



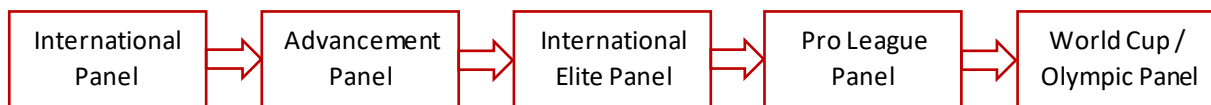
How to Become an England International Umpire

The Pathway

England’s international umpires are highly respected worldwide. The bar is therefore set high. There is a finite number of international tournaments, and therefore limited opportunity to perform internationally.

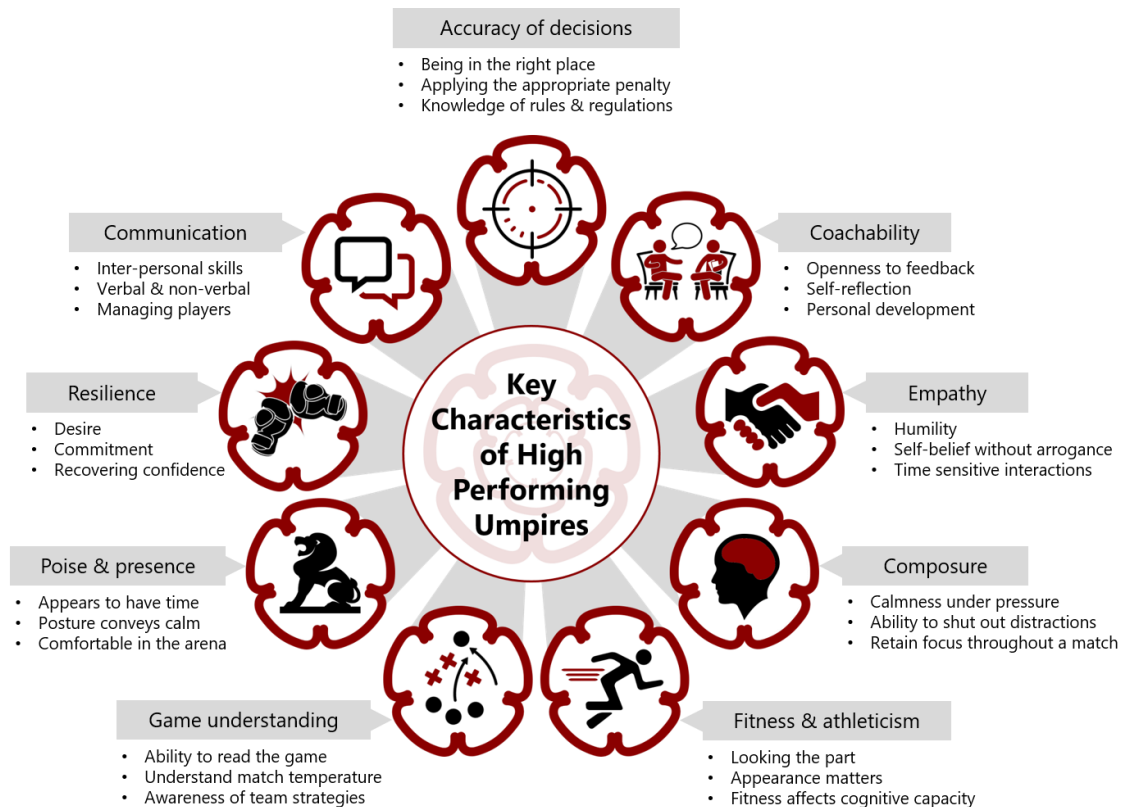
Our objective is to have an escalator of talented umpires at all stages of the pathway as a long term and sustainable strategy for success. Given the overall quality of English umpires, we have many who would be of the required standard to receive an international badge. Indeed, the threshold for our Premier Panels is deliberately set to correlate with international standards.

As a general rule, we are therefore looking to identify those who we believe have the capability to progress to International Elite Panel and beyond. The FIH Panels are as follows:



Key Characteristics of High Performance Umpires

NPUA has identified the following key characteristics of high performing umpires at all levels:





Talent ID

We aim to identify talented umpires from every available entry route. The National Young Umpire Programme has been a successful source of talented umpires over the past fifteen years, but we have also had a number of umpires who have successfully transitioned from playing at a very high level to umpiring at a very high level. We are keen to extend our talent ID network further over the coming years and there is no preferred or prescribed route. Indeed, there may be individuals umpiring for their club each week (and not part of the neutral appointing system) who have exactly what it takes.

Junior Tournaments provide a platform to showcase emerging talent, with the advantage of peer benchmarking. There is also a talent grapevine which seeks to identify those with potential.

Talent Development

England is blessed with high quality Umpire Managers and Umpire Coaches, and they help to refine umpiring skills in conjunction with the umpires themselves. Coaching can take place at regional or national tournaments, or at club matches of any kind.

Talent development will focus on the identified key characteristics. You may be fortunate enough to be invited to a Targeted Development Camp over a weekend, at which these key characteristics are discussed in detail alongside a tournament, with practical sessions to refine specific skills.

The Journey

Umpiring is not for the faint-hearted. You knowingly put yourself into the "lion's den". There will be times when players and coaches are highly critical of your performance. There will be times when your own evaluation of your performance is not as favourably shared by others. You therefore need to develop a thick skin, whilst at the same time a sensitivity to what lies behind criticisms. Elite umpiring brings great pressures and successful umpires need to be able to handle them.

The Umpiring Journey is a long and rocky road. Developing the range of skills to succeed at a high level internationally takes time and commitment over many years. Along the way, you will encounter the benefit or hindrance of a series of subjective judgements.

Personal Development Plan (PDP)

As an aspiring international umpire, you will be expected to draw up and maintain a PDP. This will allow you to express your end goal and show the steps you are willing to take to get there. By working with a mentor/coach, you can get support and input to help you on your journey.

How You Can Measure Your Progress

The simplest marker for measuring progress is the panel system for umpires that is operated by all Hockey Umpiring Associations; NPUA embraces a fast-track philosophy which enables umpires to be promoted more than one panel at a time, if appropriate. You may also be selected for tournaments which is an indicator.



High potential, however, differs from high performance. Our talent ID framework is designed to help us invest in those with high potential. Personal characteristics, such as coachability and commitment, therefore rank highly, although they are not as easy to measure.

Talent development in umpiring, as it is in all sport, is patchy and non-linear. Moreover, given that it is a volunteer activity, even at the highest level, you will need to manage your work-life-hockey balance. This sounds easier than it is – we all take our lives on to the pitch.

In umpiring, progression depends upon a series of subjective judgements, so it is important not to get too optimistic or too downbeat about progression at any given time. Successful umpires will have to manage the work-life-hockey balance and learn to focus on your personal development. Think performance, not marks, and the marks will follow.

Skill Development – Training Games & Junior International Tournaments

In addition to the regular domestic season and junior tournaments, England and GB play a number of training matches and unofficial junior international tournaments to which England appoint umpires. Making yourself available for these matches and tournaments can help you gain invaluable experience of international styles of play and skill levels, experience of players and coaches, as well as potentially helping you move up the pathway ladder. We recommend that you make yourself available for as many of these training games as you can.

The International Ladder

England appoints umpires to a number of European under 16 and 18 tournaments. Those who display promise may be invited to umpire at those events. Whilst not official international tournaments, they are a valuable learning experience and often the first step on the ladder. England will also receive feedback on performance.

We participate in two umpire development programmes run by EHF – U4E (Umpires For Europe) and UDP (Umpire Development Programme). U4E is designed to develop umpires from all over Europe; UDP targets those U4E umpires with evident promise to progress internationally.

Candidates are Nominated by National Associations, but the selection decisions are made by EHF.

Official tournaments are distinctive in that appointments are made by EHF rather than National Associations. To be considered, England have to decide to put you on the “EHF List”, the first formal step on the international ladder, and the only route to FIH accreditation. To be eligible for consideration, you need to have passed the FIH Fitness Test to the appropriate level.

To represent England (or GB) at official Under 18, U21 or senior tournaments, you need to be on the EHF List. From then on, everything will hinge on your performance feedback at tournaments. As a general rule, you will need two appropriate EHF performances at to be recommended by EHF to FIH for upgrade to International Umpire status. Once international status is achieved, any progressions are determined by FIH.

Luck can also play its part – being seen by the right person at the right tournament can be a shot in the arm for your prospects. Sometimes, opportunities arise because of late drop-outs; if you can be flexible at short notice, it can be a big advantage. There are many examples of English umpires



enhancing their careers by being able to take up a late opportunity and then really shining at the tournament.

The International Performance Group (IPG)

England controls which umpires they place on the EHF List, which is a requirement for international appointments, these appointments are under the control of EHF and FIH. Should an umpire be placed on the EHF list, they will automatically become a member of the IPG, which then gives you access to bespoke coaching, mentoring and individualised tournament preparation and support. This means that when you go to a tournament, "you are never alone on that pitch".

Will you get paid?

International umpires are not paid; the rewards for umpiring internationally are not financial. All the costs of travel to tournaments will be covered, so you will not be out of pocket, but there is no financial compensation for your time or your skills. At the very top level, such as FIH Pro League, World Cup and Olympics, you may get paid a daily allowance or match fee, but this is currently no more than €50 per day/match. So you will definitely not get rich umpiring! The rewards can instead be measured through the pride in representing your country and travelling the world.

Availability

It goes without saying that availability is important, both for domestic and international events. To progress, you both need experience and the chance to be spotted. One leads to the other.

Can you still play?

We positively encourage parallel development. Playing can add greater insight to your umpiring skills; indeed game understanding is one of the key characteristics of high performing umpires. We can work around your playing commitments, so you don't need to make a binary choice.

The England Aspiration

England's aspiration is to nurture a succession of the world's best umpires. NPUA's mission is to be the most respected Umpiring Association in the world.

We have spelt out some of the challenges to overcome. For those with the talent and determination to stay the course, however, the rewards potentially include representing your country, travelling the world, and becoming an Olympian.

Equally, your umpiring journey will bring you real transferable skills which can help you be successful in your chosen career, particularly if it involves management of people or conflict resolution.



What Next?

The support network in England is robust and highly regarded. Nevertheless, every athlete must take personal responsibility for their own development. Be pro-active in seeking to improve your skill levels. Focus on performance in preference to marks or appointments. Understand and commit to a long-term self-improvement strategy. Observe key characteristics of world's best umpires. Refine your game sense by watching top level teams and umpires.

Don't be shy of being ambitious. Success in top level sport requires sustained commitment and determination. It will involve performance choices, which may feel like sacrifices at times. Understand that ambition needs to sit alongside ever-developing self-awareness. Focus on developing your skills. Build your strengths into super-strengths. Identify and find mechanisms to address any weaker areas and ask advice of anyone and everyone who you believe can help you on your journey.

If you are currently within the umpiring pathway, be patient about opportunities and advancement. But be impatient about your own skill development. If you want to join the pathway, do not be afraid to say so. England seeks to attract new umpiring talent from every corner of the game, every corner of the country.

If you are not currently within the umpiring pathway, please feel free to contact us at either chair@npua.co.uk or umpiring@englandhockey.co.uk