

WHAT MAKES A GREAT CLUB?



**ENGLAND
HOCKEY**



Foreword

Sally Munday – England Hockey Chief Executive

Our vision is for England to be a 'Nation Where Hockey Matters'. A nation where hockey is talked about at dinner tables, in playgrounds and public houses, up and down the country. A nation where our sport is on the back pages of our newspapers, where children dream of scoring a goal for England's senior hockey team, and where our performance stirs up emotion amongst the many, not the few.

Clubs are the heart of this and the place where most people get to play regularly and fall in love with the sport. We believe every club plays a critical role in the future success of the sport by providing opportunities for players at all levels to reach their own goals.

At England Hockey our aim is to provide ideas, inspiration, tools and advice to enable clubs to provide an excellent experience for their players and members.

Since 2012 we have seen unprecedented growth at junior level in clubs, with numbers almost doubling, and new initiatives such as Walking Hockey and Back to Hockey introducing a more varied range of ways to play club hockey. Ultimately, we believe growth in the sport is critical to the sustained health of the sport for generations to come.



The Guide

Background

The information contained in this guide is the result of a significant amount of research and consultation with hundreds of clubs. Many clubs will already be familiar with the themes outlined throughout.

The guide forms part of a range of tools and resources that are available to support your club.

We know that every club has a unique set of circumstances and so this guide sets out a framework to provoke discussion.

There is no perfect approach and many ways for clubs to be successful, so it isn't possible to provide one template to fit all.



Club Context

Running a club takes vision and drive, and it can often be difficult for leaders to balance short-term priorities with longer-term objectives. Balancing the ambitions of different parties within the club and creating a vision that others buy into is critical to success. Excellent leadership can encourage increased recruitment of the right people into the right roles on the committee to ensure the longer-term success of the club.

Currently, less than 10% of our country's hockey clubs own their own facilities. Most clubs hire facilities at educational sites or leisure centres and arrangements at these facilities vary greatly. 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.

Whilst the traditional heart of club hockey is adult league matches, we are seeing some rapid and fundamental shifts in the way that people are accessing hockey. Junior sections are now often larger than adult sections in many clubs and players are available less regularly than they once were as societal habits change. We are seeing more flexible and accessible options such as Back to Hockey, Walking Hockey and Masters Hockey, as well as an appetite for more summer and social hockey from players of all ages. Adult leagues are in good health but are not the only option that many players want available to them.

This change in habits in turn creates knock-on challenges in terms of membership structures, volunteering models in clubs and club communication methods. Inherently, clubs need to adapt to continue to prosper – a challenge which hundreds of hockey clubs have been addressing with great success, but this remains an ever-present challenge for club leaders.

Increasingly, lives, particularly for young people, are about experiences, which means that being part of a club is about more than just what happens on the pitch. The broader

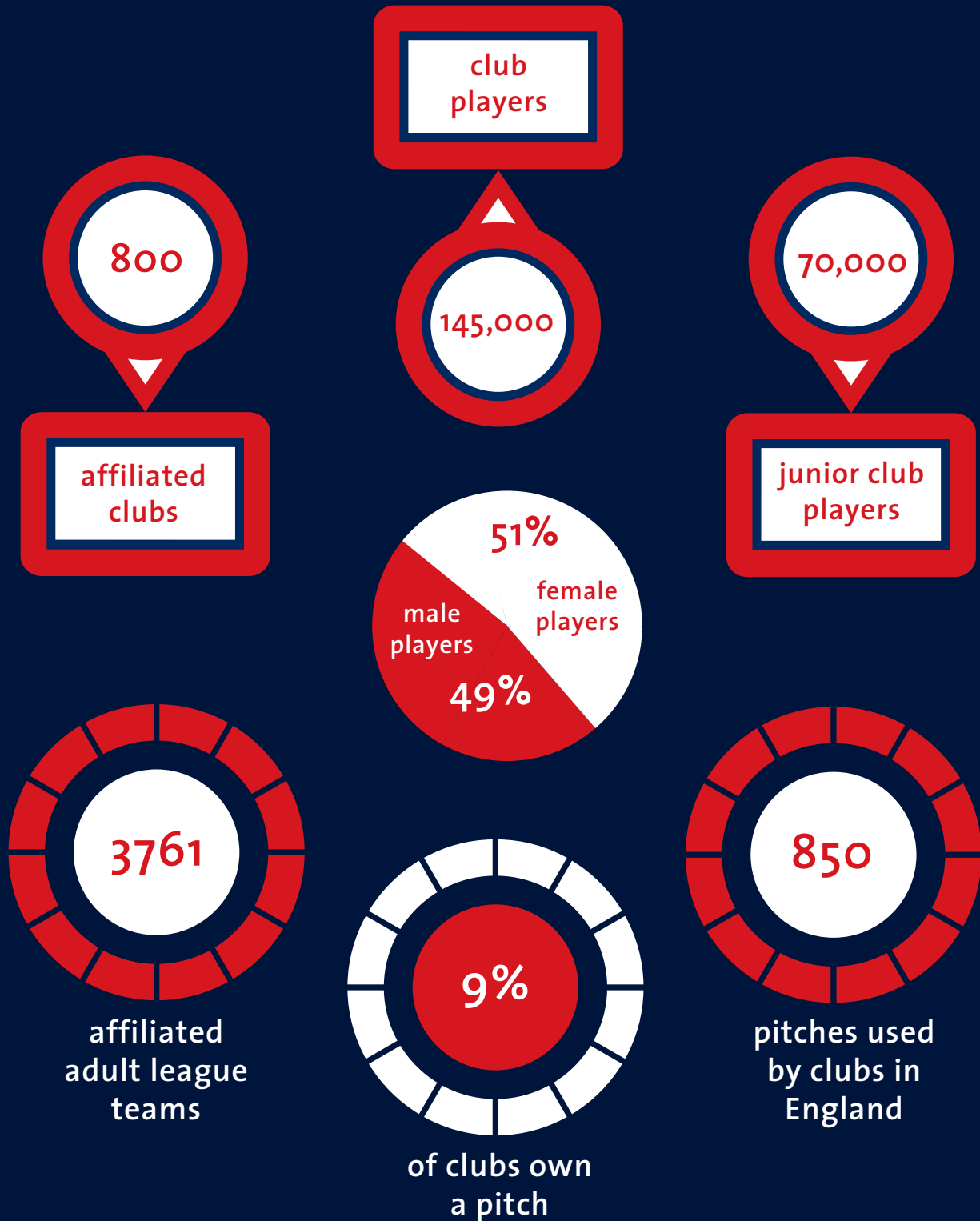
experience of being part of a club in terms of the social opportunity and development opportunities need to be considered as part of the club offer. Year after year the player surveys place the club being friendly, welcoming and social as the most important aspects of club life, ahead of quality of facilities, coaching or standard of play.

Having a local presence is key. Player feedback has indicated that players like their club to have a local presence. This can be in a variety of ways such as coaching in local schools or ensuring that results are in the local paper. Many clubs aim to have a presence in local activities such as university freshers' fairs, local town events or other community social activities to raise the profile of the club. Active social media is now a standard expectation for players and parents, and can be a great tool to ensure the club exists online as well as physically on the pitch. All of this is important when aiming to influence local decision makers to support hockey, be it through facilities or school provision.

Finally, clubs need to cater for a range of expectations in their membership. For many players (but not all) progression is a key part of being in a club and the need to provide opportunities for development is essential for most clubs. This can require ongoing adaptation of club provision that caters for players' needs through extra opportunities or supporting the other ways that the player could progress at other clubs or in the Player Pathway. The same is true for coaches, umpires and administrators.

Whilst these themes are true across almost all clubs, every club is different due to its local circumstances. This could be different stages of development, different relationships locally with facilities or partners and different playing memberships. Whatever the size of your club this guide aims to provide a way of thinking that can support growth and progression for the long term.

State of the Nation 2018



Player Feedback – based on 10,000 players surveyed, clubs in England have changed in the following ways:

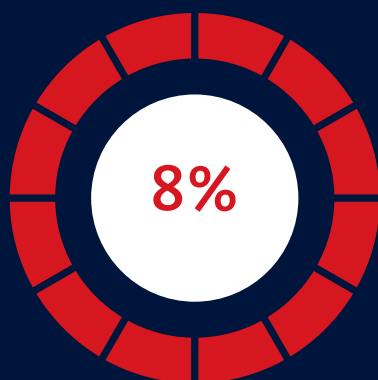
Top 3 reasons to be a club member:



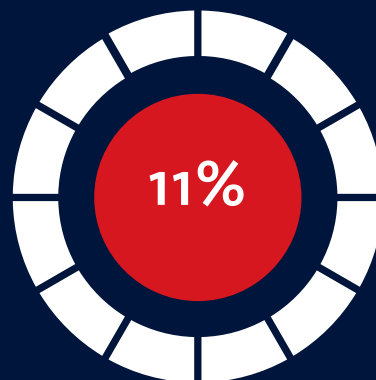
Top 3 things club players are most satisfied with:



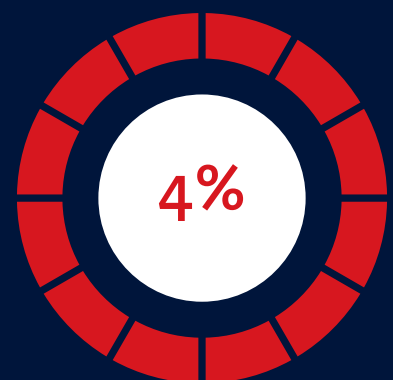
Between the eve of the London Olympics in 2012 and the Vitality Hockey Women's World Cup in 2018, clubs in England have changed...



fewer clubs



more women's
adult teams



fewer men's
adult teams

5–10 year olds in
clubs grown by
120%

11–16 year olds in
clubs grown by
80%

Male
participation
grown by 30%

Female
participation
grown by 55%

How does this compare with your club?

What Makes A Great Club?

The best clubs aim to give every player the best experience of our sport.
Those that do have more, better, happier players in a sustainable club environment.

The seven key ingredients that make a 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, welcoming and social



6. Being local with strong community connections



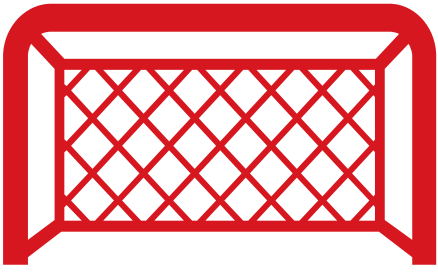
7. Stretching and developing those that want it



1. Having great leadership

Great leadership is about having the right people in the decision-making positions. These people will have the good of the whole club in mind and will be prepared to make sound long-term decisions. They will be accountable for the governance of the club (finances and policies) but also seek to lead in a way that supports the vision and values of the club. The best leaders seek to lead the club by engaging people in decisions and encouraging new people to get involved.

- What is the vision for your club? How do you communicate this to everyone in the club? Is it understood and bought into?
- What do you need to do to achieve your vision? What resources do you need – people, budget, facilities, partnerships, marketing?
- Does your club have a development plan in place?
- What is the leadership structure within the club?
- How long have your leaders had their roles?
- What skill sets do you need to make your club successful? How do you identify and recruit future leaders and do you have a succession plan?
- Is the leadership within your club as effective as it could be? How could it be improved?
- How are tasks delegated throughout the club?
- How does your club communicate with members? How do you get feedback and act on it?
- How often does your leadership team consult with the different types of members?
- What information do you use to regularly make decisions within leadership meetings?
- Do you have the right organisational policies in place? When were they last reviewed?
- Do you have good financial controls and a medium-term plan?
- Do you network with other clubs to share good practice or attend local forums?



2. Having appropriate and sustainable facilities

Appropriate facilities are a fundamental requirement for hockey and an important factor in player satisfaction. Clubs should aim to access facilities that are appropriate and sustainable for the long run. Ideally, this should include the room to improve and develop as the club grows.

Most clubs are not asset owning and therefore there is a need to develop excellent partnerships with the providers of the facilities that they use. This is a gap for most clubs with arrangements often short term in nature and outlook.

Communication is mainly to the bookings person, with limited commitment from the owner to the hockey club for the long run. Many clubs don't realise or utilise the long-term financial investment they have made and use this to negotiate better deals. 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 you 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 want to access local funding opportunities.

For those that do asset own, we need to ensure the facilities are sustainable for the long run with maximised use, robust maintenance and long-term financial planning. England Hockey does a lot of work behind the scenes aiming to support the long-term provision of facilities and working together with us is key for your club to ensure future provision for hockey. You can contact the facilities team at England Hockey on facilities@englandhockey.co.uk.

Link to: [England Hockey Facilities Strategy](#)



- What are the state of the pitches you use? When are they due to be replaced? Are you aware of the facility maintenance programme?
- How much money do you pay in pitch rental per year? Do you have a priority booking arrangement or partnership agreement in place?
- What do you have an influence on in terms of your facilities?
- Do you have a long-term commitment to the pitch/changing/social space you use? If so, what does this look like?
- How senior is the person you deal with at the venue you use? Do you know the owners as well as the operators?
- What are your plans for facilities in the future (SWOT)? Are these plans viable and realistic, and is England Hockey aware?
- Is the community around you changing and can this provide opportunities – are there housing plans, planning issues or other potential sites?
- For asset owners, are you maximising the potential at your current facility?
- Do the financial structures in your multi-sport club ensure hockey revenue (often one of the larger sections) is fairly treated?
- Playing Pitch Strategy – did you club complete the survey and input into the supply and demand for hockey? Have you identified future needs?





3. Having inspired and effective people within the club

This is about the people who make playing hockey possible: coaches, umpires, organisers, captains and anyone who does anything to help the club run. As with playing habits, volunteering habits are also changing with increasing amounts of sporadic or ad hoc volunteering that make it a constant challenge for clubs to continue to increase what they do.

The best clubs have a very clear idea of what tasks need to be done and when they need to be done. They aren't wedded to traditional roles but adapt their structures to the availability and skills of their people. New helpers are supported and invited to take on tasks that are often small to begin with and that they are confident to do. Support and guidance is provided and people are supported until they are confident in their role. On a longer-term basis, motivating and engaging people so they feel valued and part of a team is required.

In clubs where roles are paid, careful consideration is given to the remit and management of these roles with a financial and employment model related to the roles. Paying coaches is well embedded and some medium and larger clubs are supporting key administrative roles with modest payments. This approach can be successful if it is clearly thought out and doesn't undermine the 'volunteer' culture. Some clubs that have carefully implemented paid roles see increases in volunteering as the fear of assuming too much responsibility as a new volunteer is reduced by the presence of a role that is clearly accountable.



- Do you know what needs to be done for your club to run effectively? Some clubs know what they need to do (and when) but it's not effectively done. Who currently does this?
- What specific skill sets do you need to make your club function effectively?
- Where does your club workforce come from and how do you approach them? Are there opportunities for improvement or untapped potential? Does your club utilise your associated workforce (e.g. parents or family members)?
- Why do people in your club volunteer? What reward and recognition do they want?
- Are there areas where there is an over reliance on one individual to cover many tasks? Is there a succession plan?
- Are there roles where there is only one person in the club who knows or is trained to do this (single point of failure)? Is there a succession plan?
- Where roles are paid is there clarity in management and employment structures? What is the long-term strategy with paying roles and how financially sustainable is it?
- How do you provide training and development opportunities if people want them? Do you budget for this?
- Do you maximise the use of technology to reduce volunteer workload and increase effectiveness?





4. Providing different ways to play that meet players' needs

Our player research and wider knowledge of participation habits have made it clear that behaviours are changing. Many players don't 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. Lives are busier and the desire for great experiences ever increasing. Club hockey competes with other leisure and family commitments and needs to meet expectations if people are to keep coming back.

Junior sections have grown significantly in many clubs with a lot of growth in younger age groups at 5–13 years old where numbers have doubled since the London 2012 Olympics. Adapting provision here has been essential with clubs adding more sessions across the week and utilising pitch space effectively at younger age groups.

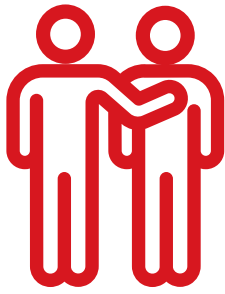
As with other team sports there is a natural drop off through the teenage years. This occurs alongside the transition to 11-a-side hockey and through the teenage years as the competition for young people's time intensifies with academic pressure and competition from other activities. Many clubs are working hard to address this through improving the transition to adult teams and providing opportunities to just play for those that want a more casual experience.

For adults, Saturday league hockey is healthy but it is not the only thing we should try to offer. Different ways to play such as Masters, Back to Hockey, Walking Hockey, Intra-club games nights, Pay & Play and Flyerz Hockey all aim to provide opportunities for groups that want a different experience from club hockey. The potential of summer hockey is also significant and a way for clubs to engage players who may not want to commit to league hockey.

In future, embedding this diversification in club provision will become more common and adapting membership models to treat these players as club members will be necessary.

Linked to all of this is the membership offer. Increasingly, more flexible membership packages are required based on how much and what sort of hockey you are getting at the club.

- How many members have you got? How much do they play?
- What ages do you lose members? Why do they stop playing for the club?
- Where would you like to see more members within your playing structure?
- Do you do targeted recruitment or general recruitment?
- If I wanted to play hockey at your club what opportunities would be available to me?
- What is the demographic of your club and how does it relate to the local community?
- What are the membership options for your club? Is it good value for money?
- Does your club have plans in place for retaining the existing membership and recruiting new members?
- How many new club members do you need to recruit each season to replace those that leave?
- Do you contact the leavers to gain feedback as to why they left? Do you act on the feedback?
- What 'informal' activity do you offer? Do you just offer formal training and Saturday league hockey?



5. Being friendly, welcoming and social

Player feedback is clear: having a friendly, welcoming and sociable club is the most important factor in being a club member. This is crucial in retaining members as well as making new members feel welcome.

The culture of the sport is friendly but being friendly, welcoming and social shouldn't be taken for granted and needs to be worked on.

It's worth asking newer members how they felt the experience of joining the club was and considering how it could be improved.

The single biggest reason for attracting new players is still word of mouth – so it's safe to say your reputation precedes you.

When considering how to improve your provision it's important to think about the size of the different groups in the club. Adult club social events can often be well established – quizzes, annual dinners etc – but junior and parents' experiences relatively under-developed. There is a huge opportunity here to grow the family at your club through a broader range of activities to engage them.

Increasingly, this provision extends in social media with many clubs exploiting social media to make up for the lack of physical club facilities. This can be powerful and engaging, particularly when many clubs rarely all converge on the same venue on the same day.

- What social activities do you currently do? Who does this engage?
- What experience are you trying to create for the different types of club members (e.g. existing adult and junior members or informal members such as Back to Hockey players)?
- How would someone become aware of your club? What would this initial contact look like? How would I communicate with your club if I was interested?
- What is the experience for new people? How would they rate their experience with you so far?
- How many new members do you retain after a season?
- How do you use social media? What is used for internal communication and how do you present yourself externally?
- How do you stay in contact with past players, particularly players that leave to go to university?
- What is your current membership model? Does this cater for people that only want to be involved in the club socially?



6. Being local with strong community connections

Feedback from our player research strongly indicates that they wanted their club to be part of the fabric of the local community. For many it was a key way to connect with their local community and feel part of the place in which they live. They like to know that their club is known, relevant and visible in the local community.

Local connections are critical when attracting players through tools such as club-school links or links with other local community activities or groups. The best clubs also use social media effectively to strongly engage with key local organisations to promote the club.

Having a local presence helps support bigger strategic connections that can support your club to develop. Do you know who your local MP is or the bursar or governors at the schools you work with? Can you influence the local planning provision to benefit your club?

Having a local presence is critical when it comes to attracting sponsorship, as most local sponsors will want to know what local visibility you have. How many people are on your membership database that they can speak to (in line with data protection regulations!) and how often are you in the local media?

- How does your club currently engage with the local community? Where are the gaps?
- Does your approach differ depending on who you talk to? Do you utilise your membership to do this effectively?
- Are you politically aware who the important people are in your community and what they could do for your club – university vice-chancellors, headmaster, local MPs, town councillors, directors of sport, chief leisure officer, school sport managers etc?
- How do you approach sponsorship within your club? Do you have a strategy or agreed approach? What does the sponsor get in return?
- How visible is your club in the local community?
- Are you aware what opportunities are available to engage the local community and businesses?



7. Stretching and developing those that want it

The best clubs look to provide all players, umpires, coaches and volunteers with appropriate opportunities to develop specific hockey skills or take on greater responsibility. This 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 Player Pathway or England Hockey training and development opportunities.

For players this may mean finding ways to provide greater support 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 both in the Player Pathway and potentially with other clubs. 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 do you identify talent within your players/coaches/umpires? What do you do with this information?
- Who leads on supporting individuals that want to progress? What training/support do they have?
- How do you differentiate in your training sessions? Could a player who wanted to train more often do so?
- Do you need to link into other clubs to ensure there is the most complete talent pathway for your players, umpires and coaches?
- Do you have anything in place to develop your aspiring coaches and umpires? How does this work?
- How do you support players that come in and out of the Player Pathway?
- How do you support and develop members in administration roles?

How Can England Hockey Help?

England Hockey is here to help your club benefit from more, better, happier players. We have staff and online resources available to support your club. We want 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 **Relationship 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 also been developing and improving our online support that is available via the Club Portal. All clubs affiliate via this portal but improvements are coming online later in 2018 that will make this the online destination for tools and advice for your club.

You can access the Club Portal by contacting clubs@englandhockey.co.uk.







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