

Minutes and Lead Reports of the 5th Annual General Meeting of North West Area Officiating Committee 8th May 2025 by Video Conference 2025

See Appendix A for Attendees and Apologies

1. Introduction

Annette Badger opened the AGM and welcomed all to the 5th Annual AGM.

2. Report from the Chair incorporating reports from the AOC Leads

Report from the Chair of the NW EHO Branch 08.05.25 Heading in the right direction. One phrase sums up this season and is a common thread in all the Lead Reports – ‘challenging with many positives.’

Appointments

Tony Shutt has once again performed miracles in appointments, only requiring Clubs to provide home umpires on 2 women's and 3 men's Premier Division games. This despite the diminishing number of umpires through age and injury, the provision of 12 umpires to the EHL Women's North Conference League and constraints as to where and when appointments can be taken. On a good weekend there have been 20 umpires to fill 24 appointments. It has only been possible through the goodwill of umpires prepared to take two appointments on a Saturday and to travel considerable distances, to whom Tony is most grateful, and to Tony himself who has contacted qualified umpires who do not normally take appointments to fill vacant slots.

Once again, a big thank you to Gemma Jones who organised the Indoor Umpires building on the success of the previous year. Appointments to the Schools' Tier 1 programme at U16 and U18 age groups were re-established appointing to all 4 events, and we covered all the Junior clubs super 6 events (4), plus the adult super 6 qualifier and provided support to Y&NE.

Quality umpires, including 4 new Indoor Umpires, were appointed to all events and whilst the Senior team numbers impacted on the development of Officials two umpires gained their L1 and Alex Brandwood his L3. Congratulations. Nevertheless

more recruitment mechanisms into indoor umpiring are needed and more people trained and available as umpire support as the burden of Umpire Manager etc is falling upon too few people who frequently have multiple roles such as John Dixon who juggled Match Officials and umpiring and of course, Gem herself.

Technical Officiating

The NW is the only Area which requires Premier and Div I matches to have a Match Official and as a result we have a clear pathway for MOs to progress to the National League. Hannah Brock, Becky Evans and Jane Evans undertook MO development at the NWH Indoor Tournaments and were subsequently appointed to National Competitions, one who progressed to the Outdoor Panel and 4 more who await assessment. John Dixon has responded to the challenge of raising the standard of Club MOs with a Training Pack and a Starter Pack for those attending Tournaments. Tournaments and competitions provide excellent opportunities to recruit and train MOs.

Young Umpiring

Unfortunately, just as the main Young Umpire season began our Young Umpire Lead had to stand down. However, we were fortunate in that Joy Elliott Bowman who had experience of developing Young Umpires in the London Area agreed to co-ordinate the Young Umpire Programme. A newly created form enables Young Umpires to join the Young

Umpire Programme and there are now 70 umpires on the data base. She formed a committee of three County Reps with the aim of providing support at the County In2 Hockey events and Junior Leagues and giving feedback. This was particularly successful in her County of Cumbria. The development of Young Umpires at County level is the key to raising the standard through to Area level. As a result of the feedback the Young Umpires have been assigned to three Panels – Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

Working with the Junior League Management Committee Joy and her team organised the Young Umpire Challenge at the NW In2 Hockey Finals at which 23 Young Umpires took part supported by 8 coaches and Umpire Manager. 3 Nominees have been accepted to umpire at the National In2 Hockey Final and 2 to umpire at the U14 Finals.

Umpire Development

Chris Reece co-ordinated the support of Appointed umpires and despite the limited availability of many coaches, although we have 3 new L2 umpire coaches Graham Morrison, Ed Westbrook and Gareth Perry they still have umpiring commitments, *(and as most of you know the Badger goes into hibernation in November and)* **40** assessments were carried out and **32** coaching's and two umpires gained their L3 and were promoted to the NPUA – Congratulations to David Halkyard, (Men's Panel) and Nick Kearsy (Women's Panel.) Thanks go to Tony and Chris Regan, the Women's Panel Lead, who carried out the larger share of watching's.

This season saw a major push in supporting the L1 Assessed Club Umpires of Division 1 games and Jane Evans worked with the NWH League and Clubs to identify and arrange watching's of **52** umpires. 8 umpires were identified as potential L2 candidates, and 6 umpires were assessed and gained their L2.

Furthermore the agreement by the NWH Board to purchase radio sets for which Clubs could apply has meant that virtually all Clubs in the NW have a set of radios for use by their Club umpires.

The season began with the annual Women's Armitage Tournament at which 27 umpires were coached and 15 gained their L1 and a new venture, a Men's, and Women's tournament, at Sedbergh. Later in April the Ladies Lancashire Cup provided an all-female development day to encourage more female umpires to take appointments – currently there are only 4. The Men's Lancashire Cup and the Women's Masters Triangular Tournament were also used to develop umpires. All of these required a huge commitment from a small number of coaches to whom Jane is most grateful.

At the start of the season two successful 'Rules Evenings' were held by Gemma Jones and David Ellcock at Timperley and Preston.

Finally, to help umpires bridge the gap between the L1 online course and actually umpiring a game and to refresh those who have been umpiring for some time, two Key Skills modules were produced by NWHO – Movement round the pitch', and 'Managing the game,' which were sent out to umpires.

Club Engagement

NWHO produced a Welcome Pack before the start of the season which contained all information for umpires and match officials, and which was sent out to umpires.

However, communication still remained a challenge despite the best efforts of Bob Ashton supported by Chris Regan and the Cluster Leads in establishing links with Clubs. Where they have been formed, particularly when they have joined the Cluster Leads WhatsApp group, Clubs have been supported with information and arranging assessments but in too many cases, Clubs have been unwilling to engage with NWHO or they are unaware of the individual who is their Umpire Contact.

Thanks must go to Gayle Gledhill for trying to raise the profile of club umpiring through posting adverts /news items on the NWH Officiating Facebook page which is linked to X and Instagram.

Which all brings us to the work we have been currently undertaking.

There are two key issues:

Communication

GMS is not designed for the communication between Area OCs and their umpires/clubs. At the beginning of the season Chris Reece was able to use an excel programme developed by the West Area to create a contact data base

using the data held by England Hockey. However, we discovered later in the season that inaccurate EH data meant that only half of our umpires received information – this particularly impacted on the work of club umpire development, with Jane doing a lot of ground work to correct data, and club engagement.

Efforts are currently now being made to resolve the problem. Chris is also going to add the Club Umpire Contact, which is a required field on GMS, to the data base but at the same time Clubs must be made aware that the role of this person is not that of appointments coordinator but of someone who looks after the interests of umpires, ensures information is passed on in both directions, recruits and helps new umpires.

The NWHO website page has not been revisited for two years and is of little use. It is being transformed to provide all the information that umpires and match officials need in a clearly accessible format – aligned to the functions of NWH Officiating and containing all the guidance documents and key skills modules. Again, it will need to be made clear to officials and Clubs that this is where all the information is held and that this is their first port of call.

Finally, it would be so helpful to have a Social Media Lead who could maintain a high output of Officiating postings.

Umpire Development

Developing umpires to both improve the standard of umpiring at Club level and to enable more umpires to progress to taking appointments is vital for the future. Despite making it clear that in gaining the L2 umpires can still umpire for the Club and take appointments there is a reluctance on the part of umpires to move to neutral appointments.

As a result, the Officiating Committee has been restructured to provide for a Performance Umpire Developer Lead responsible for umpires taking appointments and a Club Umpiring Developer Lead, thus replacing the role of Club Engagement.

However, to support them more umpire coaches and assessors at L1 and L2 will be needed, and their development is equally important.

On looking back at the ‘challenges’ I listed at the end of last year’s AGM we have made much headway in improving communication, developing Club umpires and Young Umpires, and improving the standard of Match Officials and we are well placed to successfully carry these elements further forward. Hopefully, the restructuring of the Officiating Committee will enable NWHO to improve the progress of umpires, particularly Female umpires, to taking neutral appointments and increase the number of L1 assessed and L2 umpires in Clubs but this will also require an increase in umpire support. With regard to the last two challenges the welfare of umpires, is an issue which will need to be tackled in a closer partnership with the Adult League and as for more volunteers, well?

And finally, I would like to thank all of you who, in whatever capacity, enable 22 players to run around a hockey pitch trying to hit a ball into a goal safely and within the rules of the game and from a personal point of view all the current and past members of the Officiating Committee for all their time and efforts, for their commitment and support in delivering Officiating to NWH.

Annette K Badger 08.04.25

We now move on to the elections to the Committee.

2. The election of the Chair of the NW EHO Branch to be proposed at the AGM of NWH Ltd (17th July 2025)

Chair Tony Shutt Proposer: Charlie Cordery

4. The election of vacant Lead role holders to be nominated to the Area Board for positions on the AOC.

Position	Nominee	Proposer
Vice Chair	Chris Reece	Tony Shutt
Performance Development Lead	Nick Kearsley	Mark Watts
Club Umpire Development Lead	Jane Evans	Simon Evans
Appointments Lead	Tony Shutt	Charlie Cordery

Young Umpire Lead	Joy Elliot-Bowman	Chris Regan
Technical Official Lead	John Dixon	Chris Reece
Administrator	Vacant	
Social Media Lead	Vacant	

No other business. I wish Tony and the Committee every success in the firm knowledge that they will continue heading in the right direction Annette Badger.

5. Lead Reports

Appointments Lead report season 2024/25: Tony Shutt

This has been a very challenging season due to the depleting numbers of umpires taking appointments along with the distances people have had to travel to the appointments.

For all who made the trips to places such as Kirkby Stephen and Windermere I thank you most sincerely, it was an enormous help. We were requested to supply umpires to 12 Women's Conference North over the season which again added strain to our resources.

I thank all of you that offered to double up on many occasions, without this support we would have had to request Clubs to supply their own umpires on far more occasions, there were 2 matches on the women's side and 3 on the men's side where clubs had to supply.

I thank all those who offered their services even though they were carrying injuries and would normally have rested.

Finally, I thank you all for your support through the season and thanks to Annette and Chris Reece for stepping in when I was unwell.

Tony Shutt 23/4/2025

Umpire Support - Premier Panel Report :Chris Reece

Coaches and Assessors: Annette Badger, Chris Regan, Tony Shutt, Gemma Jones, Gareth Perry, Tom McCabe and Chris Hampson

72 Watching's Premier Panel 2024-25 (M & W), 40 Assessments (M & W), 32 Coaching's (M & W) 58 Different Umpires appointed to the premier divisions this season. **North West-NPUA Nominations:** David Halkyard Men's (B Panel), Nick Kearsley Women's (C Panel)

Indoor Report: Gemma Jones

Alex Brandwood - Level 3

Finlay Fett-Worsfold and Ian Swaine - Level 1

Hannah Brock, Becky Evans and Jane Evans all undertook officiating development within the NW indoor programme, leading to all 3 being appointed to National Competitions.

We re-established the appointments to the schools tier 1 programme at U16 and U18 age groups appointing to all 4 events

We covered all the junior clubs super 6 events (4), plus the adult super 6 qualifier and provided support to Y&NE.

Need more recruitment mechanisms into indoor umpiring and more people trained and available as umpire support.

Development Lead: Jane Evans

Well another year over and plenty of challenges but lots to be positive about.

Working with the league and clubs there have been 52 Umpires observed for Division 1 matches. 8 umpires were identified for progression to L2 with 6 achieving L2 this season.

There have been many development tournaments, which we hope to keep growing as they seem to be the more focused way of umpiring, gaining feedback and being able to apply it straight away. :-

Armitage September 2024, 27 umpires turned up for coaching with 15 people achieving their L1s. My thanks go to all the coaches for all their hours of support and teams for being understanding of their developing umpires.

Ladies Lancashire Cup at Lancaster on the 5th of April which was an all ladies day. Female teams, female umpires and female coaches. Plenty of coaching was delivered by Gemma Jones and Chris Regan to all umpires.

Men's Lancashire Cup on the 6th of April, 23rd April and the 26th of April at various venues with feedback being provided to developing umpires.

On the 26th and 27th of April umpires were provided to the North West Masters tournament, held at Lancaster University my thanks go to all the umpires for making themselves available and especially to Annette Badger who supported with match allocation, briefings and coach on the Saturday.

On the 27th of April at Sedbergh, the Young umpires tournament took place organised by Joy Elliott-Bowman and Lou Nash. 24 young umpires have turned up for the day and have received coaching and great support. All were locally sourced coaches, thank you.

I would like to say a massive thank you for those that support our umpire's development as without you it couldn't happen. The pool of coaches is small and we need people to want to develop your umpires so please get in touch.

A very successful rules evening was held at Preston HC and Timperley in September, delivered by Gemma Jones and David Ellcock.

We will continue to deliver support to all club umpires and would ask you all to check that your information is correct on GMS and EH Hockey hub, which will make it easier for us to get in touch and support you letting you know about all events.

Clubs, you really need to take responsibility for advising the League of umpires on their division one matches as early as possible. This will enable Officiating to have time to source and arrange coaches and assessors to attend your matches. We have a limited resource of coaches and assessors and need you to help us with time to be able to help develop your umpires. If you don't give us enough time we can't make the arrangements.

Thank you to all the people who have supported the NW umpires development through the season, with a special mention to Annette and Gemma for their continued support in everything.

Hope you all had a great season.

Jane Evans

Club Engagement Lead: Bob Ashton

I was excited when i started as club engagement lead at beginning of season, but unfortunately became more and more disillusioned as the season progressed.

For as long as i can remember, my opinion is that as long as someone turns up with a whistle, clubs are happy and this is still the case for many clubs today.

However, some progress has been made with clubs with the purchasing of radios for club umpires, which has really gone down well .

The work done by Gayle and Chris in their area is very much appreciated, with the In 2 hockey , quick sticks and initiative to send stories to Gayle to promote on social media. Another positive were the starter packs and subsequent information regarding the requirements and coaching tips for level 1 and for those who wanted to progress to level 2 One area that was a disappointment was the attempt via clubs to encourage parents to get involved, this quickly became a non starter.

The continuation of Tournaments for umpire development is as strong as ever, with Lancashire Cup, Sedburgh , Manchester and Southport.

As we continued , suggestions were put out there, but nothing really seemed to be acted upon.

Safeguarding with juniors on radios with adult umpires, i think was never addressed, a zoom meeting between the leads and their cluster contacts i don't think happened.

One of my main concerns was the assessment of umpires, especially new ones. In my opinion, a new umpire should be assessed on the highest level of game the grade requires and also not be an assessor from their club or a game involving their club. I know EH say that an umpire can be assessed on any adult game, but perhaps is something that can be looked at further.

Bob Ashton.

Supplementary Club Engagement report from Cluster Leads Chris Regan

What has worked well for you?

Supporting clubs with information & assessments

Cluster WhatsApp groups, beneficial tool.

Some cluster groups did not bother with CL but set up their own club WhatsApp group.

Those that had set up WhatsApp found it easier to contact each other & their cluster lead.

What have been the barriers?

Most agreed that the main barrier with lack of info on GMS & the ability to view & pass on information. One click stop! Need to make it compulsory for clubs to upload their umpire reps/leads. Cluster leaders need to see this list for contact details. Need for GMS/EH to pass on how many teams & how many & what levels of umpires, a club has.

Some Clubs not engaging with Cluster leads.

Going forward what changes would you like to see to support you in your role.

A clear and concise registry of the contact details of the person/s responsible for cascading the information sent so that all clubs & umpires know what is happening and know whom to contact for any support.

Finding cluster leads names etc., & info is hard on EH & NW sites.

Key words in the search area doesn't always give you what you are looking for.

Cluster leads should have better GMS access, with better access, we could see home games & how many umpires are coving this. Could then assess 4L1 or 6 L1 unassessed.

Need for more organised meetings dates 3/4th Tuesday in the month.

Development champions (which clubs seem to be really active and can we record best practice to be communicated to other clubs) Maybe Incentives for engaging.

Development opportunities with links the leagues/counties (Events coming up that we can promote amongst our cluster clubs), as well as amongst umpire coaches.

Clear organisation pathway, recent In2Hockey event with young umpires. Need for better over view, who does what, as different people contacted same YU's.

Technical Officiating Lead Report 2025 John Dixon

For 2024/5 we have had a successful year.

- We have created a training pack for all club appointed match officials which has gone to all clubs.
- In addition we created a starter pack for official attending events where there are differing roles of TO, timing judge and scoring judge etc
- We have used both indoor and outdoor tournaments to bring new people on board and training them up
- As a result four people went on to officiate at indoor national league and other competitions, one also completing is outdoor national league assessment
- We have four people waiting national league outdoor assessments
- We currently have over 10 people taking regular national league appointments but need to get greater national exposure not constrained by TAP/EH expenses
- We will be using area competitions during the summer to identify and train other potential match officials

John Dixon

Young Umpire Lead Report 2025 Joy Elliot Bowman

This year we created a North West Young Umpiring Committee, comprising representatives from the three counties under the leadership of the Young Umpire Coordinator.

The group established three panels for young umpires - Bronze, Silver and Gold, and worked to place young umpires on each panel across the season.

A form was created for young umpires to complete to join the young umpire programme, and feedback records created. We now have over 70 young umpires from across the region on our database.

Coaching support was offered in some counties, aligned with the Mini U8/10/12 tournaments and at some junior league games. Feedback was recorded in the feedback record, shared with young umpire coordinators in the counties. Working collaboratively with the NWHO Committee, the young umpiring committee sought nominations for the county In2 and North West In2 championships.

We arranged for coaches and young umpires to each of the county In2 finals. 23 young umpires and 9 coaches, plus one Umpire Manager facilitated the North West In2 championships at Sedbergh School on 27 April.

Joy Elliot Bowman

6. AOB.

- 1.** Annette wished Tony and the Committee every success in the firm knowledge that they will continue heading in the right direction.
- 2.** Chris Reece Thanked Annette – For the past year as chair of the NWH board and NW AOC Vice Chair, first and foremost, thank you for chairing NW AOC from its conception (EG Governace review) and taking us forward into the new structure of the work you've done in setting out strategy for the last what five seasons or your 5th AGM and also the previous work you did for NHUA and the various roles of chair of selection.
- 3.** Natasha Wilson England Hockey Officiating Manager: before everyone does disappear. I just want to say thank you to all of you guys for giving up your time. I know it's already been reiterated, but on behalf of the England Hockey, thank you for going out and doing what you do week in, week out and also just to follow up Chris, thanks. I know Chris is just thanks Annette for the work that she's done in the Old North and now obviously the the more modern northwest over the past five years. But I know personally I've had the pleasure of working with the net for the past couple of years in OWG and at national level. And the work and contribution that Annette's put in at that level as well needs, you know, than thanking for and letting us letting Annette know that we appreciate the work that she's done in the impact that she's had, not just in the northwest or the north, but across the country as well. So thank you for that, Annette.

Meeting Closed: 8:40pm

Appendix A

Apologies:

Colin Leeman, Derek James, Inge Bevers, Tom Leonard, Trevor Matthew Jones, Mark Watts, Elloner Farrow.

Attendees:

Voting Members:

Annette Badger, Andrew Foster, Bill Connor, Charlie Cordery, Chris Ambrose, Chris Hampson, Chris Howkins, Chris Reece, Chris Regan, Dave Goldstraw, David Halkyard, Eunice Ellison, Gayle Gledhill, Gemma Jones Graham Morrison, Jane Evans, John Dixon, Joy Elliott-Bowman, Mark Wilkie, Mathew Cook, Mike Wynne, Nick Kearsley, Peter Kidd, Peter McNulty, Simon Cobley, Simon Evans, Terry Norwood, Tony Shutt Wing Shum Lee.

Non-Voting Members

Natasha Wilson EH Officiating Manager, Julie Kenyon, Leighan Bleasdale, Jo Skelton, Luke Pibworth, Fran Loffler-Thompson.