

English Ice Hockey Association Annual Report 2022/2023



Who are the EIHA?

The English Ice Hockey Association (EIHA) is the National Governing Body (NGB) responsible for the governance, administration, development and promotion of the sport of ice hockey in England and Wales. The Association oversees grassroots (junior) ice hockey, women's ice hockey, senior ice hockey, para (sledge) ice hockey and ice recreational (community) hockey.

The EIHA is a members association that supports clubs, players, coaches and officials and schedules and sanctions competitions tournaments and in the interests of promoting the sport of ice hockey.

The EIHA is made up of a voluntary Board who lead on strategic direction, a paid workforce who carry out the day-to-day operations of the association, and a vast number of volunteers who underpin everything we do.

To ensure the successful development of the sport of ice hockey in England and Wales, the EIHA works with the various stakeholders including Ice Hockey UK (IHUK), the Scottish Ice Hockey Association (SIH), the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), ice rinks throughout England and Wales, and our Member Clubs.

Our work as a governing body is split into four key areas:

- Retain and grow participation
- Create a world-class talent system
- Enhance our infrastructure
- Be a high performing NGB



EIHA Board of Directors



Barrie Archer
Interim Chair



Gary Apsley
Board Director



Mohammed Ashraff
Board Director



Bruce Douglas
Board Director



Duncan Hough
Board Director



Thomas Lillie
Board Director



Andrew Miller
Board Director



Daniel Smith
Board Director



Cornelia Raubal
Board Director

Chair report

It is fair to say the period this report covers, 1st August 2022 to 31st July 2023, which was another challenging year for our sport and, as I reflect on all we have achieved this year, the following quote from Wayne Gretzky comes to mind: “Hockey is a unique sport in the sense that you need each and every person helping each other and pulling in the same direction to be successful.”

Barrie Archer – Interim Chair



“Reflecting on the season it is only right that I pass on my thanks to the volunteers within our beloved sport that have maintained the high expectations of the EIHA and delivered a season full of on ice success that stand the sport in good stead for the future.

The year saw the departure of Matt Lloyd as a Non-Executive Director within the EIHA and we thank him for all his work during his time on the executive committee. Faye Andrews also stepped down from her Board role, but continues to provide vital services to the EIHA as Head of the WNIHL.

We continue to work with Sport England to develop the governance on the sport and have recently undergone an independent board review to ensure that the board are effective are ready for the future.

The EIHA board continue to develop the infrastructure to support the talent that is on display week in and week out all around the country”.



At the AGM members will have the opportunity to review and vote for new articles of association, again this has been completed to ensure that the organisation are future focused.

The EIHA remains focussed on the development of our players which has seen the introduction of the Showcase Draft and teams in Quebec and Bratislava competing against their counterparts.

The board continues to strive to develop the sport in all areas and in the coming months and before the start of season 23/24 members should see the fruits of the work completed in the background and a brighter future for the EIHA.”

Barrie Archer – Interim Chair



EIHA Mission & Purpose

The EIHA's vision is to manage and promote a thriving and sustainable ice hockey association that provides people in England and Wales with the opportunity to participate in the fastest indoor sport in the world.

The EIHA aim to maximise club, player and volunteer potential whilst inspiring the next generation of ice hockey participants.

The EIHA's mission is to grow ice hockey nationally together with key stakeholders, and it will achieve this through its key objectives, which are:

- Raise the awareness of ice hockey in England and Wales
- Support clubs in the successful delivery of their objectives
- Increase the engagement of participants and followers of the sport
- Grow the sport's commercial opportunities
- Provide participants with support throughout their pathway
- Play a leading and influential role in the national and wider ice hockey community
- Develop a talent pathway to showcase the best players and coaches in England and Wales
- Be a forward-thinking and technologically advanced NGB with safety and members at its core



Governance Structure

The EIHA is a Company Limited by Guarantee and is committed to 'A Code for Sports Governance' (the "Code") and the principles of good governance.

This report is produced for the period from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023 (the "Reporting Period").

The EIHA are doing a lot of work behind the scenes with the aim of achieving Tier 3A status in 2023.



IHUK Members & Volunteers (as at 31st May 2023)

Sector	Registrations
Members	
NIHL	1012
(Insurance Only)	16
WNIHL	497
(Insurance Only)	20
Para	83
Juniors	3031
Recreational	3255
Universities	1144
	9058

A plan to develop the volunteer workforce has been drafted as part of the association's ambition to further support clubs and provide development opportunities.

We would like to thank all EIHA volunteers that support our programmes and all registered volunteers at clubs. You are vital to the success of the sport. We truly appreciate all the hard work and time you put in.

Sector	Registrations
Volunteers	
Foundation Coach	137
Foundation Assistant	211
Team Coaches +	402
Team Manager +	189
Team Assistant	70
DSL	10
Medical Professional	25
Off-Ice Officials	392
	1436



NIHL

The NIHL completed another competitive season with events including league and playoffs, league cup and cup finals across all five divisions with a unified approach to competition at each level. The events team and volunteers who supported the NIHL have excelled in difficult circumstances through the season.

Operating without a game management system for 45-50 games per week was an unanticipated challenge that impacted a range of planned initiatives. However, enhancements to the rules of competition on stewarding, medical requirements and game video were three key steps taken forward.

Two Sport England projects due for completion in July are will provide teams support in terms of club governance and the second to support club communications, marketing and revenue generation.



WNIHL

The WNIHL brand continues to grow and once again a successful season has seen the growth in participation with clubs seeking advice on entering teams for the forthcoming season, and we continue to look for opportunities to develop the sport further.

An example of this is the WNIHL development cup which continues to offer opportunities for players to develop and learn the sport. The playoff weekend in Sheffield was a huge success with teams from all over the country coming together to continue to put the sport on the map, I would like to thank all the volunteers and participants for their support, and we continue to look to grow the event and make it a regular calendar entry for all hockey fans.

Some of the comments we received were: "The quality of the games was outstanding and from a club perspective it was brilliant" "You pulled off the most amazing event which I know every one that I spoke with from many of clubs echoed."

The future looks bright for the WNIHL.



Junior

Another challenging 12 months have elapsed and the EIHA would like to extend a sincere thank you to all the volunteers in the Junior clubs, Junior League Committee, and other Sections of the EIHA.

On the whole, the number of players who have returned are encouraging, although many clubs have reported issues with accessing ice time, higher costs, and a shortage of volunteers. Furthermore, regional disparities have been observed in these trends.

Reflecting on the past year, it is important to acknowledge the unwavering dedication of the volunteers in the Junior clubs. Their tireless efforts and selfless contributions have facilitated the continuation of the young players' passion for the sport. Without their support, none of this would be possible.

Despite the challenges faced, the EIHA maintain an optimistic outlook for the future. The resilience exhibited by both the Junior Clubs and the players is truly inspiring. It serves as a testament to their love for ice hockey and their determination to overcome any obstacles encountered along the way.



Looking ahead, the Junior Section is fully understanding of the long road that lies ahead. Given the limited resources, the EIHA continue to rely on the energy and commitment of the Junior Clubs to implement our plans. Achieving our goals will necessitate collective effort and a shared vision for the growth and success of the Junior Section.

The significance of patience and perseverance is observed as solid foundations are established. Rushing the process would impede progress, Therefore, all those involved are encouraged to remain focused on our long-term objectives and work collaboratively to attain them.

Now, more than ever, Junior Clubs must unite and embark on the journey of rebuilding, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration, understanding that only through making sacrifices and finding common ground will the section grow stronger together.

In conclusion, the EIHA would like to extend the deepest gratitude to all volunteers who have played a pivotal role in supporting junior ice hockey players. The dedication and commitment are truly commendable, maintaining an optimistic and resolute attitude will aide paving the way for a brighter future in the realm of junior ice hockey.



Recreational Hockey

Recreational Hockey within the organisation continues to go from strength to strength with numbers of persons involved continue to grow.

The recreational season is underway with a number of events being supported over the summer months.

The section is thriving and continues to develop as one of the most active sections of the organisation.



Universities

The BUIHA has started to see growth back to similar pre-covid levels however cost of living has been a specific challenge within higher education, exacerbated by frozen student funding and significant pressure on student secondary spend mainly due to increases in food, rental and utility costs.

The primary impact on student sport has been the increase in travel costs that, whilst felt across all sports, is particularly challenging in the university sector and has led to a desire for more local competition.

This saw a number of teams unable compete in the Cup Competition in the 2022/23 season and focus

on local challenge games. We saw strong desire for participation in the National Championships tournaments that followed the revised format trialled in 2021/22.

A highlight of the year were GB Students attending the World University Games in Lake Placid in January 2023. We would like to thank BUCS, our athletes, volunteers and partners for making the trip a massive success.

Due to availability and flight costs in summer 2023, training camps in Vieramaki, Finland, is now planned for January 2024.



Para-Hockey

GB Para Hockey saw great success at the World Championships winning Pool C in Bangkok which sees them promoted to Pool B, the EIHA are proud to be associated with this success. EIHA continue to support both the GB male and female teams as they seek to continue their success.

The Para hockey season 22/23 continues over the summer months and working with the EIHA we look for opportunities to develop the sport around the country.





Officials

In March this year we saw Simon Kirkham step down as Chief Referee after a successful career in the stripes, on behalf of the EIHA we would like to thank him for all his tireless work over the previous seasons and wish him well for his future.

Colin Davison has stepped into the role of Chief Referee and we continue to work together to look for ways to increase the number of officials to pre-covid numbers.

Costings for officials for season 23/24 have already been circulated to clubs.

Discipline

EIHA Discipline Team has had a positive 22/23 ice hockey season. Entering the season, two national discipline leads were appointed, and the team increased to eight volunteers. This has allowed proactively investigate all on and off ice complaints, resulting in a fair and efficient process for all parties involved.

Improvements were made to communication lines within the EIHA departments, which aided in designing an internal process to handle all supplementary discipline issues. This process has increased efficiency and enabled the provision of clearer information on player suspensions and reasons. Additionally, a Sharepoint tracker will ensure the team is working in real time and maximising efficiency.

The EIHA Discipline Team has taken a proactive role in helping the EIHA office administration set up, which has resulted in an improved overall disciplinary system. The team has also taken a more proactive role in explaining the decisions as part of press releases, facilitating better communication lines with individuals. This has allowed for a clearer understanding of decisions and has resulted in a more efficient disciplinary system.

In conclusion, the EIHA Discipline Team for the 22/23 ice hockey season has demonstrated exceptional dedication and hard work, resulting in a fair and efficient disciplinary process. The team are confident they will continue to provide an excellent service with more improvement opportunities being presented over the summer ahead of the upcoming season.



Safeguarding



The safeguarding team continues to develop with the appointment of our first SEND safeguarding lead and the team has developed to offer support to all clubs with the EIHA community.



The team continues to work in partnership with Vibrant Nation to ensure all those requiring Data Baring Service (DBS) are completed in a timely manner and the EIHA has access to an up-to-date record of all DBS held within the organisations.

Inclusion and diversity

The EIHA have recently joined forces with 'Hockey is Diversity', signing a memorandum of understanding to offer relevant training to our volunteers. 'Hockey is Diversity' will facilitate a whistle blowing, enabling participants to report any issues in a confidential manner.

The EDI group have been working on the organisation's strategy and will be implementing an ongoing Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.



Coach Education

A fresh approach to the training and support for our volunteers was announced to deliver improvements in capability and performance that the membership wanted implemented. The Plan is year two of a five year implementation plan.

The work required under the working title “Volunteer Game Plan” has continued albeit slower than hoped for, due to our limited capacity and the time available. The Plan is based on the considerable work done over the past four to five years around coaching development and alignment with National Standards for Coaches and the deployment of coaches in sports settings. In the EIHA these standards are being applied equally to Managers and other volunteer roles as we strive to up-skill the entire workforce.

The Assistant Coach course was completed in early April and a trial course was hosted face-to-face with thirty new Assistant Coaches in attendance. There are plans to roll-out more Assistant Coach courses in the coming months that will evolve and lead-on from the Foundation level so that a pathway to Team Coach can be established for the 300 coaches currently deployed as Foundation or Assistant Coaches.

The redesign of the Team Coach course has proven to be challenging because we do not have capacity to create content in-house. This work commenced last year and in January it was concluded that the EIHA needed to look externally for support. We reached-out to Hockey Canada have been engaged and are in the final stages of reaching an agreement to support the training and development of our Team Coach qualification using Hockey Canada instructors and course materials.



Team Coach training courses are currently scheduled over two weekends in August 2023 and will continue, subject to demand.

The overall ambition for the Coaching Pathway remains as follows:

- Foundation Coach (new entry level coach role)
- Assistant Coach (formerly Level 1)
- Team Coach (formerly Level 2)
- Advanced Coach (formerly Level 3)
- High Performance Team Coach (formerly Level 3)
- Elite Performance Team Coach (formerly Level 4+)
- Master Coach (Formerly Level 5+)

Hockey Canada recognises that different leagues and ability require different skill sets and this will be reflected in the Coaching Pathway content.

New facets will include licensing of age-appropriate coaching, educational support, inter-personal, communicative and functional coaching techniques that can respond to the needs of a modern sports club whilst meeting the inclusivity and diversity needs of its participants.

The collaboration with UK Coaching has been a major success overall following some technical difficulties with the platform access and time required to complete the training. UK Coaching cited the EIHA Coaches as some of the most progressive coaches in the Country with their level of interest and participation into UKC resources.

We intend to continue with the partnership with UKC as their learning resources, qualifications and credentials are transferrable across sports.

Importantly our engagement with UK Coaching is also recognised by Sport England and so there are additional benefits to the Association where our development of volunteers is seen to be at the very front of volunteer training in UK Sport.

Coaches can expect to see expansion of minimum standards as we continue with our plans to raise standards and increase capability and with the hockey specific resource coming from Hockey Canada we will begin to see the next stage of Coach Education coming together with work commencing on the high performance and advanced coaching roles that has also been long overdue. By the time the new advanced level content is available it will have been fifteen years since the last time the old Level Three course was held.

The biggest success for Education and Coaching has to be the introduction of Foundation Coach. With almost 150 brand new coaches entering the sport at this level Clubs have seen an unprecedented number of new volunteers who just needed a DBS, attendance on a couple of courses and sign-off by the Club Head Coach. The most important aspect for the EIHA with this new role is the accountability for mentoring and supporting Foundation Coaches by Head Coaches.

It is pleasing to report that there have been no issues or complaints raised about the performance of Foundation Coaches and this element of the programme can only become more successful over time. This is a major factor for EIHA demonstrating support to Member Clubs as well as making a substantial investment in volunteer development.

As we look forward the Association will need to consider how we establish a robust model for Coach Assessment and Evaluation. There is still a requirement for a more professional standard for assessment and evaluation of the capacity and capability of our coaching community and training and development of the right candidates to establish and deliver this aspect of coach education ought to be a significant issue for action. Of course funding will need to be considered and in the current economic climate the plan could prove to be challenging.



Manager programme

The Manager Programme has continued its transformational path and the introduction of the Assistant Manager role was met with mixed reaction. The Manager Pathway published in March 2022 has yet to become embedded in the general knowledge of our community and more work still needs to be done to address the perception of shortcomings in this part of the EIHA.

Surprisingly, we have over 70 new managers in the making who have been acting as Assistant manager, bolstering the manager community by more than a third. The development of the Manager role is proving to be controversial in certain quarters and a further review of the role and required credentials for Managers may be necessary.

The Manager Steering Group continues its work with the Manager Forum, proving to be a successful resource for the sharing of best practice. Support for Clubs to establish Mentor Managers will be a new requirement, along with workshops on the practical knowledge for specific tasks and operational aspects.

More development work is in progress with advanced manager courses and development workshops for Club Officers, further information will follow in coming months.



Showcase

In early December, the Board made a decision that Showcase must continue despite the financial challenges, and a new approach was conceived and developed. The result was the biggest and most ambitious project the EIHA has ever seen with a completely new direction being followed which places the development of players at the very core of the programme .



The introduction of “drafting” players and eliminating the need for the late night trails and training, as well as securing full engagement with Club Coaches, the new look Showcase programme proved to be exactly what the programme needed. Not everyone agreed and the loss of the old Conference rivalry was noted by a few commentators. The increased level of competition was accessed by more than 650 players who were showcasing their talents, as well as the expanded off-ice Athlete Development workshops and testing, added to a reinvigorated event.

The Combine for older players together with the detailed player evaluation against the Five Pillars of Development, will hopefully be rolled-out to clubs at all levels over the next 12 months.

Also benefitting from the event, Assistant Managers, Managers, Assistant Coaches, Coaches and Mentor Coaches were pushed to new levels of performance and accountability, and we have seen many people demonstrate their worth to the EIHA which gives confidence that some parts of the programmes have the potential to be World Class.

Showcase has cemented itself as an essential element of the EIHA Elite Player Pathway with a successful model established that can be amplified and expanded ready for Showcase 2024.

England National Team Programme

There are a numerous challenges around maintaining and providing the opportunities for development within the England programme. In particular, costs for hosting ENTP and events which are substantial along with the availability of facilities (ice rinks and support space) which are not available at times to suit.

This season we have delivered ENTP development events for U13, U14, U15, U16 U17 boys and U13 and U17 girls. Plans for other age teams remain on hold due to concerns over capacity and capability.

In February, another ambitious project was delivered by sending U13 Boys and U13 Girls to Quebec, Canada to compete in the “best U13 Tournament in the World”. The Boys reached the semi-final stage narrowly losing out for a place in the Final. The Girls were the first England U13 Girls to attend the tournament and a brand new purpose for the ENTP Girls programme has been created, which should inspire the development of girls’ hockey in the EIHA for years to come.

The ENTP held five Development Camps at Sheffield, Cambridge, Hull and Leeds throughout the season attended by more players than ever. Volunteer Managers and Coaches have gained valuable experience of the ENTP and our capacity and capability has been expanded to an unprecedented level which can only ensure the programmes continued journey towards raising standards and performance with a player centred focus unlike anything that has been delivered previously.



The finale for this season was the Development Camp in Bratislava where more than 175 England players took part in a five day Camp over 4 consecutive weekends. Another first for the EIHA .

Athlete Development Team

Another hugely successful year for the EIHA's ADT. Involvement in the ENTP and Showcase proved once again to be significant contributions to the overall success of the programmes.

The EIHA's elite programmes contain so much untapped potential and presents an opportunity to raise the standard performance for all athletes if a platform for this group of ADT professionals can be created to commence working with Clubs.

The programme is not just about strength and conditioning training, but about making ice hockey the focus for development of any athlete hoping to pursue a long and distinguished involvement in the game, so that all are properly equipped to exploit the opportunities ice hockey can provide if they wish.

Sports Therapy & Medicine

With the recent announcement by the Government and UK Sport on Concussion in Grass Roots Sports, there is renewed interest in dealing with concussion. This is not a new subject for the EIHA and as reported to Members in December, work had already commenced on re-defining the Association's approach to raising awareness of the effects of concussion as well as the management of the return to play protocol.

In addition to concussion there is the matter of First Aid which received considerable attention with the formation of a First Aid Steering Group. Work remains in progress on an ice hockey specific first aid training resource which is a huge piece of work that requires careful consideration and attention. More news on these two significant pieces of work should be expected before the start of the new season.



Operational Team

Five new members of staff were inducted into the business in the summer of 2022. It is fair to say that this has been a huge learning curve for the staff members, all of whom are new to ice hockey, though the support to date of volunteers has been invaluable. A lot of work continues to go on behind the scenes to bring the Association's policies and procedures up to date. Undeniably more challenges will be faced, but with a new strategy imminent, the operational work of the EIHA Office will become more focused, with streamlined procedures, improved communications and better support for all members.

The Association has also appointed a part-time Finance Administrator and Fixtures Secretary to improve these areas of the business.



Legal and external affairs

New articles have been produced with the assistance of Muckle LLP to modernise the EIHA's governing documents to better serve our membership and the interests of the association more effectively. To ensure the new Articles are accessible to members, the EIHA Board will offer question and answer sessions for members ahead of the AGM.

The Board has introduced an Audit, Risk and Finance Committee and Nominations and Remuneration Committee, the latter of which advised the Board on the appointment of three new Directors whose expertise will be invaluable for supporting the EIHA's strategic aims.

The EIHA are now seeking applications for an Independent Chair to lead the Board, with a view to making an appointment in the summer of 2023.



External stakeholders

It should be for the benefit of all participants in our sport for its governing bodies to work effectively together, with mutual support and respect, to develop and grow our sport and to work with other stakeholders across the community.

The EIHA maintains many key relationships with external stakeholders, including:

Ice Hockey UK (IHUK) - the EIHA is a member of IHUK, the sport's national governing body. Over the last year we have supported a number of initiatives. Supporting IHUK in winning significant new funding for our sport. We seek to represent the interests of our members with IHUK and the parts of the sport that are under the IHUK umbrella, including the management of the UK Referee Section and managing the IIHF International Transfer Card (ITC) system.

A number of exciting opportunities are planned in partnership with IHUK in the coming year.

EIHA is working to enhance relationships with other ice hockey stakeholders within the UK beyond, such as the Scottish Ice Hockey Association and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF).

The EIHA continues to develop its relationship with Planet Ice, with a new Memorandum of Understanding signed in June 2023, including provision of development opportunities for junior participants. In addition, the EIHA have worked closely with UK Coaching to improve its education provision for members and is looking to develop this relationship further.

The EIHA continues to embrace equality and diversity, with a Memorandum of Understanding now in place with Hockey is Diversity to improve services and training within the Association. A key partnership with Puckstop to provide Netminder kit to clubs has also been successful and is due to continue next season.





Sport England

EIHA continues to strengthen its relationship with Sport England. Funding has enabled the EIHA to better serve clubs by providing support through the Sport and Recreation Alliance to improve governance and club structures, and engaging JDG Media to help NIHL clubs transform their digital offerings. Reports on project outcomes and next steps are due in July and December 2023.

On the recommendation of Sport England, an external and independent Board evaluation process was conducted by a third-party organisation in March 2023 and presented to the Board in May 2023. A series of recommendations were developed from the process for further implementation and the Board have an action plan to help drive the Association forward.

Communications, digital and marketing



With no dedicated communications officer, the EIHA has been a transitional period with regard to its media provision and digital offering. Steps are now underway to put in place a long-term action plan to improve and provide regular communication for members, the implementation of a new CRM system for the 2023/2024 season being key to achieving success. In the meantime, JDG Media continue to support with the digital media platforms.

The new brand for the sport is in progress, due to be unveiled at the upcoming AGM. The new design is modern and striking and will help elevate the England Ice Hockey brand.



A new website is currently being developed and will be in place by early Autumn. This will make the sport more easily accessible to both existing members and newcomers to the sport.

A new strategy is being written with a view to it being published in July 2023. This will enable the EIHA to define the business and its purpose, promote a set of values and provide a clear roadmap which shows our destination and what success looks like for our association.

Thank you

