

Minutes of last meeting

12th Sept 2026



Meeting name	National Game Panel				
Venue	Teams				
Date	12 th Sept 2026	Start Time	17.30	End Time	18.30
Lead	Keith Carder (Chair) KC				
Attendance	Jo Thomas-Ellis (EH) JTE Nick Kendall (TBB) NK, Jo Pennycook (Disciplinary) JP, Christine Crossley (Sevenoaks) CC, Tony Jones (Surbiton) TJ Rebecca Edwards (NPUA) Annie Hairsine (TAP) Paul Mangat (Wimbledon) PM				
Apologies	Gareth Griffiths (Beeston) GG Leigh Maasdrop (Old Georgians) LM				
Welcome KC – Welcomed new members Paul Mangat and Rebecca Edwards. and reaffirmed the role of the National Game Panel as a forum to provide insight, challenge, and feedback on competition matters. It was agreed that the panel should be utilised more proactively to help shape future competition developments and policy decisions					
Minimum Operating Standards (MOS) KC - An update was provided on the development of Minimum Operating Standards for Premier Division clubs, with implementation planned from September 2027. The objective is to raise and standardise standards across the Premier Division both on and off the pitch. Areas covered include: • Club operations and governance • Player development pathways • Coach development • Live streaming requirements • Facility standards • Club profiling and benchmarking through a performance dashboard Feedback from clubs showed broad support for the initiative, although significant concern was raised regarding proposed player age quotas and squad composition requirements. As a result, these measures will not be introduced at this stage, although player development metrics will continue to be monitored					
Key Discussion Points • Standards should be shared beyond Premier Division clubs to allow aspiring clubs to prepare for future promotion. • Several members recommended distributing the standards to all England Hockey League clubs. • It was noted that future discussions with clubs should involve a broader group of decisionmakers					

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Actions

- Circulate the latest version of the Minimum Operating Standards.
- Share standards with all EHL clubs.
- Arrange meetings with individual Premier Division clubs to understand current positions and implementation challenges.

International Sportsperson Visas

JTE - An update was provided on the reintroduction of International Sportsperson Visas following significant work with the Home Office and immigration specialists Newfields Law. The framework has now been implemented successfully, providing clubs with a clear route for recruiting overseas players legally and transparently.

Progress to Date

- 11 clubs sought endorsement for sponsorship licences.
- 4 Premier Division clubs have successfully brought players into the country using International Sportsperson Visas.
- A transparent eligibility framework and public register of approved players are now in place.

Issues Identified

The current eligibility grid has highlighted several grey areas, including:

- Players transitioning between visa types.
- Players arriving on visitor visas despite having international playing backgrounds.
- Age-group internationals who may not necessarily be high-level players but are restricted by the current framework.

The Home Office is currently reviewing the wider definition of an International Sportsperson, and England Hockey will contribute feedback based on experiences from the first season of operation.

Key Message

The framework now places responsibility firmly with clubs. Clubs have been made aware of the risks and potential Home Office sanctions should visa regulations be breached

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Adult Super 6s

Finals Format

KC - An update was provided on the future format of the Super 6s Finals.

Key drivers for change included:

- Declining spectator attendance at arena finals.
- Increasing financial losses associated with large arena venues.
- Significant flooring and venue costs.

Following consultation with clubs, England Hockey will move to a sports hall-based finals format at St George's College, Weybridge. The event will continue to be live streamed and will be spread over two days to maximise spectator capacity.

Indoor Rule Changes

JTE - The panel was updated on the adoption of the revised FIH Indoor Hockey Rules from November 2026.

Key changes include:

- Unlimited substitutions between fully-kitted goalkeepers and an additional field player.
- Players being permitted to bring aerial balls under control using the flat side of the stick.

Rule 14 regarding personal penalties will not be implemented this season due to incompatibility with the current disciplinary framework.

Guest Player Regulations

Two additional guest player positions will be introduced for Premier Division and Division One clubs.

These players:

- Must be under 23 years of age.
- Must be eligible to represent England and/or Great Britain.
- Must receive approval from the England Hockey Competitions Department.

The change is intended to increase opportunities for young domestic players and university athletes while preventing further overseas recruitment through the guest player route.

International Players

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England and Great Britain international players will be available for Adult Super 6s participation, subject to:

- Player willingness.
- Fitness and injury status.
- Pro League commitments.

Members commented that England Hockey should communicate these developments more publicly to demonstrate its renewed commitment to indoor hockey

Umpiring and Match Officials

Rebecca Edwards highlighted ongoing challenges around umpire availability. Increasing numbers of appointments now require officials to umpire two matches on the same day, which raises concerns around:

- Welfare and fatigue
- Performance standards
- Injury risk
- Long-term sustainability

NPUA expects some conference fixtures may be left without appointments due to official shortages.

Discussion

- A revised umpire grading structure may improve progression pathways.
- Growing numbers of Saturday fixtures have increased pressure on the officiating workforce.
- Consideration may be required regarding the balance between Saturday and Sunday fixtures in future seasons.

Player Welfare and Head Injuries

AH - Significant concerns were raised regarding the management of head injuries during fixtures.

Examples were shared where:

- No qualified first aider or physio was present.
- Match officials felt uncomfortable managing concussion situations.
- Home clubs did not always have suitable emergency medical provision available.

Suggestions Raised

- Stronger enforcement around penalty corner face masks.
- Mandatory first aid provision at National League fixtures.

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- Wider concussion awareness and education programmes.
- Consideration of medical and first aid requirements within future Minimum Operating Standards and club compliance frameworks.

Actions

- England Hockey to issue a reminder to clubs regarding head injury protocols and home club responsibilities.
- Explore options for mandatory first aid qualifications within competition regulations.

GMS (Game Management System)

Members reported continued concerns regarding GMS, particularly around player transfers and registrations.

Issues highlighted included:

- Lack of visibility of transfer status for clubs.
- User errors resulting in registration anomalies.
- Delays to previously promised system updates.
- Continued high volume of support requests.

The group agreed these concerns should be escalated again to the England Hockey team responsible for GMS development.

Actions

- Further feedback to be provided to the GMS project team.
- Request updates on planned system enhancements and development timelines.

Agreed Actions Summary

- Circulate updated Terms of Reference and Minimum Operating Standards.
- Share MOS documentation with all EHL clubs.
- Meet with Premier Division clubs regarding MOS implementation.
- Continue review of International Sportsperson Visa eligibility criteria.
- Promote England Hockey's support of indoor hockey more publicly.
- Communicate head injury and first aid expectations to clubs.
- Explore mandatory first aid provision and concussion training.
- Continue discussions on umpire recruitment and fixture scheduling.
- Escalate ongoing GMS concerns and request updates on improvements.

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- Next Meeting

Thursday 26 November 2026 at 5:30pm.

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