



South Central Hockey

Area Officiating Committee

Chair's Report – 2025 AGM

We have now completed our fourth season as the South Central Area and life as an Area seems to be settling down and, dare I say, even GMS!

Against that background, we have managed to complete another season of league hockey in the South Central Area, a lot of junior hockey has been played, we've had winners and losers, promotions and relegations and end of season celebrations just as usual. For which thanks must go to each and every one of you – players, coaches, officials, and committee members across the Area, for helping us to get through our fourth South Central season. Without you we really couldn't have done it.

As before huge thanks must also go to the committee that has helped to run South Central Officiating this year – their names are on our South Central website:

<https://southcentral.englishhockey.co.uk/officiating>

Without them my job would have been impossible – and, without them, we would not have got through this season in as good a way as we have. Their individual reports will show the extent of work that has been carried out – we, in South Central, are very lucky to have such an exceptional band of volunteers.

Upcoming developments from England Hockey

Following the England Hockey AGM recently, and the vote for the new membership structure, there are good things coming for officiating in the new season, with free umpiring courses and also, hopefully, free access to match official training too. This should make it easier for anyone to access umpire and officiating training with, hopefully, an increase in the number of people undertaking these courses.

There is also work being done currently to update the Level 1 course, to develop the whole umpiring development process (it may not be called Levels 1, 2 and 3 next season) and work is also going into documenting the skills required to be an umpire, with a view to improving consistency across the country.

What we in South Central are doing

Our development team, lead by Ginette, are busy developing an on-line training course for those people who are thinking about picking up a whistle for the first time, as well as those people who have been umpiring for a while and just want to improve their umpiring so that they can support their clubs better.

We are also developing a video library, with video clips taken, mostly, from South Central matches which will help to see how to, and possibly how not to, develop your umpiring skills.

Head over to <https://umpiredev.co.uk/> to see what is going on here.

So looking like good news for next season – enjoy the break, if you are having one, and come back refreshed in September.

Chair Area Officiating Committee – Simon Milford – chair.officiating@southcentral.hockey

Club Liaison

South Central Officiating has in its remit officiating at all levels throughout the Area, not just the relatively small number of matches which receive appointed umpires. In order to reach everyone we need the help of clubs – Umpire Liaison Officers and Club Umpire Developers. Our Club Liaison Lead (Rowena Shepherd) continues to contact all for whom we have contact details but there are still very many clubs from whom we get little or no response. We are here to help – but we need you to get in touch with us, or just respond to us, to let us know how best we can help.

We have continued to develop the South Central Hit Squad, run by Steve “Goddards” Godwin, to try to help clubs to develop more umpires. Many clubs have held successful sessions and we have been asked back to several to run either similar courses or extension courses.

Without clubs carrying on umpire development it is clear that the number of umpires will dwindle away, very much to the detriment of our sport. We really need ALL clubs to stand up and operate an umpire development process. Get in touch if you need any help setting up or running such a system – your game needs you.

Development

Again we’ve helped many officials progress this year, many to Level 1, a lot to Level 1 assessed, quite a few to Level 2, and even some to Level 3. Well done to all those who progressed, and many thanks to those who helped them along the way, at both club and Area levels. Especial thanks to the development team, run by Ginette Tessier (your Monday Mixer concept has been adopted by several other Areas now), and the Level 1 assessment team being managed by Hatty Wood and the Level 1 coaching sessions run by Rob West.

If you want to see more about umpire development in South Central then head over to:

<https://umpiredev.co.uk/>

Appointing

Appointing has been even more of a challenge this season, given the reducing number of umpires making themselves available to cover neutral appointments – trying to get the right umpires, to the right games, whilst taking into account travelling distances and ever changing availability. But appoint we have, all thanks to Allan Notman and his team of David Boyle, James Bartrip and Huw Richards.

Young Umpires

We have been very fortunate this season to have the services of Sophie Parker as our Lead for Young Umpires. Sophie has been leading on appointing young umpires, where possible and with suitable support, across both indoor and outdoor sessions.

Congratulations too, to Sophie, on being appointed to the Premier Panel in NPUA, showing that she can also be a real role model for our younger umpires.

Technical Officiating

David Rigby is also available to support anyone who wants to think about the match official role, one which allows an involvement in higher levels of hockey, sitting right at the pitch side for national league matches.

Summary

Thanks to everyone who has helped us get through our fourth season in the new organisation. Having supported so many hockey matches has been no mean achievement and one of which we should all be proud. Plenty more to do next season, of course, so we can't sit on our laurels too much – but enjoy the summer (whether it involves hockey or not) and come back ready to face the new season in late summer 2025.

Simon Milford

Chair, South Central Area Officiating Committee