



National Umpiring

4 Year Plan

2017 – 2021

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Introduction

Purpose

The Irish Hockey Umpires Association (IHUA) has produced '**The National Umpiring 4 Year Plan**' as the framework that will support us and our key partners to take a much needed new approach to the education, recruitment, retention of umpires and to enhance umpiring through grassroots initiatives and a recognised umpire qualification.

Our 4 Year Plan gives Hockey Ireland and the Branches, an opportunity to implement a number of strategies to prevent numbers from further regressing and to encourage more young people into umpiring.

Background

The IHUA strives to invest in all our members: as umpires, umpire assessors, umpire coaches and umpire managers. In the last few seasons, we have embarked on an intensive process to have a common approach to umpiring throughout all Provinces within Ireland to achieve a more consistent product.

A number of initiatives have been developed and implemented:

- an defined umpire pathway to encourage and support progression
- a common grading system
- an exclusive umpire development website and appointment system
- umpire assessor and umpire coaches courses
- a national umpire briefing for all umpires (annually)
- a discussion session with EYHL Club Coaches (annually)

Drivers for these initiatives can be identified as follows:

- The same basic principles and interpretations and delivery of the rules
- The standardisation in the qualifications that umpires can achieve
- Consistency in the management of the game

Role of the Irish Hockey Umpires Association (IHUA)

The role of the IHUA is to strategically lead on all areas of umpiring throughout Ireland.



The IHUA is responsible for appointing umpires to all matches within Irish national competitions and ensuring these umpires have suitably qualified support (umpire coaches, umpire assessors and umpire managers) for their personal development and progression opportunities. In addition, IHUA may be requested to make suitable nominations for EHF and FIH tournaments.

IHUA is responsible for the recruitment and development of suitably qualified and experienced umpire coaches and umpires managers to assist in the development of their umpires. The IHUA shall strive to support these coaches and assessors and managers, providing them with appointments and opportunities to develop their expertise and provide fulfilment.

To summarise, IHUA is tasked to lead in umpire development and appointing umpires to national competitions.

In order to fund the development of umpiring and the strategic objectives and targets of the National Umpiring Development Strategy, IHUA will seek the necessary funds from Hockey Ireland (HI) through the annual funding it receives for the game. The IHUA will also seek to raise any additional development funding through its own initiatives.

Key Partners

Hockey Ireland



Hockey Ireland is the National Governing Body for the sport of field hockey in Ireland, governing the 32 counties. It is responsible for the management and overall development of all areas of the sport. Four affiliated Branches govern the sport at provincial level.

Irish Hockey is the affiliated National Association (NA) to our international partners (EHF and FIH) and is therefore the recipient and the sender of all formal messages.

The Branches

The Branches (Leinster, Ulster, Munster and Connacht) are responsible for hockey and its promotion and development at provincial level.



The Branch via its various committees runs all competitions within their province including senior men's and women's league and cup competitions, senior and junior schools competitions, junior club hockey leagues and youth hockey competitions.



The IHUA are committed to working closely with the Branches to ensure the development of umpiring at grassroots level, through delivery of Introductory Umpire Courses and Youth Umpiring Programmes.



The European Hockey Federation (EHF)

The EHF is the governing body tasked to oversee the delivery of hockey across Europe. It is responsible for the competitions within which Ireland's international umpires and umpires managers can develop on the international stage.



Its responsibility is inclusive of the appointing of suitably qualified and experienced umpires, umpires managers and technical staff to all matches in the European Hockey Programme.

Additionally, the EHF currently has an Umpire Development Programme (3 year programme) whereby IHUA can annually nominate umpires between the ages of 20-30 years old to participate.

The aim of the programme is to provide high level coaching and fast-track opportunities to future potential FIH Grade 1 umpires and beyond (World Level).

The International Hockey Federation (FIH)



The FIH is the world level governing body of hockey. It oversees the delivery of hockey from continental level through to world championships and the Olympic Games.

The FIH is responsible for the appointment of suitably qualified umpires, umpires managers and technical officers to all matches in the FIH Programme.

Strategic Umpiring Aims

Our aim is to promote, develop, support and improve umpiring throughout Ireland. The IHUA fully recognises the important role that good umpiring contributes to the game of hockey. One of our major focuses must be to increase the number of umpires throughout all provinces as well as decrease the average age.

Throughout Ireland the following figures are applicable:

- There are 2 umpires under the age of 25 years old
- There are 92 male umpires, with an average age of 48 years old
- There are only 33 female umpires, with an average age of 45 years old

The problem is at its greatest at provincial level with the average age of umpires officiating the top leagues being incredibly high, and matches not receiving appointments on a weekly basis.

For example on Saturday 5th March 2017;

Ulster Women's Premier League – average age of 57 years old

Ulster Men's Premier League – average age of 47 years old

Leinster Women's 1st Division - average age of 52 years old

Leinster Men's 1st Division - average age of 45 years old

Munster Women's 1st Division - average age of 48 years old

Munster Men's 1st Division - average age of 46 years old

From the figures presented above, it is clear that there is an absolute need to tackle this yearly deterioration. It is for this reason, that the IHUA has developed a number of strategic objectives have to correct the problems both in the short and long term.

Strategic Umpiring Objectives

1. Use the Umpire Development Pathway to create a framework for long term sustainable success and a consistent approach to umpiring.
2. Through education and training, to increase the understanding of the importance of umpires to the game of hockey.
3. To provide an environment to encourage more people into umpiring which is unequivocally supported by the national and provincial associations.
4. The Introductory Umpire Course should become the single nationally recognised umpire qualification for all umpires throughout Ireland.
5. A National Umpire Development Officer and Provincial Umpire Development Officers are required to drive grassroots umpiring initiatives at national and provincial level, club level and within schools.
6. To provide the necessary guidance and support to ensure the implementation of a new Young Umpire Award at provincial level, in order to achieve a sustainable umpiring structure and future.
7. To implement a more attractive expense structure for umpires, assessors and coaches; to recruit and retain umpires in both the short and longer term and to ensure an essential mentoring and support for the personal development of all umpires.
8. Any umpire officiating in any match in Ireland has a registration number and the minimum Introductory Umpire qualification.
9. To ensure that umpires, umpire assessors, umpire coaches and umpire managers are given the best opportunity to maximise their potential and achieve international umpiring success at the highest level through national and EHF umpire programmes.

The Objectives Explained

1. Use the National Umpire Pathway to create a framework for long term sustainable success and a consistent approach to umpiring.

Umpiring is a critical element of our game but unfortunately each and every province has seen a significant decline in umpire numbers, year on year. This has become such a big an issue that the crisis point has already been passed and the crisis will only deepen further until urgent action is taken at both national and provincial level.

The National Umpire Pathway was introduced in 2015 and has provided a defined structure and a clear progression ladder for all umpires as well as improving the overall playing experience through the provision of more consistent approach to umpiring. Umpires of all ages are very important to our structure and the Umpire Pathway however one major current risk is the ever increasing average age of umpires and the current rising levels are not sustainable in the short term never mind the longer term.

However, IHUA are dedicated to further developing the Umpire Pathway and believe that it is essential that we a concentrate our efforts to encouraging younger people into umpiring through provincial initiatives.

Recommendation: Hockey Ireland and the Provinces should work with IHUA to help recruit and retain umpires as well as introduce grassroots initiatives to encourage younger people by 1st September 2017.

2. Through education and training, to increase the understanding of the importance of umpires to the game of hockey.

The critical element of the importance of umpires to the game of hockey is to change current attitudes, through education and training.

It is also important that the National and Provincial Associations promote umpiring and make it a high priority within their strategic objectives and in particular, increase the number of female umpires within umpiring.

Recommendation: Hockey Ireland and the Provinces should promote umpiring in the correct manner at all times, strive to increase the number of female umpires and 'idealise' umpires like players.

3. To provide an environment to encourage more people into umpiring which is unequivocally supported by the national and provincial associations.

After the final whistle, coaches, managers and players must STOP approaching umpires with the intention of arguing over decisions made during the game. To manage this, IHUA has already introduced a 20 minute 'cool off period' at the end of all Irish Hockey League and Senior Cup matches. Thereafter, all participants in the match are encouraged to discuss all aspects of the game in a calm, constructive and productive manner.

This new initiative has already started to have a positive significant impact on behaviour. Disappointingly, occasional breaches of this rule continue to bring the game into disrespect. Therefore, there remains the need to be other deterrents to prevent and stop such behaviour and misconduct.

For this reason, a proper Match Day Misconduct Offence (MMO) procedure must be introduced to deal with unacceptable behaviour towards umpires and match officials before the match starts and after the final whistle.

From a national perspective, the current IHA Code of Conduct procedure is extremely wide-ranging and is not the appropriate procedure to deal with issues, which continue to plague our game. This is a matter that needs to be addressed at provincial level, as well.

It is accepted that it is entirely the umpire's responsibility in accordance with the relevant disciplinary procedures, to deal with all incidents that occur during normal playing time.

The benefits of a MMO are as follows: -

1. A transparent and support procedure/process which PREVENTS indiscipline rather than regularly having to deal with the aftermath which takes up value time and resources.
2. It should provide a 'support platform' to ENCOURAGE people to take up umpiring.
3. It should help to **RETAIN** umpires rather than to lose them due to unacceptable levels of inappropriate or abusive behaviour.

The importance of having a preventative process cannot be highlighted enough. It's about prevention as well as cure and reducing the time that is continually spent, through disciplinary proceedings, dealing with such matters. The introduction of the MMO has been used successfully in other countries.

Recommendation: Proper MMO procedures and processes should be implemented within Hockey Ireland and the Provinces from 1st September 2017.

4. The Introductory Umpire Course should become the single nationally recognised umpire qualification for all umpires throughout Ireland.

It is important that everyone (every club umpire) who takes to the hockey pitch to umpire any game of hockey in Ireland has a nationally recognised minimum qualification. The Introductory Umpire Course provides a real

opportunity to re-structure how we educate future umpires in a way that would promote consistency in training and qualification.

The benefits of the course are as follows: -

- New approach will help to promote umpiring and ensure vital re-investment.
- Consistent approach to training and qualifying umpires
- Better prepared umpires at provincial level
- Qualified umpires help raise standards of hockey games
- Greater continuity regarding basic umpiring principles and interpretations
- Better consistency delivered by qualified and experienced course tutors
- Nationally recognised umpire qualification
- Greater compliance for umpires, clubs, and associations with any insurance requirements

Recommendation: The Provinces introduce the Introductory Umpire Course as a standard nationally recognised umpire qualification, by 1st September 2017 to ensure a consistency of approach in the education of all umpires and ensure at all umpires at all levels (to the very lowest) have a recognised qualification by 1st September 2021.

5. A National Umpire Development Officer and Provincial Umpire Development Officers are required to drive grassroots umpiring initiatives at provincial level, club level and within schools

Umpire Development Officers are essential to ensure that people have the chance and opportunity to take up umpiring and ensuring that all sections of the hockey community and wider sporting communities are aware of the available activities and how to become involved.

Development Officers will also target those who want to take part at club level as well as those who are interested in taking part at all levels, from provincial (local), national and international.

One of the most important aspects of our future planning must be the introduction of grassroots umpiring initiatives. However, this needs to be properly co-ordinated, managed, delivered and promoted. Liaison with club development officer and schools will form an important part of the role as developing new initiatives. Evaluation and monitoring using performance indicators will help measure the overall success.

Recommendation: Umpire development officers should be in position at both national and provincial level by 1st September 2019.

6. To develop the Umpire Development Pathway and provide the necessary guidance and support to ensure the implementation of q Young Umpire Award at provincial level, in order to achieve a sustainable umpiring structure and future.

It is an absolute necessity that a Young Umpire Award is introduced for anyone between 12 to 18 years old.

The benefits of this are as follows: -

1. To introduce more people into umpiring at a younger age.
2. To provide young people with an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the role and techniques employed by the umpire and the Rules of Hockey in an enjoyable, motivating and confidence building method.
3. Young people should be umpiring youth hockey games.
4. To expose more young umpires to under-age level hockey at provincial level and to U16, U18 and U21 inter-provincials at national level.

Recommendation: IHUA and Hockey Ireland should work in close conjunction with the Provinces to develop and implement a Young Umpire Award for young players and school children within clubs by 1st September 2017.

7. To implement a more attractive finance structure for umpires, assessors and coaches; to recruit and retain umpires in both the short and longer term and to ensure an essential mentoring and support for the personal development of all umpires.

Hockey is competing against other top field sports such as football, GAA, and basketball. All of these sports have one thing in common; their registered on-pitch officials are paid on a fee-per-match basis. Following recent consultation with the IFA, they have clear evidence that the number of football referees practically doubled overnight with the introduction of a fee-per-match.

IHUA believe it is absolutely crucial for the future of umpiring that all umpires appointed to officiate at a provincial or national match under the auspices of that Association receive improved expenses payments. This will provide the necessary incentive to increase the number of umpires.

Presently, there are a significant number of hockey umpires at provincial level receiving a fee-per-match every weekend? Parallel umpire sites such as 'Need a Whistler' are paying umpires through contracts with schools and clubs, and even the clubs themselves are paying umpires to officiate their games particularly in the lower leagues. The vast, vast majority of these umpires have no formal umpiring qualification; the 'net' result is that unqualified, inexperienced umpires are being paid to officiate at matches sanctioned by the Provincial Associations but the most experienced, qualified and highest performing umpires are paid nothing. Therefore, what would be the incentive to join your Provincial Association!

The Irish Hockey League really does demonstrate the current level of commitment that is required by the appointed umpires each week: -

- For an 'in-province' match, each umpire will have to give between 4 and 6 hours of their time for a "local" game. For an 'out of province' match, each umpire will have to give much more of their time; it would certainly not be unusual for an umpire to give a minimum of 8 hours to fulfil this appointment. The financial remuneration of 20 cents per kilometre for drivers and a €20 out of province subsistence payment is not sustainable.

There is support for a more attractive expense structure among players and coaches. Some Irish Hockey League clubs have queried why umpires were not being paid a rewarding amount of money.

An email recently received from the Coach of a top IHL Club stated the following: "Make the umpiring more appealing. The whole 'amateur' part has to be taken out of it. It's not going to cost that much to pay umpires a good wage per match day e.g. 50 euro for provincial match and double this for when travelling outside their province. It makes it all much more professional."

Simply, an expense structure which is attractive and rewarding will be beneficial to the game of hockey as follows: -

1. Increased numbers umpiring hockey.
2. Proper reward for the time and dedication given each weekend.
3. To attract, recruit and help to retain umpires who may become disillusioned with giving their time for little reward or gain.
4. Higher standards due to greater competition.

Recommendation: A proper tiered financial remuneration should be implemented at national level by 1st September 2017 and provincial level by 1st September 2018, where there are official umpires appointed.

8. Any umpire officiating in any match in Ireland has a registration number and the minimum Introductory Umpire qualification.

There must be a joint provincial and national umpire registration list; umpires should only be registered once they have attended and successfully passed the Introductory Umpire Course, where they will receive a qualification.

No hockey match in Ireland should be umpired by a person who has not obtained a qualification. All umpires should sign the match card after every game and their name should be checked against the club umpire registration list to ensure compliance.

The benefits of this are as follows: -

1. All umpires have a minimum umpire qualification.
2. All umpires know the rules and the current interpretations.
3. Ensures compliance with essential insurance requirements.
4. Improved playing experience.
5. Helps monitor fairness and integrity throughout all leagues.

To be effective we believe that all umpires should be registered with the Provincial Association and Hockey Ireland, and have one registration number. If a game is umpired by an unregistered umpire, effective and stringent sanctions should be put in place for those who transgress.

Recommendation – This approach needs to be implemented through a phased structure over the next four years (2017-2020).

9. To ensure that umpires, umpire assessors, umpire coaches and umpire managers are given the best opportunity to maximise their

potential and achieve international umpiring success at the highest level through National and EHF development programmes.

Umpires

The National Umpire Pathway is as follows: -

C Panel → C* Panel → B Panel → B* Panel → A Panel → A* Panel
→ National Panel

Umpires will generally go through every Panel on the Pathway, which includes coaching and assessment. However, there is scope to promote umpires past the lower Panels, should the umpire be showing significant level of ability and improvement.

Generally umpires at A* Panel and National Panel level will be given the opportunity to obtain their international badge (if suitable). This involves the appointment of the 'right' umpire to an international tournament(s) and should they achieve the required marks they would normally be promoted to international umpire status.

When an umpire achieves international status, they effectively move to the bottom of the international ladder. The international umpire pathway is as follows:

International Umpire → Promising List Umpire → Grade 1 Umpire → World Development Panel Umpire → World Panel Umpire

Again, umpires must progress through EVERY level and progression will be based on their tournament performance (assessed in every match). However, it is important to note that progression to next level can only be obtained at specific tournaments. Therefore, it is not uncommon for an umpire to take many years to achieve even Grade 1 level and some never achieve this level.

To qualify for world level appointments, the minimum qualification is normally that of FIH Grade 1. In most cases, the umpires appointed to the World Cup and/or the Olympic Games will be members of the FIH World Panel. The retirement from international competition is compulsory at 47 years of age.

Hockey Ireland has high aspirations to become one of the top ranked teams in the world to retain that ranking. However, it is essential that Hockey Ireland has umpires who can equally perform at the highest level. This is also a FIH / EHF requirement.

To help us achieve this, the IHUA will introduce a more targeted approach by introducing an International Development Group (IDG) which will increase the chances of international progression and success. IDG Umpires shall be identified in relation to their performance at provincial and national level.

The IDG concept involves creating a Personal Development Plan (PDP) with each umpire, and utilising a small group of suitably experienced coaches and mentors to coach and support those umpires providing them with qualitative and consistent guidance, resources and support. It is fully recognised that this scheme cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' but will be individually tailored to reflect the needs and circumstances of each of the identified participants. The introduction of mentors to these umpires will be crucial to the success of their development through their PDP.

Irish Hockey also needs to ensure that its International umpires or those aspiring to reach International level receive important development opportunities through umpiring at the highest level, both home and abroad, each season.

It is important that our umpires are offered essential opportunities to travel with the national teams at all levels.

Umpire Assessors and Coaches

Additionally, we shall continue the work already commended with player coaches, umpire coaches and umpires to work together to share expertise, enhance understanding and performance and to achieve success.

IHUA will continue to develop and update the umpire assessor course and introduce new courses for development opportunities as an umpire coach. Not only will this be important for the Umpire Development Pathway but it will also widen the number and range of people who can work with young umpires at provincial and club level. Child Protection and vetting procedures will be at the heart of our approach.

It is important that Hockey Ireland invests in the EHF Umpire Development Programme (UDP) and that we nominate our most promising umpires. One of the very positive outcomes of the scheme is the feasibility of fast-tracking our most talented umpires into the international environment and onwards towards inclusion at the highest European and World tournaments.

Recommendation: Hockey Ireland must support IHUA in ensuring that our high performance umpires are provided with suitable international exposure and are financially supported to achieve their full potential, from 1st September 2017.

Summary of Strategic Plan 2017-2021

Year 1 & 2 Goals

- **Umpire Development Pathway for long term sustainable success**
- **Create environment to encourage more people into umpiring**
- **Introductory Umpire Course as the nationally recognised umpire qualification**
- **Put 'Young Umpire Award Programme' in place**
- **Finance structure for umpires, umpire assessors and umpire coaches, to recruit and retain essential resources at national level**
- **Umpires maximising their potential through national and EHF development umpire programmes and opportunities**
- **All umpires officiating in any match in Ireland has a registration number and an Introductory Umpire qualification**

Year 3 & 4 Goals

- **Increase the understanding of the importance of umpires to the game of hockey**
- **Umpire Managers, Umpire Coaches and Umpire Assessors continuous development**
- **The appointment of a National Umpire Development Officer and Provincial Umpire Development Officers**

