compns No U14, U15, U16s in adult leagues 	• Further implementation of proposals as dictated by experiences 2006-12
Structure	 Pathway elements criteria developed Level 4 Coach Award launch Develop U19-21 National Academy criteria 	 Tiered club support system launch Association accreditation scheme developed Coach education revision includes single system proposals U19-21 National Academy site selection 	 Coach licensing launch Association accreditation scheme launch 	• County/Region/Club roles and responsibilities evolve to support long term delivery proposals	• Further implementation of proposals as dictated by experiences 2006-12

Conclusion

This document sets out exciting proposals for hockey's long term future. To achieve this vision hockey in England must build on what is already good about our sport but also recognise the opportunities that embracing change can bring. We hope that you will join hockey on its journey towards becoming **'the most dynamic, vibrant and successful sport for all'**.

Feedback

These proposals will continue to evolve through a piloting process. If you have any comments or feedback please send them to: Cath Arter, National Development Manager – player pathway and welfare by email to singlesystem@englandhockey.org

www.englandhockey.co.uk

A SINGLE SYSTEM FOR HOCKEY – A SUMMARY

Hockey proposes to establish a single, integrated system for hockey that will help hockey achieve it's vision of being **'the most dynamic, vibrant and successful sport for all'**. The proposals will build on what is already good about hockey in England, helping prepare for 2012 and lay the foundations for success well into the 21st century.

The principles for a single system for hockey are as follows:

- Long term recognising that players may not reach their potential until early or mid 20s
- **Common philosophy** values and principles for the development of young players, using the consensus of scientific research as a basis
- **Openness** enabling all players to reach their potential, regardless of whether as a club or international player
- **Consistency** providing quality coaching and opportunities within a systematic player development structure nationwide
- **Transparency** talent identification that provides transparency at all levels
- **Training culture** guidelines for ratios of training to competition that will assist players to progress
- **Effectiveness** greater clarity of roles and responsibilities for all partners, providing effective use and targeting of resources

Player pathway

A single system for hockey must be underpinned by its player pathway. Utilising the principles of growth and development, this will be based upon a phased, long term approach to development. The pathway will provide:

- Structured development of talented players, with all providers playing a part in 'Team England'
- Access to quality coaching and competitive opportunities with travel times and distances proportionate to standard at each stage. This will help to develop a 'training culture' by having more hockey closer to players' homes, minimising travelling

And be:

- Supported by appropriate training and competition structures at each stage
- Open so that it does not discriminate against late developers, or those coming to hockey later in life
- Tiered to provide opportunities for talent identification, using consistent criteria for transparency
- Underpinned by a player development syllabus
- Supported through coach education and development

Player pathway and a structured season

To maximise learning, development and ultimately competitive performance, it is proposed to adapt the junior season by:

- Extending it to 10 months
- Dividing the season into two 5-month cycles
- Subdivide each of these cycles into phases of preparation, competition and rest

This will:

- Use the scientific evidence showing that a structured approach better supports sporting development
- Clearly define priorities for players, minimising conflicts
- Provide a more open, continuous, system of assessment
- Support the tiered nature of the player pathway
- Help young players to avoid injury and burnout
- Enable more hockey to be played in Summer thereby reducing conflict with football for pitch time
- Allow for a lengthened indoor season
- Combined with other proposals potentially enable further professional opportunities in hockey

Competition

Competition is crucial for retaining the interest of young players. The competition structure will:

- Provide a progressive structure for junior competition, supporting the player pathway for all ages and abilities
- Minimise potential conflicts between school, club, county, regional and national programmes
- Ensure talented players are not overplayed to the detriment of skill development

Included in the proposals for competitions are the following:

- Expanded networks of local junior competitions
- Limited use of tiered competition, i.e. county to region to national, to maintain an appropriate balance of travelling distances with standard of play
- Age date qualification of Ist January at all levels
- Restructured Regional and University competitions
- Long term, age restrictions on juniors playing in adult leagues for development and health and safety reasons. Appropriate alternatives will be required before this could be implemented
- Future revisions to elite adult competitions to better account for the time and cost of travel relative to standard of play, and the needs of clubs and players aspiring to European and International competition

Delivery structure/roles and responsibilities

For consistency and effectiveness, delivery of the player pathway will be undertaken according to clear criteria, providing a framework for targeting resources effectively.

Developing a thriving club infrastructure is a key strategic objective. In the long term, therefore, most of the practical delivery would be through a network of quality, accredited, clubs. Counties and Regions would take an enhanced role in co-ordination, leadership and local governance. Schools would retain their role of introducing and developing players in the curriculum and through school-club links.

In the short to medium term, delivery would be through whichever partners are most appropriate in each location.

Implementation

These ambitious proposals will require an 8-10 year plan for implementation.