ECB Guidelines for Junior Players in Open Age Group Cricket

The ECB has issued guidance covering the selection and participation of young players in open age group cricket. It is designed to help clubs to decide when to select young players in open age group cricket and how best to help their cricketing development when they play within open age groups. The ECB keeps these guidelines under review and, following feedback from clubs and leagues, has revised these guidelines for the 2011 season. The ECB will continue to monitor the impact of these guidelines and you are invited to feedback your thoughts and comments in writing to the ECB Non-First Class Cricket Department.

1. Making the step up from junior to open age group cricket is a significant event in any player's cricket experience. Ensure that the player's safety, personal development needs and overall cricket experience are considered.

2. There is no definitive age at which they should be introduced to open age group cricket but determine each case on an individual basis dependent on their ability and stage of cognitive and emotional maturity to take part at this level, however, clubs, squad coaches and managers must take into account the requirements on age at point 9 of this guidance

3. ECB Fast Bowling Directives and Fielding Regulations should always be adhered to for junior players in open age group cricket.

4. Provide an opportunity for players to show their talents in an appropriate way. Children who are just used as fielders will not fully experience the game.

5. Be supportive at all times for all forms of effort even when children are not successful. Try and put them in situations where they will experience some success (however small) and ensure plenty of praise and encouragement.

6. Try and involve them in all aspects of the game wherever possible i.e. socializing, team talks, practice, decision making etc. so that they feel part of the team.

7. Children will often feel more comfortable and able to perform if they have a family member or friend also playing in the side.

8. Remember, children's early experiences will remain with them always and will often determine whether they want to remain playing the game or give up and do something else!

9. Players who are selected in a County U12 squad in Spring for a summer squad or in another squad deemed by ECB Performance Managers to be of a standard above 'District level' for that season are eligible to play Open Age Cricket. This is providing they are at least 11 years old, and in School Year 7 on 1st September in the year preceding the season and have written parental consent to play. In allowing these players to play in Open Age Cricket it is essential that Clubs and Coaches recognise the 'Duty of Care' obligations towards these young players.

This means that County Squad and Area Squad players, both boys and girls are able to play Open Age Group Cricket if they are in U12 Age group and are a minimum of 11 years old on 01 September of the year preceding the season. District and club players who are not in a County or Area squads must wait until they reach the Under 13 age group, 12 years old, Year 8 on 01 September of the preceding year prior to being able to play in any Open Age Cricket, again written parental consent is required for these players.

The duty of care should be interpreted in two ways:

• 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

• 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.

In addition the guidelines note the need for clubs and leagues to recognize the positive experience that young players should have in open age cricket and thus clubs should provide an opportunity for players to show their talents in an appropriate way. Children who are just used as fielders will not fully experience the game.

Section 3 – ECB Guidelines for junior players in open age group cricket - October 2010