

Essex Cricket

Essex Cricket in the Community (ECiC) Policy on player age eligibility in Junior Cricket

Background

1. In recent years the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has introduced a number of measures to support the safety and promote the level of engagement of young people in the sport. These have included changes to the pitch lengths, team sizes and match formats used in junior cricket. These changes have been adopted throughout the sport.

2. The ECB has also mandated a minimum age for children to become eligible to play open-age cricket. This too has been adopted throughout the sport.

3. The ECB has created a Disparity Policy giving match officials the power to remove players from a game on various grounds including safety. This makes no specific reference to junior cricket and refers to young people only in the context of playing open-age cricket.

4. The ECB gives guidance regarding 'duty of care': 'It is essential clubs and coaches recognise the "duty of care" obligations they have towards young players in open-age cricket. The duty of care should be interpreted in two ways:

a) Not to place a young player in a position that involves an unreasonable risk to that young player, taking account of the circumstances of the match and the relative skills of the player.

b) Not to create a situation that places members of the opposing side in a position whereby they cannot play cricket as they would normally do against adult players.

Note that this refers only to open-age cricket.

5. Duty of care is referenced in cricket's 'Safe Hands' policy and point 4 above can reasonably be extrapolated to junior cricket matches. However, 'Safe Hands' does not include any specific guidance regarding age eligibility for junior cricket.

6. Unless a competition has specific regulations to define the lower and upper age of participants, duty of care in terms of player selection rests with a coach, team manager or parent from either of the participating teams, or a match official.

7. ECiC has become concerned at reports of children participating in levels of age-group cricket which may not be suited to their physical and emotional maturity. This most frequently occurs when children are selected to participate in a much older age-group – for example, an under 9 player participating in an under 15 match. This is often justified by reference to a player's perceived level of skill. In some cases it is simply to make up the numbers.

8. In the view of ECiC, a player's perceived level of skill should not be the determining factor in selection to play in a much older age-group. The risk of injury to a much younger player outweighs all other considerations.

Rationale

1. Using an under-age player to make up the numbers for a match is never acceptable.

2. Under points 3 and 6 above, the ECB Disparity Policy or duty of care may be exercised by any of the persons mentioned. This may be possible when matches are managed by qualified and experienced coaches, team managers and qualified match officials.

3. The reality for much junior cricket at club level is that matches are managed by inexperienced, and sometimes unqualified, coaches, team managers and match officials. An attempt to remove a player from a game or invoke the ECB Disparity Policy is, without expert knowledge, more likely to lead to contention and dispute than achieve resolution.

4. On this basis, ECiC believes that safeguarding of under-18s will be best supported and clarity provided by unequivocal guidance regarding player age eligibility in junior cricket. ECiC believes that such guidance should be applied in the same way as the measures relating to pitch lengths, team sizes and match formats etc, and the mandate regarding the minimum age for children to play open-age (adult) cricket.

Policy

1. After consideration of the many factors pertinent to this matter, and to prioritise the safety and well-being of young people in cricket, ECiC has introduced the following policy for all age-group cricket played within the county of Essex:

If a player is deemed safe and competent to participate:

- A player in the under 7 to under 9 age group may play under 9 cricket.
- A player in the under 9 to under 11 age group may play under 11 cricket.
- A player in the under 11 to under 13 age group may play under 13 cricket.
- A player in the under 13 to under 15 age group may play under 15 cricket.
- A player in the under 13 age group and above may play under 16 and under 19 cricket, on the basis that they are eligible at this age to play open-age cricket. This is on the proviso that for under 19 cricket, the captain of the team holds an ECB DBS. This will mean that the captain is at least 16/17 years old and ideally should be 18. Even if the captain is 16/17 years of age (and has an ECB DBS), an ECB DBS checked Adult (and/or qualified coach) must also be present with the team from a duty of care/position of trust requirement.

2. For players in the under 13 age group and above, the ECB Disparity Policy may be applied if deemed necessary.

3. A child's age group is determined by their date of birth and corresponds to their school year starting 1 September.

4. At all times, young people must meet the safety requirements (including ECB Fast Bowling Match Directives and ECB Fielding Regulations) for their actual age rather than the age group they are playing in.

5. A player found not to be within the prescribed age banding may be removed from a match by any responsible adult without challenge. The offending club may be subject to disciplinary measures according to the regulations of the competition or organising body.

6. A player found not to be within the prescribed age banding subsequent to the match taking place may subject their coach, manager, team or club to disciplinary measures according to the regulations of the competition or organising body. These may include concession of a match, a points deduction, or expulsion of a team or club from a competition or competitions.

7. Cases of persistent or wilful infringement should be reported to the ECiC Safeguarding team.

This policy takes effect from 2nd April 2024.

Next Review Date: April 2025

Appendix 1

How do I know what age group my child is in?

Your child's age group is determined by their date of birth and corresponds to school years.

Dates below for 2024 Season:

U7: September 1st 2016 to August 31st 2017 (School Year 2)	U9			
U8: September 1st 2015 to August 31st 2016 (School Year 3)				
U9: September 1st 2014 to August 31st 2015 (School Year 4)		U11		
U10: September 1st 2013 to August 31st 2014 (School Year 5)				
U11: September 1st 2012 to August 31st 2013 (School Year 6)			U13	
U12: September 1st 2011 to August 31st 2012 (School Year 7)				
U13: September 1st 2010 to August 31st 20011 (School Year 8)				U15
U14: September 1st 2009 to August 31st 2010 (School Year 9)				
U15: September 1st 2008 to August 31st 2009 (School Year 10)				

GIRLS-ONLY TEAMS:

Clubs may enter a girls-only team in a competition. Such a team may include girls not in a County Age Group Squad (CAG) who are one school year older. This applies at all age groups.

MIXED TEAMS:

Under-9 / Under-11 / Under-13 / Under-15: a team may include girls not in a County Age Group Squad (CAG) who are one school year older.

COUNTY AGE GROUP PLAYERS:

County Age Group Squad (CAG) Players should play in the OWN AGE GROUPS across all formats.

Appendix 2

ECiC County Youth Competitions

The following specific regulations apply to the county age group competitions organised by Essex Cricket in the Community (ECiC):

Brian Taylor Trophy (U12)

A player shall only be eligible to play for a Club or Team in the Competition if they are in the age range stated. Player age restrictions for this competition in accordance with current school years U10 (Year 5) - U12 (Year 7) as of midnight on 31st August / 1st September 2023, (as per ECB Generic Rule 3.4.6).

Sir Alastair Cook T20 Cup (U14)

A player may represent one club in the competition if they are in the current school years U12 (Year 7) – U14 (Year 9) as of midnight on 31st August / 1st September 2023, (as per ECB Generic Rule 3.4.6).

Trevor Bailey Matchplay Shield (U16)

A player shall only be eligible to play for a Club or Team in the Competition if they are in the age range stated. Player age restrictions for this competition in accordance with current school years U13 (Year 8) - U16 (Year 11) as of midnight on 31st August / 1st September 2023, (as per ECB generic Rule 3.4.6).

Ravi Bopara T20 Cup (U19)

A player may represent one club in the competition if they are in the current school years U15 (Year 10) – U19 (Year 14) as of midnight on 31st August / 1st September 2023, (as per ECB Generic Rule 3.4.6).