

MIDLANDS ADULT LEAGUE

DEVELOPMENT TEAMS GUIDANCE 2026/27



Guidance notes for Development Teams & non-Development Teams playing in the same division, emphasising the importance of utilising selection flexibility to **fulfil ALL fixtures** and penalty for non-fulfilment.

Overview

The Midlands Area League structure makes provision for Development Teams. The purpose of this is to encourage new teams to participate in the lowest divisions of the League by providing more opportunities to play fixtures for teams that may not otherwise have any opposition.

- **Development Team status is temporary** i.e.; the aspiration is to establish a fully competitive team.
- **Development Teams are NOT an alternative to 'Badgers' or junior competitions.**

Development Teams are defined in the Regulations as: Teams that are given player selection flexibility to gain League experience, develop new, young, or returning players' abilities or confidence, and encourage the participation of new teams. Development Teams are not an opportunity for players in higher teams to play more games.

Development Team Application

To apply for Development Team status a Team may make a request in writing (email) to the League organisers (ALMC) to play as a Development Team for the coming season. Requests, with justification, **must be received by 1st May** and will be approved or declined by 31st May.

- As a minimum a team **must confirm** its understanding and ability to meet the criteria outlined in Development Team Regulations 1 & 2 (listed below).
 - See below for 'How to Apply'
- Development Teams can only play in the lowest ranked division of any part of the vertical League structure.
- Admittance to the League as a Development Team is strictly at the discretion of ALMC.
- Teams may not change their status from a Development Team once the season has commenced.

Development Team Regulations

Development Team fixtures are Adult League fixtures. Standard League Regulations apply but with leniency on certain regulations and flexibility on selection requirements. The key variations that apply in the Midlands are as follows:

ALL matches involving Development Teams (i.e., matches against other Development Teams and against non-Development Teams), shall be played on the following basis:

1. Development Teams are **expected to fulfil ALL FIXTURES**¹ using the selection flexibility outlined below. If it is necessary to cancel a fixture, normal match cancellation protocols **MUST** be followed (and any costs paid).
 - i. Standard Regulation 4.3.1; allows for **4 forfeit games ONLY**.
 - ii. If a team fails to honour more than 4 fixtures the League reserves the right to exclude them from further games, and all previous results removed.
2. For any individual fixture, a **Development Team must have a minimum of 6 core players** i.e., players who have not played for another team in the League on that day (and must have a minimum of 7 players to play the match). *See 3 below for full details of selection flexibility.*

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If you cannot meet the criteria outlined in 1 & 2 above, participation as a Development Team will NOT be permitted.

3. Development Team selection may be supplemented in 3 key ways as follows:
 - i. Players of any standard doubling up and/or playing down from other teams (of same gender) from that club.
 - a. NB: in the Standard Regulations players should be selected purely on playing standard and availability, it is therefore expected that players playing down from a higher level and/or whose skill level is significantly higher than the standard of the game will do this in the **spirit of 'development'**, i.e. the development of less experienced players in their own team and consideration of the playing standard of the opposition; as such they should not dominate the game. Specifically:
 - They may **not score goals or enter the oppositions 23**.
 - **Maximum of 2 'experienced' players** may play in the defending 23 and defend a short corner i.e., 'experienced' = playing down from a higher standard.
 - b. Players are **not permitted** to play for another Competition Category in Development fixtures, as specified in Regulation 7.4.
 - c. Evidence of abuse of these selection privileges may result in the ALMC expelling the Development Team from the division.
 - ii. 'Borrowing/Sharing' players with the opposing team for that particular fixture.
 - iii. Players aged 12 or above with the agreement of their parent/guardian and if the participating club can ensure that the player has the physical development and confidence to participate in an adult game (Regulation 7.2.1). **No more than THREE U13** i.e., 12 year old players, permitted on the pitch for a team at any one time.

NB guidance for non-development teams playing in the same division:

- permitted the same selection flexibility for games against Development Teams only.
- must follow standard selection regulations for games against other non-development teams.
- may be subject to fine and points deductions for failing to fulfil fixtures against Development Teams.

4. All games involving Development Teams should be recorded as a 0-0 result. If your Club wishes to keep a record, Goal Scorers can currently be entered in the Timelines without GMS checking against the score.²
5. All cards **MUST** still be recorded.

Additional notes

¹ Avoiding cancellation of fixtures:

- Remember that you always have the opportunity to contact your opposition and discuss options such as sharing players, playing 7-a-side, swapping home/away, a different start time or even moving the occasional fixture to an alternate day, with the agreement of the opposition.
- **Non-Development teams** who cancel a scheduled fixture against a Development Team may be penalised as per Regulation APPENDIX 5 - STANDARD PENALTIES & TARIFFS OF FINES, i.e., = 1 point deduction (subject to review of tariffs and penalties for the coming season).
- **Non-Development teams** have equal selection flexibility for games against Development teams.

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² Awarding of points

Scores recorded as 0-0 for games involving Development Teams and the points will be manually removed by the ALDS. The reason for this is:

- Selection for matches involving Development Teams is not governed by standard player eligibility regulations. Consequently, there may be greater variation in the strength of the team from week to week. The opposing team may therefore be significantly advantaged/disadvantaged by the Development Team's strength on any given fixture. It is therefore not appropriate/fair to award points or goals for/against that could affect League standings.
- Points ARE awarded for matches between two Non-Development teams i.e., teams competing in the division for League promotion. **For these games standard player eligibility regulations MUST be followed.**

How to apply for Development Team status

Please email your request to the ALMC adultleagueschair@midlands.hockey by 1st May.

Your email should include the following:

- Club/team details
- Your name and position within club
- Statement on behalf of the club:
 - *We have read the Development Team guidance and understand the requirements of participation.*
 - *We confirm that we have a minimum of 6 regular players available for this team.*
 - *We understand the selection criteria flexibility available to us and the requirement to fulfil all fixtures.*
 - *We understand the consequences of non-fulfilment of fixtures.*

Any queries?

The main objective is to play hockey, so if you have any queries, just ask your ALDS.