

WAYS 2 PLAY

# WALKING HOCKEY

Club Support



ENGLAND  
HOCKEY

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## About This Guide

**This guide has been written in collaboration with Bromsgrove Hockey Club and England Hockey would like to thank them and in particular Alan Gormley for their input and support.**

The guide will hopefully encourage and support more clubs to offer Walking Hockey, by providing information and advice on a range of aspects including the benefits of offering sessions, who you might have attend, ideas on marketing & promotion, considerations for when sessions should take place and what they

should look like. Along with simple rules for game play and key tips for launching Walking Hockey.

Don't forget your England Hockey Relationship Manager is also available to support you!

# > BENEFITS OF DELIVERING WALKING HOCKEY

Clubs offering Walking Hockey have already found a wealth of benefits for doing so, these include;

## ✓ New Members

The session can cater for those players who are unable to take part in mainstream hockey

## ✓ Keeping Members

Giving those that do play the opportunity to play for many more years

## ✓ Increased Revenue

In addition to a small fee to cover the sessions, many club have also adopted a flexible membership option for Walking Hockey Players

## ✓ Greater Publicity

By promoting suitable sessions to new or returning players and gaining positive PR, clubs have raised their profile in the local community

## ✓ Social Offering

Letting social groups and families (and generations) play together in a fun and friendly environment

## ✓ Additional Volunteers

With more individuals at the club the pool of potential volunteers increases

## ✓ Maximum Pitch Usage

By thinking practically about the space available in existing bookings, many clubs have found they don't need to book additional spaces and therefore get greater value for money

## ✓ More Players

Whilst many start with Walking Hockey, over time you will find they can filter through to your Back to Hockey or mainstream club sessions





# PREPARING FOR SESSIONS

Before you start to offer Walking Hockey sessions you need to consider your clubs own circumstance. Have you thought about these points?

## Club Analysis

- Do any of your club members have an affinity with the target group?
- Are they willing to contribute to setting up the sessions? By providing advice and support or being more hands on?
- Is the club committee on board with the idea to ensure the whole club contributes to making the sessions a success?
- Are there enough volunteers in the club or do you need to look externally?
- On what days and times is the pitch available? Could part of the pitch for an existing booking be used?



## Area Analysis

Research your local market to see if there is a need or latent requirement for Walking Hockey or does the marketing drive a new audience to you that doesn't know they want to do Walking Hockey until they find out about it.

Is there another club in your area who offer Walking Hockey or who plan to start this? What are their experiences? If there's a nearby club perhaps there's an opportunity to develop a partnership.

Are there other organisations in the area

that offer Walking activities? What do they offer and what are their experiences?

What is the community policy in respect to the target audience? What support can your local council and/or County Sports Partnership offer to the club?

## Financial Analysis

- Do you have to pay for the venue?
- Do you need to pay coaches or will they volunteer?
- Can you get old equipment to recycle?
- Do you have money available or do you need funding?
- Can you get sponsorship?
- Will you charge participants training/ membership fees?
- Can you get funding from your local council or County Sports Partnership?

## Area Analysis

Setting up Walking Hockey sessions should not be expensive. However be sure to come up with a project cost model that is attractive to and affordable for participants.

These are some of the items you might need as you set up your sessions, some of this you'll have already:



Promotional material



Hockey sticks



Hockey balls



Venue hire



Ad hoc equipment



Delivery staff costs

## Generating Support for the Club

It's important that you have club support for your activity so committee and other club members should be notified. This can be done by putting Walking Hockey on the agenda of your next meeting, or communicating with members via your usual communication channels (email, website, Facebook, newsletters, twitter etc).

Outline the benefits to your club. Good information to all members and other key people is important to boost the success of the sessions and ensuring Walking Hockey becomes integrated into your club.

If possible, establish a working group of people who are committed to

setting up Walking Hockey and who are responsible for making it happen. Ask around so you can access a variety of skills, we are sure you will find lots of people who are enthusiastic about the project!





## Target Groups

The next step is to understand who Walking Hockey sessions would appeal to. This might be;

**Former players** who had given up hockey due to age and / or injury

**People who had never played the sport before** but were looking for a gentle sport to help with recovery from illness or injury

**People who hadn't played the sport for years** who might be attracted to a new angle on a sport they liked previously

**Older people** who are looking for a walking sport

**People with New Year resolutions** involving fitness or weight loss for example

**Current members** who want to play a little more

**Families who currently can't make sessions due to childcare** – Walking Hockey is suitable for youngsters too so the whole family can play.

You may decide you want to target all or some of the above types of players. This is entirely up to you, based on the area you are based in and the resources you have available. For each profile begin to think about where you might find them, what they would like to achieve during the sessions and how you can integrate them further into the club.



## Why the Type of Coach or Volunteer is Important

For this target audience, individuals with good people skills, who are welcoming and engaging, are most important. Especially having a coach who can relate to and communicate with participants in a relaxed and friendly way.

Remember that the Walking Hockey participants will have a vast range of expectations and will almost certainly be nervous and / or apprehensive. So the small things like greeting them individually and creating sessions that

are relaxed, but well organised can make all the difference to their experience. If players have a great experience not only will they come back the following week, but they are likely to tell their friends and family as well.

## Insurance

**Check your club insurance: does it cover club members or all club activity? If you are not asking participants to become members of the club will your policy cover them?**

For more information contact your Insurance provider or speak to your England Hockey Relationship Manager.

## Support From Other Organisations

There are a number of other organisations who can help you to run sustainable Walking Hockey sessions. These include;

### Local Authority Sports Development Team

The team will be able to advise and support you in setting up and promoting your session, along with

providing information on other Walking activities in the borough and who the influential people are.

### County Sports Partnerships

Across England there are 44 County Sports Partnerships (CSP) who are a network of local organisations, including, Local Authorities, National Governing Bodies of Sport, Schools, Colleges and Universities, Professional

Sports Clubs and Public Health, working together to improve people's lives by growing participation in physical activity and sport.

You can find details of your CSP at: [www.cspnetwork.org/your-csp](http://www.cspnetwork.org/your-csp).

### Other Walking Groups

There will most likely be some other clubs that offer Walking activities in your area, which can sometimes simply be regular sessions rather than an

established "club". They are a great way to promote your activity and also to find out more information about the Walking landscape in your area.





# ➤ PROMOTING YOUR SESSIONS

Once your sessions are set up, promotion is vital to ensure they are well attended. What's really important to remember when trying to recruit players for your sessions, is to focus on people within and around your local community - they are your biggest audience and they are going to be the ones most likely to come to your sessions!

Also give yourselves a good amount of time (at least 3-4 weeks) to promote the sessions before you begin.

When talking about your sessions, keep your messages really simple as to why they should attend. Focus on;

1. Keeping active
2. Meeting new people
3. Having fun
4. Social & relaxed sessions



## How and Where to Promote

There are three overarching ways which will help you to promote your sessions:



### Word of mouth

England Hockey have developed an online portal where clubs can personalise marketing items like posters and social media content to support clubs in



### Local

promoting themselves in their local community. To access visit: [www.marketingportal.englishockey.co.uk](http://www.marketingportal.englishockey.co.uk)



### Online

## Word of Mouth

Make the most of your current members - use them to get the word out there about your Walking Hockey sessions! For example if you have 20 members, and they tell five friends/ colleagues/family members each, that's already 100 new people reached - It's as easy as that!

Don't just think of word of mouth as verbally telling someone about the sessions, they could pass on posters, share images over social media and even send an email to their address book

Don't underestimate the power of word of mouth - it's easy and FREE! A recent

survey discovered 94% of current players would recommend their club to people they know!

Once your sessions have started, you can encourage players to bring a friend to the next session

## Local Promotion

There are a variety of ways in which you can promote your sessions in the local community:

### Press

Send a press briefing out to your local papers as they always need local content. Also invite members of the paper down to have a go. Bromsgrove HC found

from speaking with players this was the most quoted source of awareness which suggests that participants in Walking Hockey relate with written media.

### Posters

Put posters up in and around your local community. When going in to speak about putting a poster up, tell them all about your sessions and ask them to promote

it to their customers, friends, family and members. Here are some examples of where you can put posters;

- Newsagents
- Supermarkets
- Community notice boards
- Schools - lots of parents/grandparents dropping their kids off
- Library
- Doctors Surgery
- Convenience shops
- Coffee Shops
- Tourist information centre
- Leisure Centres/other local sports clubs
- Pubs - great place for a social after a session

### Radio

Approach local radio and utilise any contacts you, the club or members have. As well as having time on the radio's sports shows, push to see if you can also

be on during the Breakfast or Drive Time shows to reach a wider audience. Again don't forget to invite the presenter and show support staff down to a session.

## Community Groups

Think about local community groups who have a similar target audience as you or who would also be interested in or benefit from attending your sessions.

This could range from Parish Groups to local Slimming World Groups or charities like Age UK

## Online

Using the internet is a great tool to help promote your Walking Hockey sessions - there are some simple steps to take to have the greatest effect.

**Update your club website** - make sure you are shouting about your Walking Hockey sessions on your website - news stories, pictures. And again, focus on the key messages; keeping active, meeting new people and social & relaxed fun sessions!

Remember the same rule applies online as it does with your posters - you're audience is still your local community and the surrounding areas. So when it comes to posting into groups such as Mumsnet, baby and child groups, weightwatchers and your local authority, find the one's near to your hockey club

**Does your club have social media accounts?** If so, utilise these to help you promote. Posting images is a great way to catch people's attention and to give whoever's reading it a call to action. What should they do after looking at the post, e.g. get in contact with, register, etc.

**Lastly, again utilise your existing members to help spread the word online!** Ask them to share and retweet posts that you have posted. They can change their profile and header pictures too, every little helps!

There are loads of online groups on social media, so get your message out to them!



# PLANNING & DELIVERING SESSIONS

## Where and When to Run Sessions

To begin with the most ideal time for Walking Hockey sessions to take place is when the club is active and peers are also training / playing. As well as the obvious benefit that this will help integrate the sessions and members into the club, other advantages include:

- It will be easier to recruit volunteers for Walking Hockey sessions if they're training / playing immediately before or after your sessions
- You could save on further pitch hire fees if you share pitch space with other training sessions
- If the sessions take place before or alongside Back To Hockey sessions, those players who might want to progress can get a feel for the sessions.

## Format / Adaptations

The premise of Walking Hockey is a simple one: players can only walk, players do what they can manage, and the sessions are about enjoyment as opposed to competition.

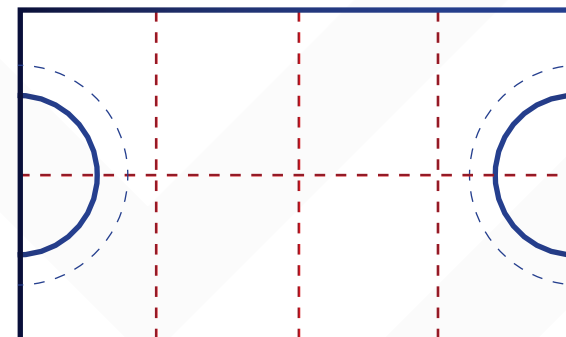
Clubs are encouraged to deliver sessions based around the games not drills philosophy with the only difference being that walking is encouraged as opposed to running. Alan and Bromsgrove's philosophy when it comes to coaching Walking Hockey players is to facilitate the sessions so that participants develop their skills and find out what works best for them.

For ideas around activities to deliver during hockey sessions visit: [www.englishhockey.co.uk/hockeyhub](http://www.englishhockey.co.uk/hockeyhub)

One important factor to think about when delivering Walking Hockey sessions is

around the numbers of players on the pitch and the space required. Bromsgrove Hockey Club have found that during Walking Hockey sessions compared to sessions where players are able to run the pitch sizes are likely to be smaller and games which are around 4/5 a-side work best.

The following diagram demonstrates how Bromsgrove Hockey Club split each quarter of a pitch in half when playing 4 or 5 a side games. This allows up to 8 games to take place and can accommodate 64-80 players.



4 v 4 or 5 v 5

## Simple Rules For Game Play

The game should be as true to hockey as possible as that is the experience players want. Here are a few pointers to get you started, but you can adapt them to suit your group. For a more in depth version of the rules please visit:

[www.englishockey.co.uk/walkinghockey](http://www.englishockey.co.uk/walkinghockey)

- Players have to walk which means one heel must be on the ground at all times.
- Adapt the pitch to suit the number of players and their level of experience and ability.
- Play small sided games (4-5 a side)
- Use larger, lighter balls such as Quicksticks balls or Rush Hockey balls.
- Goals can be scored from anywhere on the pitch. Although you may want to introduce scoring areas if required to stop players hitting the ball from too far away.
- A penalty goal is awarded if a player prevents the ball from entering the goal with any part of their body.
- The 'self pass' rule is included
- At a re-start the opposition must be at least three meters from the ball.
- There will be no physical contact between players.
- If the ball hits a player's foot a foul will only be awarded if an unfair advantage is gained.
- If the defence commits a foul within five meters of the goal, the ball is moved five meters from the goal to take a free hit.

## Equipment

Most hockey clubs will have enough suitable equipment to get them going. However many clubs delivering Walking Hockey have found the following can further improve a players experience;

- Using larger, lighter balls such as Quicksticks or Rush Hockey Balls. These balls can be purchased from [www.youthsportdirect.org](http://www.youthsportdirect.org)
- Having a few extra long sticks for those players who might have restricted mobility. Asking your current members if they have any old sticks they are willing to donate is a great way to find additional sticks!
- Smaller goals as there are no goalies and you are likely to have multiple pitches going at once. England Hockey's Target goal, is lightweight, can be assembled and dismantled in less than 2 minutes and folds down to store in a compact carry bag. These goals can be purchased from [www.youthsportdirect.org](http://www.youthsportdirect.org)





## Session Structure

| The overview of a typical session can look like this:

### ● Warm up

Have players walk across the pitch and back passing the ball to each other, encouraging them to talk to different players each week to emphasise the social nature of the sessions.

### ● Game based activities

Players attend as they want to play hockey, have lots of touches of the ball and not be standing around waiting for a go. Check out The Hockey Hub ([www.englishhockey.co.uk/hockeyhub](http://www.englishhockey.co.uk/hockeyhub)) for lots of ideas and activities you can deliver to your Walking Group.

### ● Matches

Keep them small sided so players get lots of touches of the ball and are constantly involved. Ensure the teams are balanced and rotate opposition regularly. You may find some pitches want to use a Quicksticks Ball, whilst other a standard hockey ball. This is absolutely fine!

### ● Post session social

We know people attend Walking Hockey because it's social and there's an opportunity to meet new friends - so make sure you try to deliver on this! Can the club facilitate cake and a drink in the club house, local pub or cafe? Let players know about this beforehand so they can make suitable arrangements

## Integrating Players to be Club Members

It's important that your club considers your Walking Hockey players as members of the club, consider subsidised rates for them to join as full members.

For example, ensure Walking Hockey players are invited to participate in all non-hockey activities your club organises for its members – such as club socials, quizzes, Club Day etc. Invite them to come and support home matches as well

Also where possible invite them to support the running of the club: there could be voluntary / committee positions that are willing to carry out.



# ➤ EVALUATION & CONTINUATION

**Once you get into the swing of your sessions, the challenge is to keep improving them in order to keep members and possibly expand membership. A number of items worth evaluating are:**

- Do you adapt the session to the needs of the individual?
- Are you prepared to change the session if it's not working?
- Are your coaches/volunteers in the right roles?
- Do you regularly communicate with your players?
- Do you receive regular feedback from your players?
- Are you promoting the session in the right places? And frequently enough?
- Do you need any further specialist equipment for any of your members?
- Does your session structure and game format suit your members?
- Do you need more volunteers or coaches?
- Do you from time to time visit other sports clubs who offer similar activities to share best practices?
- Are you still promoting Walking Hockey within the club?
- If some of your members have stopped attending have you found out why? Encourage them to return if possible

## What Next?

**Your Walking Hockey session can become a staple in what your club offers to the community. However over time you may find some of your players may want to play Walking Hockey against other groups or clubs. This is great news!**

Your local EH Relationship Manager can advise you of what other local clubs are running sessions and support in the introductions and set up of activities.

You may decide to invite a local club along to play against or host a mini Walking Hockey Festival. Just remember why the players attend and what they enjoy most about the sessions and ensure this carries over to ensure the best experience.

We hope you find this guide useful as you look to set up and offer Walking Hockey sessions at your club. Please let us know if you're intending to set up sessions as we'd love to keep in touch and create a network of clubs so we can all support each other.





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