

English Chess Federation – Junior Development Pathway Consultation – March 2022

Junior chess remains extremely popular in England with a thriving educational and competitive scene. There are many organisations and service providers including for profits, charities and not for profit associations involved in teaching chess, running chess tournaments and organising training programmes. Indeed, many coaches and organisers derive their primary income from chess. The ECF also recognizes that many organisations are providing a needed service to parents and students that the ECF is not geared towards providing at present.

We are exiting an unprecedented global pandemic that has had a significant impact on chess in England and of course junior chess as well. Changes to tournament schedules and formats, the massive shift towards online training and playing and impact on ratings are just a few we could mention.

The ECF would like to help:

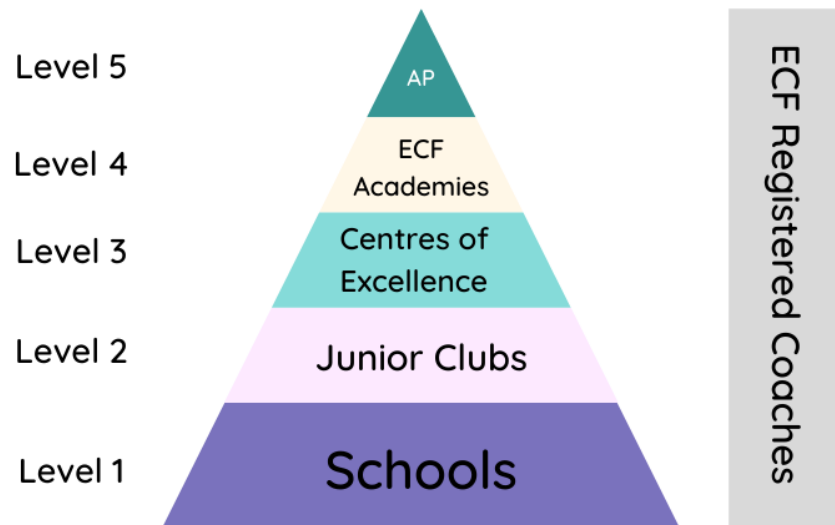
- Develop junior talent to reach their chess potential
- Achieve competitive success in the junior ranks of international competition
- Develop the next generation of professional players in the senior ranks
- Help develop greater clarity for parents and players regarding their development options and opportunities
- Provide a fair market place for individuals and organisations to compete and offer their services

The English Chess Federation's Junior Development Pathway is a new initiative by the ECF to create a structured and formal progression plan for junior chess players which incorporates existing coaches, junior clubs, associations and programmes. Many of the ideas here are derived from conversations and input from coaches, organisations and parents.

This paper sets out our current thinking of how the Pathway would work. We are now seeking feedback from stakeholders (including teachers, coaches, organisers and parents) to help further guide the process. The next step will involve a small steering committee to submit their final proposals to the ECF board. At this stage we are aiming for the Pathway to be live from January 2023 but to start taking applications for Stages 2-4 before in Autumn 2022.

What is the Pathway?

The Pathway is a 5-level system with majority of players at the base of the pyramid at Level 1 (Schools) and currently just a handful of places available at the top Level 5 (Accelerator Programme).



Here is a brief summary of each level. Please note for detailed criteria for levels 2-4 please see the 'How can organisations apply' section

Level 1 - Schools

Chess is played in 1000s of schools in England, with some schools providing the service of a professional coach. There are some national programmes providing services within schools including CSC (Chess in Schools and Communities) and the UK Chess Challenge. Joining a school club (where one is offered) is a natural first step for junior chess players.

Level 1 is not proposed as an affiliated stage of the Pathway initially – although the idea of ECF 'school membership' idea has been raised before.

Level 2 – Junior Clubs

Clubs which are either dedicated junior clubs or have a dedicated section for training junior players. For Level 2 affiliation organisations should apply via the *ECF Pathway Application Portal*.

Level 3 – Centre's of Excellence

Clubs (or County Associations) with an extensive junior chess training background. For Level 3 affiliation organisations should apply via the *ECF Pathway Application Portal*.

Level 4 – ECF Academies

Organisations with an excellent demonstrable chess training background capable of running a National Programme. The ECF Academies will offer a hybrid of online and physical training and support for students and are seen as a complementary service to Level 2 and 3 organisations rather than a direct alternative. For Level 4 affiliation organisations should apply via the *ECF Pathway Application Portal*.

Please note that the current 'ECF Academy' is managed by a single provider until 31/12/22. It is proposed from 01/01/23 the new model will apply organisations who meet the relevant criteria eligible to apply.

Level 5 – Accelerator Programme

The Accelerator Programme is run by the Chess Trust and provides mentorship services to a limited number of students each year (currently 10 students) who are selected by the Junior Selection Committee.

What is the purpose of the Pathway?

The Pathway has two primary purposes:

1) Provide clarity for parent and players regarding how to progress their chess: The Pathway indicates a clear progression pathway to develop in chess and enables parents/players to identify and join appropriate clubs/organisations.

2) Provide clubs and training providers official recognition: Clubs and training providers will be able to apply for Levels 2-4 affiliation on the pathway. This will provide marketing benefits to those organisations through being able to use the official 'ECF Development Pathway' quality mark on their website and marketing literature and appearing on the ECFs 'Club Finder' portal.

An additional benefit we foresee is the opportunity for greater collaboration between training providers, for instance cross-promoting services and running joint sessions / initiatives.

What are the benefits for affiliated organisations?

Level 2 – Clubs:

- Use ECF affiliation quality mark on website and marketing literature
- Promotional benefits through ECF channels including website, social media and email
- Greater visibility in the ECF 'Club Finder' tool making it easier for parents to make an informed choice
- Access to ECF group insurance

Level 3 – Centres of Excellence

- All Level 2 benefits plus
- Featured advertisements through ECF channels
- Discounted ECF training
- Promoted via the ECF Academies
- Discounted membership to ECF Academies

Level 4 – ECF Academies

- All Level 3 benefits plus
- One representative on the Junior Selection Committee

Pathway Affiliation

How can organisations apply?

Organisations wishing to become affiliated should apply via the *ECF Pathway Application Portal*. This involves submitting an online application. The application will then be reviewed by an independent panel and the applicant will be informed of the decision by email. There will be no application fees or annual fees to be part of the pathway.

Criteria

Level	Criteria
1 – Schools	This is the entry point for significant amount of private coaching at present, and it already serves as the first tier for most people. It is a possible future expansion of this pathway to include something here, but for now this is not a specific area of focus.
2 – Junior Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated junior training section of club/organisation • Active website or social media presence • Physical meeting place • Minimum of 40 hours per annum contact time • 2 x parent testimonials • A safeguarding policy in place
3 – Centres of Excellence	<p>All Level 2 requirements plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three named coaches • All coaches are ECF registered • Minimum of one ECF Level 3 registered coach • Minimum of 25 active student members • Either one member who has won a National junior title within the last 3 years (e.g. British Championships or Terafinal), or at least 10 members who have represented their county or EPSCA association last year • In the last 3 years, have entered either as a team in OTB external junior or adult team events (e.g. local leagues, EPSCA Inter-Association tournaments, Junior 4NCL, 4NCL); or organised OTB rated chess tournaments (e.g. internal club tournaments (either for juniors or “open”), county tournaments) • 5 x parent testimonials • A Safeguarding Officer
4 – ECF Academies	<p>All Level 2 and 3 requirements (excepting physical place of meeting) plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online coaching capability for 100+ members • Organise a minimum of 3 physical training events per year spread throughout England • A minimum of 100 active students • In last three years at least 5 students have achieved either National Team representation or have won a National title (e.g. British Championships or Terafinal) • Minimum of 3 Grandmasters on the coaching roster • Minimum of 3 Level 4 registered coaches on the coaching roster • Robust organisational structure with key policies in place (e.g. safeguarding, data protection, anti-bullying) • Evidence of development of own training materials

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-promote level 2 and level 3 organisations • Robust track record of promoting junior chess • Actively promote and engage with junior activities • Provide periodic reports to the JSC and ECF about the activities of the Academy and progress of the students
5 – Accelerator Programme	N/A

International selection

Note that for the purposes of ‘international selection’ we are referring to three categories of competition

A) Team Events

B) Individual Events with limited entries (i.e. National Federations are limited in the number of players they may select)

C) Individual Events with unlimited entries.

Selection for Category A Events

For Category A events all selections will be made by the Junior Selection Committee and these players will represent the ‘England Squad’ during these events.

Selection for Category B Events

For Category B events the selections will be made by the Junior Selection Committee. All players selected as part of this combined process will represent the ‘England Squad’ during these events.

Category C Events

For Category C events, the ECF Board will set criteria to be met for membership of the ‘England Squad’, upon a proposal from the Director of Junior Chess & Education and the Junior Selection Committee.

In addition to the above, players who do not meet the criteria may play, subject to paying a surcharge which will be payable to the Bursary Fund. These players will not form part of the ‘England Squad’.

What is the Bursary Fund?

This is a fund set aside to support talented junior players who are in need of financial assistance. Funds may be spent on training provision and assistance in playing international events.

About the Junior Selection Committee (JSC)

The JSC comprises of independent junior chess experts and meets to make selections for international tournaments and for the Accelerator Programme. The JSC use a range of data points including rating progression, tournament results and quality of games to make their decisions which are ultimately decided by a vote.

The JSC is also responsible for setting the minimum criteria for Academy nominees and for non England Squad representatives at international events.

Other Questions

Q: What about individual coaches not part of a wider club or training provider?

A: Individual coaches can register with the ECF as an ECF registered coach and appear on the official list of such coaches without charge.

Q: Does a player need to be a member of a level 2-5 organisation to represent England?

A: No – the JSC will make their selections based on the information available and the list of candidates includes all active junior tournament players. It is more likely the JSC will know about players who are part of a pathway organisation but this does not preclude other players being selected.

Q: Why allow players not selected to play in certain events?

A: This has been an area of contention for some years and many parents and coaches have expressed a view that if a player is willing and able to play in an open event then the ECF should not block this. Allowing such players to play, subject to meeting a minimum set of criteria is the compromise we suggest.