



WHAT MAKES A GREAT CLUB

ENGLAND
HOCKEY

BUILDING A STRONGER
HOCKEY COMMUNITY TOGETHER



YOUR SPORT, OUR SUPPORT

Nick Pink – England Hockey Chief Executive

“Clubs are at the heart of hockey in England, and therefore an integral part of England Hockey’s strategy. In this country, we are so fortunate to have such a committed group of over 730 hockey clubs who provide opportunities for everyone involved in the sport to enjoy welcoming, positive, and safe environments.

We want to continue to work together to make hockey more visible, accessible, and relevant for all. Our aim is to provide support, guidance, tools, advice, ideas, and inspiration to enable clubs to provide an excellent experience for all of their current and potential players and members, and to help them develop further in whatever way suits them.

It has been incredible to watch the way the hockey community galvanised itself and came together to face the wider societal challenges of recent years. The past few years have also seen clubs at the heart of the changing governance structure within the sport, leading to new rules, new Areas, new leagues and an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework. The Talent Framework has placed clubs at its heart and the recognition provided to Talent Centre’s and Talent Academies is embedding talent development within the club network.

Looking ahead, we have a real opportunity to grow the game further by working together to share a love of the game with a wider and more diverse audience than ever before.”

WHAT MAKES A GREAT CLUB

Sharing our love of hockey is fundamental in bringing the hockey community together. To encourage more people to participate and to stop us losing people from the sport; we need to collectively work together to make hockey more visible, relevant, and accessible to all.

Clubs are at the heart of this mission and are central to providing opportunities for players across all backgrounds and levels of play, supporting volunteers who are essential to helping hockey thrive or welcoming anyone wanting to join our growing 'hockey family'.



We recognise that every club has its own unique set of circumstances, short term priorities and plans and ambitions for longer term development. There is no perfect approach and many ways for clubs to be successful.

So, whether you have aspirations to grow, retain or diversify your membership, develop the people who are pivotal to the running of your club, invest in developing your facilities, looking at future financial sustainability or something entirely different, we are here to support your club develop and succeed.

SEVEN KEY THEMES

This What Makes a Great Club summary introduces you to the seven key themes we believe are at the heart of every great club.

- 1**  **Having great leadership**
- 2**  **Having appropriate and sustainable facilities**
- 3**  **Having inspired and effective people within the club**
- 4**  **Providing different ways to play that meet players' needs**
- 5**  **Being friendly, safe, welcoming and social**
- 6**  **Being local with strong community connections**
- 7**  **Stretching and developing those that want it**

HELPING YOUR CLUB EVERY STEP OF THE WAY



Read on to find out more about each of the strands. Or visit our online [What Makes A Great Club support hub](#) to challenge your existing thinking and utilise the support and resources available to help you successfully embed that strand within your club.



HAVING GREAT LEADERSHIP



Running a club takes vision and drive and having the right people in decision-making positions is fundamental to the future success of your club.

Great leaders will have the good of the whole club in mind, they will:

- Actively balance and manage the short-term priorities with longer-term objectives
- Create a vision, values, safe environment and culture that is embedded throughout the club, and everyone buys into
- Commit to providing a safe, inclusive environment for young people
- Be accountable for the governance of the club, for example, finances, policies, structures, development plans
- Manage and respond to the ambitions and concerns of different parties involved in the club
- Positively listen and engage with club and it's members
- Help facilitate the recruitment of the right people into the right roles on the committee
- Ensure the day-to-day running of the club is smooth



HAVING APPROPRIATE AND SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES

Securing hockey pitches is obviously key to the future of the sport and working to secure stronger more collaborative approaches with providers is an absolute requirement in coming years.

With the majority of clubs across the country hiring facilities from schools, colleges, universities or leisure centres, there is often a great difference between facility standards and the arrangements and partnerships clubs have in place with their facility providers.



This is a gap for most clubs with arrangements often short term, both in nature and outlook. Communication is mainly through the bookings person, with limited commitment from the owner to the hockey club for the long run. Many clubs do not realise or utilise the long-term financial investment they have made and use this to negotiate better deals or secure long-term access. Therefore, developing strong relationships politically (if you use a local authority, school or university facility) is critical.

Working out your annual bill and how much your club have invested since the pitch was last resurfaced is a useful exercise when negotiating with a provider. This also applies to asset-owning clubs who wish to demonstrate their credibility to access local funding opportunities.

For those asset owning clubs, we need to ensure their facilities are sustainable for the long run with maximum use, robust maintenance and long-term financial planning. England Hockey tirelessly works behind the scenes aiming to support the long-term provision of facilities. It is key that clubs work together with us to ensure future provision for hockey.



HAVING INSPIRED AND EFFECTIVE PEOPLE WITHIN THE CLUB



The volunteering landscape and behaviour have changed, with many people having less time and willingness to commit. Therefore, creating a culture within your club which supports, appreciates and values volunteers is vital.

The most well run and organised clubs:

- Know their annual tasks and when they need to be done
- Adapt their structures to the availability and skills of their people
- Provide fun, enjoyable and rewarding experiences
- Support, guide and mentor volunteers in their respective roles
- Have people with the skills and behaviours to inspire young people to play and develop
- Appreciate, value and reward volunteers – a simple THANK YOU goes a long way!
- Encourage, invite and support new volunteers to take on small tasks in areas they are confident in
- Where roles are paid they will carefully consider, manage and balance the financial and cultural needs of the club to provide the best possible outcomes



PROVIDING DIFFERENT WAYS TO PLAY THAT MEET PLAYERS' NEEDS

Many players do not want to play every week but are happy to play at any time of the year. They want opportunities that provide good experiences but are also local enough to allow room for other interests and commitments.

Clubs are currently doing a great job at welcoming and retaining more junior players in the game:

- Hockey Heroes is attracting 5 to 8 years in a fun and engaging way
- A wider range of structured junior competitions allows young players to access appropriate competitive hockey
- A marked increase in junior club sessions across the week
- Understanding and responding to the needs of young players as they reach their teenage years
- Supporting and improving transition into adult teams via development teams
- Providing new, social, lower commitment, ways to play with friends.



For adults, Saturday league hockey is healthy, but it is not the only thing clubs should offer. Separate ways to play such as Masters, Back to Hockey, Walking Hockey, intra-club games nights, Pay & Play and Flyerz Hockey all aim to supply opportunities for groups that want or need a different experience from club hockey.

Summer hockey is growing significantly, providing a way for clubs to engage players who may not want to commit to winter league hockey through informal leagues, Pay & Play and festivals.



BEING FRIENDLY, SAFE, WELCOMING AND SOCIAL

The friendly, welcoming and social culture of the sport should not be taken for granted and needs to be worked on so that it is reflected in all aspects of club life. It is fundamental for making new members feel welcome and for keeping existing members actively involved and happy.



Great friendly, welcoming and social clubs actively:

- Engage positively with members, asking for feedback and looking to find and implement improvements across the club
- Make it simple for current and potential members to find out about your club, what you offer and when and to then communicate easily with you
- Create and implement a more structured marketing strategy to help raise awareness and engagement
- Attract new players and members through word of mouth, remember your reputation precedes you!
- Offer a broad range of social activities and events which cater for different groups of people within the club and aim to engage a wide audience, including young people and their families
- Search for new ways to engage members virtually through social media or other online channels, especially if access to physical club facilities is a challenge



BEING LOCAL WITH STRONG COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Feedback from our research strongly shows that members want their club to be an integral part of the local community. For many, membership of their hockey club was a key way to connect with their local community and feel part of the place in which they live.



The more relevant and visible your club is in the community the more likely it is to thrive. Some of the benefits of connecting with your local community include:

- Helping increase participation by attracting new players through tailored activities such as club-school links or links with other local community activities or groups.
- Using your club, it's facilities and people to make a positive impact on your local community and the people in it through projects, activities, and charitable work.
- Supporting bigger strategic connections across the local area. Having an influence with key political figures in your community may help influence local decision making.
- Providing opportunities for financial sustainability by attracting sponsors and support from local companies.
- Helping recruit and attract new volunteers and supporters to your club



STRETCHING AND DEVELOPING THOSE THAT WANT IT

Providing the opportunity for people in your club to have the chance to develop their skills not only benefits the club but can also benefit the individual and make their experience with the club more rewarding. To do this effectively clubs need to understand people at an individual level and understand what opportunities are available for them, both within the club and externally, through wider hockey structures such as the Talent System or England Hockey training and development opportunities.



For players this may mean finding ways to provide greater support to develop skills through extra or more specific training, advice and support off the pitch. For some clubs this might be about helping players to progress to play elsewhere at a time that is right for their development across the Talent System and potentially with other clubs, which can be supported by England Hockey's **Right Athlete Right Environment (RARE) principles**. Ultimately there is a need to put the players' needs at the heart of decision making.

Coaches, umpires and volunteers are also key to consider when planning development opportunities. This could be courses, workshops or softer learning opportunities such as the Hockey Hub or internal club support through mentoring or coaching. Understanding the relevant coaching and umpiring pathways is important for clubs to maximise their people. As in business, this includes the need for a club to budget for developing people.

HOW CAN ENGLAND HOCKEY HELP?

England Hockey is here to help your club benefit from more, better, happier members and players. We have staff and online resources available to support your club and aim to be your first port of call for support and advice on how to develop your clubs, so please contact us:

Your primary contact is your **Club Development Manager** who will be able to offer local support to your club.

Alternatively, you can contact the Clubs Team at England Hockey: **clubs@englandhockey.co.uk** or call 01628 897500 Please contact us if you require help.

ONLINE SUPPORT

We have been developing and improving our online support that is available for clubs and volunteers. Our online **What Makes A Great Club support hub** to challenge your existing thinking and utilise the support and resources available to help you successfully embed that strand within your club.

All member clubs also have access to further tools and advice using the following options:

- **England Hockey website** <https://www.englandhockey.co.uk/>
- **England Hockey Club Portal** <https://clubportal.englandhockey.co.uk>
- **Hockey Hub** <https://hockeyhub.englandhockey.co.uk>