



## Covid-19 Return to Play

### Consultation on Calendar Options C&D and Covid-19 Related Regulations

#### Circulation

- Regional HA / County HA
- Adult Leagues
- Junior Leagues
- HUA's
- Player Pathway Committee

#### 1. Purpose of this document

At the time of releasing this document the relaxation of Covid-19 related restrictions continues to progress with the likelihood of the season starting in a relatively timely manner still possible. Despite this England Hockey would like to ensure that as many scenarios and issues are covered as effectively as possible before the season starts.

At this stage this document has only been shared with the distribution list above allowing for the key administrative bodies in the sport to provide feedback prior to a final issue being provided.

The content of this document focuses on two issues:

- Calendar scenarios C&D
- Suggested rule and regulation adaptations (mainly focused on adult league rules)

#### 2. Feedback & Final Version

Feedback is welcome to [competitions.info@englandhockey.co.uk](mailto:competitions.info@englandhockey.co.uk) by 23 July 2020

A final set of the information and regulations within this document will be shared by the end of July 2020 to allow implementation prior to the season starting.

#### 3. Return to Play - Process so far

For those not familiar with the wider England Hockey Return to Play plans they can be found here: [www.englandhockey.co.uk/covid19](http://www.englandhockey.co.uk/covid19)

Calendar options have already been issued for a 'Normal' and 'Delayed' Season (Options A and B) with this update covering a 'Revised' (Option C) and 'Shortened' season (Option D).

#### 4. Club Survey (15 July closing date)

Initial headlines from the club survey relating to Covid-19 are included in Appendix 1.

Clubs are still responding to the survey but a number of trends are well established and so unlikely to significantly change. The feedback from the survey has helped shape the proposals around the regulations and timing of the season set out in this paper.

Much of the written feedback from clubs also covered issues related to safely returning to play such as game adaptations or issues related to travel. These are not covered in this paper as aligned to the requirements from government linked to the framework for the return of recreational sport. England Hockey is currently compiling a detailed assessment and guidance against these new expectations.

## 5. Calendar Options C & D

As a reminder the overall options for the calendar were as follows. These are not exact dates and the decision to resume hockey will always be led by government guidance.

Headline indicative calendar:

Level	Status	SEP				OCT				NOV				DEC				
Wk beginning Sat		05	12	19	26	03	10	17	24	31	07	14	21	28	05	12	19	26
A	Normal																	
B	Delayed																	
C	Revised																	
D	Shortened																	

Level	Status	JAN					FEB				MAR				APR				MAY				
Wk beginning Sat		02	09	16	23	30	06	13	20	27	06	13	20	27	03	10	17	24	01	08	15	22	29
A	Normal																						
B	Delayed																						
C	Revised																						
D	Shortened																						

There are still significant variables in here including:

- Second wave of infections – whilst there are scenarios around a second wave there is no realistic way to plan for the timing and extent of any disruption caused by it. If it happens then the planning undertaken should allow an easy move from one scenario to another as possible.
- Indoor Hockey – indoor sports are looking likely to return but the level of restriction indoor is likely to be greater than outdoor. The circumstances for indoor hockey will therefore take longer to resolve.
- Adaptations – the extent to which 'normal' hockey can resume is still unclear. At the time of writing it is hoped that this will be minimal but if the game is significantly altered the value of existing competition structures may need to be considered.

In light of the feedback the two proposed scenarios for an Option C Revised and Option D Shortened season are as follows:

### Option C - Summary

Option C would see a 'Revised' version of the calendar being operated. This means the season cannot be played in full and a significant revision to the 'Normal' calendar would mean less activity is scheduled and over a reduced time frame. Activity would remain scheduled on existing priority dates where possible. This version would be implemented when it is clear that a full programme of activity, be it run as 'Normal' or 'Delayed', is no longer achievable, or if further lockdown measures cause further disruption or delays after resuming.

Key points;

- Starting in mid-late November or December.
- League season finishing no later than end of April.
- Leagues would be split after all teams have played each other once. After split, top half teams play each other and bottom half teams play each other, for a second time.
- England Hockey Adult Championships would be cancelled. Masters and Mixed offers would run with possible reduced capacity.
- England Hockey Junior Championships would run with possible revised formats, timings and reduced capacity.
- Junior leagues would run with possible revised format, timings and reduced capacity.
- Indoor clubs programmes may be revised or cancelled following further Government updates and consultation with key EH stakeholders, which would include the appetite of participants.
- Schools Championships already operating to a 'Revised' version of activity - with no activity planned to run before October half-term - due to current school planning for the 2020/21 academic year.
- Indoor schools programme may be cancelled following further Government updates and consultation with key EH stakeholders, which would include the appetite of participants.
- International and Regional Masters would run with possible revised dates.

## Option D - Summary

Option D would see a 'Shortened' version of the calendar being operated. This means the season cannot be played in full and significant changes to the 'Normal' calendar would mean minimal activity is played over the shortest possible period. Activity would remain scheduled on existing priority dates where possible, however, significant changes may be required to balance priority amongst all activity. This version would be implemented when it is clear that a restart in 2020 is not achievable, or if further lockdown measures cause further disruption or delays after resuming.

Key points;

- Starting in 2021.
- League season finishing no later than end of April.
- Leagues would run single fixtures only. All teams play each other once only.
- Adult Championships would be cancelled. Masters, Juniors (including In2Hockey) and Mixed offers could run with possible revised formats, timings and reduced capacity.
- Junior leagues could run with possible revised formats, timings and reduced capacity.
- All Indoor activity would be cancelled.
- Schools Championships could run with possible further revised formats and timings. Including playing in the Summer term in consultation with key EH stakeholders, which would include the appetite of participants.
- International and Regional Masters would run with possible further revised dates.

Scenario D is obviously a long time away and more work would be undertaken on the exact specifics depending on when hockey would be allowed.

## 6. Player Pathway

The Performance Centre Working Group have continued to engage with England Hockey to discuss delivery options relating to the different scenarios.

In summary:

- Selection activity is planned to begin in September in line with the current government guidelines at the time. Those involved in the selection process should be aware that players will have experienced different levels of exposure to hockey activity over this time and adjustments should be made accordingly.
- Option C (Revised) - Activity will begin in January on the planned dates. No additional dates will be added to the calendar
- Option D (Shortened) - Potential to provide junior performance players with some activity through the summer months (dates additional to the current calendar)

County Associations will need to consider and adapt Development Centre and Academy Centre programmes as appropriate for local delivery. In summary for Academy and Development Centre Activity.

- Due to the congestion in the calendar Academy Centres will not be able to add extra dates to deliver their programme.
- Development Centre activity, if delivered, should be in line with government guidance for the local area at the time
- Those involved in the selection process should be aware that players will have experienced different levels of exposure to hockey activity over this time and adjustments should be made accordingly.
- Option C (Revised) - Activity will begin in January on the planned dates. No additional dates will be added to the calendar
- Option D (Shortened) - Development Centre and Academy Centre programmes will not take place

## 7. Proposed Regulation changes (appendix two)

In line with the club feedback and having asked Regional Leagues for input a set of draft rules and regulation updates for leagues to consider is included in Appendix Two.

This covers the areas that we believe will need to be addressed in light of Covid and further potential disruptions to the season. We would very much welcome feedback on these proposals as well as suggestions for improvements and refinements to the proposals as well as any gaps.

Feedback is welcome to [competitions.info@englandhockey.co.uk](mailto:competitions.info@englandhockey.co.uk) by 23 July 2020

## 8. Risks and Mitigation

There are understandably a number of risks and concerns linked to returning to play in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and there are many implications as a result. Below is a table which summarises some of the risks and areas for concerns, related to a competitive return for hockey, this does not include issues specifically related to health and safety matters.

Area	Issue	Implication	Mitigation
Fixtures	Lack of available dates to complete fixtures	Not playing enough games for competitions integrity	Revised formats for leagues (split league, only play each other once) developed to ensure competition integrity
Fixtures	Slip dates	Not being able to rearrange all fixtures in time	Clear slip dates to be communicated before season start (e.g. every two Sundays after original fixture)
Further lockdown disruption	League season being curtailed	Resolving the final standings and promotion/relegation	Revised regulations to support minimum number of games being played relevant to format to ensure competition integrity
Facilities	Lack of pitch availability	Games having to be postponed or forfeited	Revised regulations to allow greater window for start times, seek alternative venues or reverse fixtures
Player registration / movement	Universities / colleges / schools / workplaces returning to a different location after season start	Selection and fielding of teams, issues due to player availability	Revised regulations to extend player registration and transfer dates
Player availability	Players not available due to self-isolation	Selection and fielding of teams, issues due to player availability	Greater flexibility to support movement of players within a club or playing multiple games in a day. Priority with higher ranked teams
Umpires & officials	Lack of qualified availability for appointments	Matches having no appointed umpires & officials	Revised regulations to allow greater flexibility on standard of appointments at varying levels

## Appendix One

Separate file – survey results as of Friday 10 July

## Appendix Two

### Draft Standard Competition Regulations regarding Covid-19.

We have spent time developing a first draft of league related Covid-19 regulations but would appreciate feedback on the specific issues highlighted in this appendix. As per the note at the end of the Appendix further documents will be added in due course once the principle elements are finalised.

Feedback is welcome to [competitions.info@englandhockey.co.uk](mailto:competitions.info@englandhockey.co.uk) by 23 July 2020 with a particular request to respond to elements in **green** and points with suggested numbers in yellow.

#### 1. Introduction

- These regulations are issued by England Hockey to endeavour to offer a consistent framework for the management of issues relating to Covid-19 that may impact on league hockey. They may be updated during the course of the season. The regulations supersede existing league regulations where relevant.
- Each League shall have an “Emergency Committee” who will be responsible for managing any issues that arise in relation to these regulations, any issue not covered by these regulations, any issue that may arise from non-compliance with these regulations, any issue arising from the spirit of the regulations not being applied.
- Certain Regulations herein refer to Tier 1 Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the League where different regulations apply. The definition of Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 in respect of all leagues is shown as Appendix N2.

#### 2. England Hockey CV19 Policy (this is a working title for the England Hockey Return to Play plan and associated policies with final guidance for competitive hockey at Step 5)

- England Hockey CV19 Policy (the Policy)** is shown as Appendix N1. It details the conditions under which hockey may be played in the 2020-21 season. It supersedes all existing league regulations where relevant. **The Policy** is updated as and when required and will be posted on the England Hockey website and social media platforms. It is

important that all clubs take steps to ensure that they are aware of the most up to date version of **the Policy** prior to any fixture. England Hockey will take every step to ensure that any changes to **the Policy** are made available in good time prior to fixtures. However as this is often in response to Government guidance, this may not always be practical.

b. **England Hockey CV19 Policy** shall be applied to all fixtures

c. Where there is a major breach of **The Policy** a fixture should not go ahead or continue. A major breach is one that **...a definition will be required here .... causes a significant risk to participants.....**

d. The breach should be reported to the relevant league official by the team(s) and / or appointed umpires and match official and the league will adjudicate on the matter in line with these regulations.

### 3. Withdrawal of Teams

a. Any club that wishes to withdraw a team or teams from a League must do so in order of their League ranking, starting with the lowest ranked team.

b. In exceptional circumstances a club may apply to a League to withdraw a different team. If the League approve it, any teams ranked lower than the withdrawn team will not be eligible for promotion at the end of the season.

c. Any team that withdraws from the League shall be deemed to have filled the lowest place in the Division it was due to play in or has played in. The playing record of any team that withdraws once the season has started shall be expunged.

d. the League shall have the authority to revise any teams' Division and fixtures therein prior to the start of the season or after a maximum of **two** rounds of fixtures have been played in order to facilitate the smooth running of the League.

### 4. Scheduling of Fixtures

In variance to the relevant League regulation the League shall have the authority to determine at any time if any individual Division, group of Divisions or the whole league shall be reformatted and fixtures rescheduled in line with one of the following formats.

a. Delayed season. Each team shall play all other teams in its Division on a home and away basis on revised dates specified by the league

b. Revised season. Each team shall play all other teams in its Division once, on a home or away basis, on revised dates specified by the league. This shall form Phase 1 of the Division. The Division will then be divided into two sections, top and bottom, based on placings at this time and each team will play all other teams in its section on a home or away basis on revised dates specified by the league. This shall form Phase 2. (See Appendix N3 for further details of this)

c. Shortened season. Each team shall play all other teams in its Division once, on a home or away basis, on revised dates specified by the league.

d. A league may reformat an individual Division, group of Divisions or the whole league more than once during the season, eg its status may change from Normal to Delayed, Delayed to Revised, Revised to Shortened.

e. If any of the above formats are used but it is not possible to complete all fixtures the season will be designated as Curtailed and any outcomes will be in line with Regulation 7 below. If a season is curtailed, the league reserves the right to vary any fixture list and/or order specific fixtures to be played or rescheduled in order to ensure that promotion or relegation issues may be resolved.

### 5. Final League Positions

a. When all scheduled fixtures have been completed in whichever format used or it is designated a Curtailed season, the final tables for a Division shall be calculated. Promotion and Relegation will apply in line with Regs 6. to 8. below.

### 6. Promotion and Relegation

a. Standard league regulations shall apply where any of the formats, as shown above, are used and all fixtures concluded.

b. If the formats shown above are used but not all fixtures in a Division are concluded the season shall be designated Curtailed and Regulation 7 shall apply.

c. In both instances, teams may apply for a reprieve from relegation in line with Regulation 8.



## 7. Curtailed Season – variance to Promotion and Relegation

a. If all teams in the Division have played each other once and all teams have played **75%** or more of their scheduled matches then the final table will be decided on a PPG basis when PPG represents the number of points gained by teams in all league fixtures divided by the number of fixtures played. If teams are level on points the standard league regulations for determining final positions shall apply.

b. If all teams in the Division have played each other once and all teams have played less than **75%** of their scheduled matches then the final table will be decided by the number of points gained by teams when each team had played each other once. ie only the results of these matches shall count to the final table, ie not the result of any reverse fixtures or if a Revised format used, fixtures in Phase 2. If teams are level on points the standard league regulations for determining final positions shall apply.

c. If all teams in the Division have not played each other once then there shall be no promotion or relegation save in line with Regulation 7.d below for Shortened format.

d. Promotion and Relegation in Curtailed Shortened format.

i. any team who has secured a promotion place (ie at the time a season was determined Curtailed it was in a promotion place and could not be overhauled) shall be promoted if a place is available in the relevant higher Division. This will either be by a team in that Division being eligible for relegation in line with 7.d.ii below, or a place being available due to a promotion in line with this regulation or withdrawal or league restructure. Where more than one team has secured a promotion place the team with the highest PPG (or placing as determined by standard league regulations) shall be promoted if only one place is available.

ii any team who cannot avoid ending in a relegation place (ie at the time a season was determined Curtailed it was in a relegation place and could overhaul another team) shall be relegated if a place is available in the relevant lower Division. This will either be by a team in that Division being eligible for promotion in line with 7.d.i above or a place being available due to a relegation in line with this regulation or withdrawal or league restructure. Where more than one team cannot avoid ending in a relegation place the team with the lowest PPG (or placing as determined by standard league regulations) shall be relegated if only one place is available.

## 8. Request to Reprive

a. If a team withdraws from the league in line with Regulation 3.c above but the season is curtailed with no promotion or relegation that team will retain its place within the Division for the subsequent season.

b. At the end of the season where a team occupies a relegation place within a Division a club may apply to the League for it to be reprived. A reprive may be granted if feasible, for example due to the number of teams being eligible for promotion or relegated to/from the relevant Division means that for the subsequent season there is fewer than the standard number of teams otherwise eligible to play in that Division or its successor. Priority for any reprive will be for a team who has completed a league season, in order of any ranking or equivalent playing record if from different Divisions, over any team who has withdrawn.

## 9. Start times and scheduling of fixtures

Where possible existing league regulations should apply in respect of start times. In variance to these and in order to facilitate fixtures being fulfilled the following shall apply.

a. Fixtures at Tier 1 must start between **1100 hrs and 1530 hrs\*** (\*1430 hrs from 25 Oct to 21 Feb unless the venue has floodlights with an average lux level of 350 lux, with current valid certification or dating from 1 Jan 2019 if it has not been possible to arrange a test.)

b. Fixtures at Tier 2 and Tier 3 must start between **0900 hrs and 1700 hrs\*** (\*1430 hrs from 25 Oct to 21 Feb unless the venue has floodlights with an average lux level of 250 lux, with current valid certification or dating from 1 Jan 2019 if it has not been possible to arrange a test)

c. Where both teams and the League agree fixtures can be played outside of these time windows including on a different date within two days of the original date, (eg Friday evening or Sunday)

## 10. Venue availability

a. Clubs must prioritise venue availability for all their teams (both men's and women's) in ranking order with the highest ranked team having highest priority for any available pitch slots. Any available slots between 1200 and 1430 hrs must be allocated to clubs' highest ranked teams.

b. The home team must confirm the venue and time for a fixture, 16 days in advance of it.

c. If the home team is unable to provide a venue for a fixture the away team shall be given the opportunity to host the fixture at a venue and time in line with these regulations (see Regulation 9 above). In these circumstances the away team may agree to reverse a subsequent fixture between the teams or retain home advantage for the subsequent fixture.

d. At any time within 16 days of the fixture if a venue becomes unavailable after it has been confirmed, the home team must immediately advise the away team of a change of venue/time. If no alternative venue is available, the home team must advise the away team immediately who shall be given the opportunity to host the fixture in line with 10.c above.

e. Any change of start time by the home team must be within one hour of the original start time or approved by the away team otherwise the away team shall be given the opportunity to host the fixture in line with 10.c above.

f. If it is not possible to arrange the fixture on the scheduled date or a team may request to postpone it or choose to forfeit a fixture at no penalty other than the fixture being recorded as a 3-0 loss subject to any further remission or penalty as imposed by the league.

## 11. Player availability

Standard league regulations shall apply save the following regulations shall apply where a club is unable to field sufficient players for its teams to fulfil all its fixtures on any one day.

a. Starred player regulations or those that are used to determine fair selection for teams shall only apply at Tier 1.

b. On the last round of matches in a Division or of Phase 1 of Phase 2 if a Revised format is used, players eligibility to play for a team will be subject to the following.

i. If a player has played a fixture in a higher ranked team during the season they are only eligible to play for the team if they have played **n** or more matches for the team or a lower ranked team during the season.

c. Players may play for more than one team within a club on any one day where both fixtures are at Tier 2 or below within the relevant league structure except on the last round of matches in a Division or of Phase 1 or Phase 2 if a Revised format is used

d. A team may choose to forfeit a fixture at no penalty other than the fixture being recorded as a 3-0 loss, subject to any further remission or penalty as imposed by the league, or request to postpone it.

e. The club should postpone/forfeit any fixtures for teams in their ranking order starting with the lowest ranked first.

## 12. Local lockdown

a. Where it is subject to local restrictions due to the impact of Covid 19 a team may choose to postpone the fixture or forfeit it at no penalty other than the fixture being recorded as a 3-0 loss.

## 13. Postponed and forfeited matches and slip dates

a. The League will consider any evidence in relation to a request to postpone a fixture and may approve this or decline this and determine the fixture forfeited. If a request to postpone a fixture is approved it shall be rearranged in line with slip date regulations.

b. A team will be entitled to postpone a maximum of **20%** of scheduled and postponed fixtures due to unavailability of a home venue or players or a local lockdown. If they are unable to fulfil further fixtures these fixtures will have to be forfeited. This is in addition to any postponements due to a venue being unfit for play due to the weather.

c. Any postponed match must be replayed on the designated slip date or may be played prior to the slip date if agreed by both teams (see *Appendix N4* for slip dates for the season).

d. The league retains the right to impose further remissions or penalties on teams forfeiting matches where, but not exclusively - a team forfeits multiple fixtures, where it is determined that Covid-19 was not a factor in the decision, where a the outcome of a Division may be impacted by such a decision. **nb if this is agreed a broad standard tariff should be adopted.**

## 14. Umpires

Umpires will be appointed to fixtures by relevant umpire associations where possible.

Where clubs are required to provide umpires, standard league regulations will apply.

If a team is unable to appoint an umpire in line with regulations to a fixture they should advise their opposition as soon as possible. The opposition may appoint an umpire qualified in line with league regulations. If they are unable to do so the team should appoint another individual to umpire the game. At Tier 3 it is acceptable for a team to use two



individuals to each umpire and play half the fixture.

**(Player Registration deadline** - If a Revised format is used at Tier 1 the deadline for transfers is 01 March 2021)

## **Appendices – will follow with final document or when able to be published**

Appendix N1 - EH Covid-19 Policy (not yet published as can only be set out once government agree the requirements)

Appendix N2 - **League pyramid sub divided into Tiers to be agreed but for illustrative purposes to recognise that lower league activity will see some more relaxed regulations in place.**

Appendix N3 – Revised Split Season regulations - developed if required.

Appendix N4 – Slip date calendar – **nb there will be a need for adherence to a calendar to minimise the risk of the impact of rescheduling further matches**