

GLOUCESTERSHIRE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

GHA Junior Festivals and In2Hockey Organiser, West Junior Competitions Committee representative report for GHA AGM on Thursday 19th May 2022.

As a result of the new Junior Competitions initiative by England Hockey GHA decided to try to expand the Clubs Festivals offering for 2021 – 22. In addition to the U8 mixed, U10 and U12 girls and boys Festivals, pitch bookings were made for U12 A Team Festivals and also U14 7-aside girls and boys Festivals. However, it quickly became clear that there was already so much U14 11-aside hockey with the West Leagues, the Avon Junior Hockey League and the EH knock-out cup that there was insufficient interest to run U14s. So the only additional elements were the U12 A Teams girls and boys Festivals.

In the period from October to December there were 3 Festivals for each age and gender group. The total entries were as follows:

U8 Mixed	U10 Girls	U10 Boys	U12 Girls	U12 Boys	U12 A Girls	U12 A Boys
34	41	23	43	29	16	12

Overall a total of 198 teams entered. As can be seen from these numbers the U12 A Teams festivals were not as popular as the other events, but this is not surprising as it tended to be just the larger Clubs and at most 2 teams in one gender.

In the period from January to March the number of Festivals were fewer with mostly 2 for each age and gender group, this being lower than before Christmas because of the County rounds of the EH In2Hockey and the long February half term. The total entries were as follows:

U8 Mixed	U10 Girls	U10 Boys	U12 Girls	U12 Boys	U12 A Girls	U12 A Boys
24	34	16	36	24	5	3

Overall a total of 142 teams entered. Again the U12 A Teams festivals were not as popular as the other events, but there was only one occasion of these. Overall though attendance was excellent and the popularity of the Festivals had returned to pre-Covid pandemic levels. The challenge really is to provide enough opportunities for all those that want to play to be able to participate.

The invoices for the period before Christmas were all paid, but at the time of this report there were 3 still outstanding from the period after Christmas.

The Gloucestershire rounds of the EH In2Hockey were held on 6th February and 6th March, U12s on the earlier date. In U12s there were 12 girls and 10 boys teams. Champions in U12 girls were Lansdown, runners-up Cheltenham Junior. Champions in U12 boys were Cheltenham Junior, runners-up Cirencester. The results of the West Area competition that took place on 20th March are not known.

In U10s there were 12 girls and 9 boys teams. Champions in U10 girls were Westbury & United Banks, runners-up Lansdown. However, subsequently it was learned that Westbury had participated in the Avon rounds of the In2Hockey and had qualified there so instead Lansdown were promoted to the top place for the West Area round and Lydney to the second place who had been in third place. Champions in U10 boys were Cheltenham Junior, runners-up Wotton-U-Edge. The results of the West Area competition that took place on 3rd April are not known.

This issue with Westbury was disappointing as they participated in all the Gloucestershire In2Hockey events despite them being specifically asked if they had played in the Avon rounds when they first applied to play. This was put down though to a misunderstanding on their part due to the inexperience of their junior coordinator who was new and for whom the language used was unfamiliar.

Most of the West Junior Competitions Committee meetings which covers the U14, U16 and U18 age groups were attended. The feedback from the new Junior Competitions Framework for U14 and older age groups that has been piloted this season has been mixed. There has clearly been a lot of competitive hockey, but there have been issues with Clubs struggling to fulfil fixtures with the combination of travelling, Covid and the impact of the new Talent Strategy with players moving to prospective Talent Centre Clubs. This has been particularly bad in the south of the Area, but paradoxically in the north the clubs have had almost too much hockey taking place. Discussions for next season have started and it is likely there will be no lower tier knockout in the West Area.

There has also been issues for those Tier 1 League Clubs who did not qualify for the national supra league who have felt that the period after Christmas was rather disappointing.

West Clubs who had progressed to the Supra-League were as follows:

Girls U14 T1 – Clifton, Taunton, Bath

Girls U16 T1 – Clifton, Bath, Cheltenham

Boys U14 T1 – Bath, Wotton-U-Edge, Isca

Boys U16 T1 – Clifton, Taunton, Isca

It will be interesting to see what is the overall feeling from these Clubs at the end of the season once the supra league has finished.

Lastly in the West Junior Competitions Committee there were several discussions around County hockey and the feelings in the meetings were very negative. Feedback was provided from the CSC NWG meeting that EH were now listening to the county feedback and counties actually still had a major role in delivering opportunities for higher quality coaching and competition. This is something which EH has reiterated and are committed to issuing a new communication to clarify this.

Lastly, the appeal for Clubs to start to consider volunteers to take over as Junior Festival and In2Hockey organiser for U8s, U10s and U12s at the end of the 2024 – 25 season has been met with a deafening silence!

Ian Harvey
GHA Junior Clubs organiser
5th May 2022