

# Thoughts of three male and female umpires recently promoted to Level 2 in the West



## What made you want to progress to Level 2?

1. I've really enjoyed umpiring which started alongside playing. As my children progressed to a higher standard and mine dropped it was a way of staying involved in matches of a higher standard. I also relish the mental and physical challenges that it brings.
2. I wanted to umpire a better level of hockey - I also wanted to test my ability at that level and to see how I can add value to a game- I also want to continuously improve so working with more experienced colleagues and knowing that I am regularly coached is part of the level 2 experience
3. In the past I have often been asked if I would like to progress up to Level 2, but, because of work commitments I preferred to stay within the county. I'm sure I could have gained it years ago. The feedback from coaching and players has always been good. When I retired in 2020 I felt that I could now commit to travelling on a Saturday. Unfortunately, covid delayed everything by 2 years. And, we're not getting younger. I'm glad I have finally achieved my level 2.

## Did you get any coaching before being assessed - if so was it helpful and constructive and were you given enough time to implement recommendations?

1. I've been lucky. It's been a relatively quick progression from L1 to L2 and have had the benefit of informal mentoring. The best session I had was an age group schools tournament as lots of L2 umpires and coaches there. I had the benefit of at least 2 coaching sessions. I've made a note of all feedback and that's been useful. But some feedback points are often subjective so maybe more perspective rather than actual issues to address.
2. Yes I benefited massively from being part of the Devon Umpiring team - I received lots of constructive support and have had a number of unofficial mentors who I know I can go to for advice. I had time to make and test things out so I could figure out what worked best for me.
3. This season I was coached in my first league game. The feedback was very good. Also had good feedback from fellow umpires as well.

### How did your assessment game go?

1. It wasn't my best game! I was nervous and my assessor was stuck in traffic so wasn't there to chat through anything before we started. That said once I passed I had a really good game the following week and very much enjoyed it.
2. It was fine - feedback was balanced (for both umpires) - my assessor was a last minute stand in due to sickness but that was fine - I was able to relax and not get too nervous
3. My assessment game was great, with lots happening, and, brilliant feedback from the assessor.

### What do you like about being an active level 2 umpire?



1. I like the network and also meeting new umpires as well clubs. It's a supportive group.
2. I like working with experienced colleagues and I am starting to get to know the teams/coaches that I regularly umpire. I like contributing to hockey at this level and continuing to give back
3. Better quality of games. Also, the great banter and laughter with players I hadn't seen for quite a while

### Are there areas we can improve?

1. Consistent communication.
2. I think you have a thankless task- I think moving to the new arrangement has meant we have lost some of the camaraderie but it also means that I have met new colleagues from further afield. I asked for a mentor and I don't think that has been sorted yet? But that's not really an issue as I know who I can approach for help. I think communication (generally) and maybe think about how we get everyone together (an annual event off season) might be good -but I guess that's not everyone's thing.

I would also like to see clubs do a bit more particularly when we may have had a long journey- particularly on arrival- it would be nice to be welcomed and offered a tea/coffee- and shown where to change

3. As we know, umpires are in short supply. The same with coaches. Devon has tried every year to recruit more to umpire, as I'm sure other counties have as well. I'm not sure how we can get more umpires when clubs and players don't want to commit. We've had this problem for years

**Do you feel valued?**

1. Yes, very much so.
2. I feel valued by West umpiring colleagues but not really by England Hockey - I think there is a long way to go - there is no incentive and I don't think EH do enough to recognise the importance of umpires - maybe that's different for NPUA colleagues?
3. Yes.

**Do you feel part of a team?**

1. Definitely.
2. I did in the previous set up as part of Devon - not as much now but I know I can contact colleagues when I need help
3. Yes. I also like the WhatsApp chat room

**Do you think we have the correct support mechanisms in place?**

1. Too early to tell.
2. I'm not sure if you mean pastoral or systems? I think support is there if you know how to get it
3. I think there is. But, it mainly depends on whether people use it. I think I'm too new to this to really comment.

**If you have had requests for appointments have they been met? ie personal reasons for staying local etc?**

1. Yes especially around my children's matches.
2. Yes they have thanks.
3. If you mean that have I requested a local game because of doing something in the evening, then, yes.

### **Have you had a good balance of teams and different umpires?**

1. Yes.
2. Yes - I feel it's well managed - it must be a challenge keeping us all happy
3. I think I have had a good balance of both teams and umpires.

### **What would you say to someone thinking of progressing to Level 2?**

1. If you want to develop your umpiring and relish new challenges I'd definitely recommend it.
2. I would highly recommend it - where you are based can be a factor - it's definitely a good way to improve your umpiring and generally the standard of hockey makes it more enjoyable because at this level (in women's hockey) you are very much the overseer helping the game to flow well rather than being the arbitrator - it's far more satisfying and is rewarding - players and coaches expect a good standard and want to feel safe - at this level they want to play good competitive hockey that is enabled to flow in a safe well managed manner by a team of confident umpires who they can trust to perform consistently and fairly
3. If you are considering it, and, feel that you are confident, then ask for some serious coaching as well as ask your fellow umpires for a few tips.

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