

Summary of Changes to the 2025-26 Area League Regulations

While the core framework of the Regulations remains stable, the 2025-26 update introduces a much more granular promotion-and-relegation system, retitles and reshapes the player-eligibility section, and tightens several administrative rules.

Reg #	Regulation	Comment / Nature of Change
Glossary	Definitions	Adds new terms: "Cascade Effect", "Higher/Lower Division", "Parallel Division", "Ranking", "Reprieve", "Vacancy". Updates several existing definitions for clarity
1	Introduction	Restructured with clearer section headings (1.1-1.5) and improved organisation
2	Management	Clarifies ALMC diversity expectations and committee appointment process (2.4.1-2.4.3).
3	Entry into the League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2025-26 regulations have added a sub-section on "Club & Team Entry" which clarifies the process and requirements for entry. A new clause (3.1.7) has been added requiring club representation at meetings called by the ALMC and a timely response to requests for information. The fine for failure to return perpetual trophies is now £100 (T3)
4	The Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Cascade Effect" automatic knock-on relegations/reprieves when NL interaction occurs (4.5.5 (c)) Vacancy-filling hierarchy clarified (4.5.8)
5	Fixtures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced fixture management procedures with specific timelines for pre/post-Christmas matches (5.2.1) Deadline for changes to fixture details increased from 10 to 21 days New - Home teams must contact the opposition between 10 and 21 days before the fixture to confirm match details to their opposition
6	Matchday Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1.5 Designated bench area must be at least 5 metres from any spectator area. Substitutes and officials on the team sheet must remain in the vicinity of their bench area (unless warming up/down) and no other persons are allowed in the designated bench area. At Grades 4 and 5 only this requirement may be varied with discretion.
7	Player Eligibility – Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender clause revised to match Player Categories in line with new EH Trans and Non-Binary Participation Policy. Dual Registration – Added clarification on dual registration approval requirements (7.4) Weekly registration deadline introduced (7.6.1) and explicit final date kept at 1 Feb (7.6.2) Transfer process timing clarified – opposing-club non-action triggers ALMC decision after 10 days (7.7.1 (b))

Reg #	Regulation	Comment / Nature of Change
8	Player Eligibility – Team Selection	RESTRUCTURED – renamed from "Fair Selection" with simplified structure and refined doubling up rules (see detailed notes below).
9	Teams, Match Sheets & Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At all Grades both teams must complete their Matchsheet by 2000 hrs on the day of the match (removed separate Grade 4-5 timelines) • Match Officials and any team officials must be included on the match sheet
10	Dress	No substantive changes
11	Umpires & Match Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptable minimum accreditation requirement raised at Grade 3 to Level 1 Assessed • Simplified umpire replacement procedures
12	Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team manager (or captain) is responsible for the conduct all club officials not in the spectator area. • The section on yellow/red cards (12.2) has been expanded to better define player and club responsibilities regarding suspensions
13	Postponement or Abandonment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rearrangement deadline is now 36 days for Grades 2-5. • If a large number of fixtures need rearranging the ALMC may set a block fixture move date. • The decision-making authority for postponements and abandonments has been clarified. If umpires are unassessed the team captains will make the decision.
14	Failure to Honour/Forfeiture	Added requirement for ALDS notification procedures – the forfeiting team must <i>not</i> update GMS themselves; ALDS does so (14.1.3) .
15	Breach of Regulations & Penalties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added 7-day reporting deadline for regulation breaches (15.4) • Penalties are now more clearly defined in Appendix 5
16	Appeals	RESTRUCTURED Procedures and timelines moved to Appendix 6.

8. Player Eligibility – Team Selection

Element	2025-26 Position	Change Type & Impact
Structure & Terminology	Section renamed Team Selection ; with supporting guidance in Appendix 4 – Player Selection Guidance	Renaming signals a broader focus beyond “fairness” to holistic roster management; appendix format makes practical examples more accessible.
Aims (8.1)	Aims reordered but substantively identical; emphasis on avoiding “unselectable” players retained	Clarification only.
Doubling-up Conditions (8.4/8.5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Max squad size when doubling-up rises from 12 to 13 players (8.4.2 (d)) Explicit per-player limit of two games per match-day (8.4.2 (f)) 	Slight relaxation (extra player) but tighter workload cap; clubs must track appearances closely.
Grade-specific GK rules	Largely unchanged but table corrected and cross-referenced (8.5.2-8.5.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies SXP trigger points. Reduces ambiguity for emergency GK cover. Intention to encourage outfield players to double up in goal for a lower team to help with GK shortages
Selection Exemption Pass (SXP)	Examples expanded	Gives ALMC clearer precedents; speeds approval decisions.

Appendices

Appx #	Title	What changed & why it matters
1	League Titles & Divisions	Minor seasonal updates only.
2	England Hockey Policies	UPDATED: List expanded to include "EH Trans and Non-Binary Participation Policy" reflecting current EH policy framework
3	Variations to FIH Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEW: Optional format for Premier Division games only - four quarters of 17½ minutes 30 seconds with no stoppage for short corners, implemented if requested by Home team (Appendix 3, Rule 5.1) • Suspension-timing clauses moved here for consistency.
4	Player Selection Guidance (was <i>Fair Selection & Eligibility Guidance</i>)	MAJOR REVISION: Complete replacement of "Fair Selection & Player Eligibility Guidance Notes" with streamlined "Player Selection Guidance" focusing on practical scenarios rather than complex selection hierarchies
5	Standard Penalties & Fines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised penalties for a number of breaches. • Tariff tables re-indexed to match new section numbers.
6	Appeal Procedure	COMPLETE RESTRUCTURE: Comprehensive 6-page appeal procedure document replacing simple appeal notice template, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Detailed initial appeal process ◦ Further appeal procedures to EH Appeal Panel ◦ Specific timelines and deposit requirements ◦ Oral hearing procedures ◦ Decision-making criteria and outcomes
7	Duties of Appointed Match Officials	Added timing duties cross-reference (aligns with Umpire changes).