

EHO Officiating Guidance

2025/2026 Season

The following guidance has been issued by England Hockey Officiating to all its members for the 2025/2026 season. If Umpires or Technical Officials require any further information or support on any parts of this guidance, they should contact their Officiating Committee.

Umpires are to start Penalty Corners on their whistle not their voice

For greater consistency across the sport, and to deliver a clearer message to all involved in the game, the new guidance for umpires at all levels in England is to **start Penalty Corners on a whistle not voice** (e.g. no longer shouting “play” or “when you’re ready” for the injection to take place).

As per tournament regulations for the National and 8 Area Adult Leagues, **time will not be stopped** for the setup of the Penalty Corner, unless there is an injury, card or other situation that requires time to be stopped. This will also apply to most other competitions, but there may be some variations in specific tournament regulations (e.g. Talent Academy Cup). It is therefore important for umpires to check the tournament regulations for any amendments to the FIH Rules of Hockey.

From the 2025/2026 season:

- Umpires will blow their whistle to award the Penalty Corner.
- Allow the players enough time to put on their extra protective equipment and set up for the corner.
- Umpires will then blow their whistle to indicate for the Penalty Corner to start.
- The injector should play the ball within a couple of seconds of the whistle being blown and not delay too long.

It is felt this will have several benefits:

- Most umpires, particularly those that are new to the game, are more confident blowing their whistle than using their voice, therefore it will be clearer to the players when to start.
- It removes any ambiguity when umpires use the common phrase “when you’re ready” and it keeps the process the same if time is stopped for injury or other situation at a Penalty Corner.



- It also allows all umpires to use a great number of online resources (e.g. video clips) to help their development, as they will now be following the main processes as seen on TV.

It should be noted that for many this is a change and therefore education will be key to both experienced umpires and players.

England Hockey strongly recommends facemasks be worn when defending Penalty Corners

Following updated FIH regulations mandating the use of facemasks in all official international competitions, **England Hockey strongly recommends that all players - at every level and age - wear facemasks when defending penalty corners.**

The safety of players is a priority, and the use of facemasks during penalty corners - where ball speed and proximity present increased risk - can significantly reduce the chance of facial injury.

Although this is the standard across England, some events (e.g. school's competitions and the Junior Talent System), may have it in their regulations that facemasks must be worn. Therefore, it is important to check specific tournament regulations for any amendments.

Read the full guidance and access further Health and Safety guidance [here](#).

The aerial rule remains the same this season, as per the FIH Rules of Hockey

For the 2025 FIH Hockey Pro League the FIH introduced a new optional trial rule on aerals, and you may have seen this on TV. **England Hockey has chosen not to introduce this trial rule for England Hockey activity in the 2025/2026 season*.**

The aerial rule is therefore the same as it appears in the FIH Rules of Hockey and what has been umpired in the previous years, with players not permitted to approach within 5 metres of a receiver until the ball is under control and on the ground. Rule 9.10 which covers the aerial rule is quoted below:

Players must not approach within 5 metres of an opponent receiving a falling raised ball until it has been received, controlled and is on the ground. The ball may be intercepted within 5 metres but outside of playing distance provided it is done safely.

The initial receiver has a right to the ball. If it is not clear which player is the initial receiver, the player of the team which raised the ball must allow the opponent to receive it.



If you are unsure about the aerial rule, it is a topic which will be discussed at the **EHO Conference**, taking place on **Sunday 31 August 2025** at the East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham. All officials are invited to this conference, and you can [book your place via the Hockey Hub](#).

**Please note that the England Hockey National League Premier Division's only will be playing the new aerial trial rule. Therefore, if you are involved with, or watching this hockey division, it will be umpired differently to the above guidance.*

Managing England Hockey's new Transgender & Non-Binary Participation Policy

In January 2025, England Hockey announced a new Transgender & Non-Binary Participation Policy that will apply to England Hockey activity from September 2025. Detailed information on this policy can be found on the [England Hockey website](#). A recording of the webinars hosted by England Hockey, can also be found on the [England Hockey YouTube channel](#).

Officials need to be aware of some key guidance with this policy.

Like all other player eligibility issues, **it is not the responsibility of an umpire or technical official to enforce**. If a team is questioning the eligibility of players, this should be raised with the league / competition organisers. As part of the organiser's investigation, they may get in touch with the officials to aid with an investigation.

If a team refuses to play or fails to complete a fixture against a team with a (suspected) transgender player, they may be deemed to have breached the League Regulations and be subject to the associated penalties set out in those regulations. Again, this will be down to the league / organisers to enforce.

Officials must be aware that, as per the FIH Rules of Hockey, "It is not acceptable for players to abuse opponents, umpires or other technical officials verbally or through body language and attitude. Umpires must deal firmly with abuse of this sort". Therefore, **if an umpire hears/sees the use of abusive language or behaviour this should be dealt with via a red card**. If an umpire doesn't hear/see the abuse but it is reported to them they should encourage the witness to report it and support with a follow up report via the correct discipline channels.

If umpires or technical officials require any further guidance or support on the England Hockey Transgender Policy, they should contact trans.policy@englandhockey.co.uk

Online Safeguarding Awareness module recommended for all Officials

As an umpire or technical official, your role goes beyond managing the game – you also help create a safe, positive environment for everyone, especially young people and vulnerable adults.



To support this, we are asking all officials to complete the online Safeguarding Awareness module [available via Hockey Hub](#).

This short free course ensures you:

- Understand your safeguarding responsibilities
- Can recognise and respond to concerns appropriately
- Help promote a culture of safety, trust and respect across hockey

Even if you never face safeguarding issues directly, completing this training protects all participants and yourself, as well as reinforces the standards we all uphold in the game.

Further information about the Safeguarding Awareness module can be found [here](#), and you can complete the learning at any time by [logging into your Hockey Hub account](#). For further Safeguarding information and support, please visit the [England Hockey Umpire/Official Safeguard webpages](#).

Area Premier Divisions may play Quarters rather than Halves

With the updates to the Area League Regulations, the **home team in the Area Premier Divisions may choose** to play their matches with 4 x 17.5-minute quarters, rather than 2 x 35-minute halves. Umpires and Technical Officials participating in these area divisions are advised to check they know which timing format of the game they are officiating before match day. It is also then recommended to confirm with both captains on match day to ensure there has been no miss-communication.

This only applies to Area Premier Divisions with all other Area Divisions remaining at 2 x 35-minute halves. All Divisions within England Hockey's National League play quarters as standard.