

# Water Polo Leadership Group

27<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Time: 18:30 – 20:00

## Attendees:

Chris Stephens (CS) – Officials Lead  
Mike Hesketh (MH) – Competition Lead  
Steve Kinloch (SK) – General Member  
Ekaterina Boyd (EB) – Swim England Head of Events  
Claire Coleman (CC) – Swim England Head of Development  
Gareth Picken (GP) – Swim England Development Team Administrator

## Additional attendees:

Andy McGinty (AM) - Water Polo Talent and Inclusion Officer  
Rose Younger (RY) - Water Polo Talent and Inclusion Officer  
Alice Fairhall (AF) - Club Development Project Officer  
Diane Elliot (DE) - Sport Science Sport Medicine Manager

## Apologies:

Ian Mackenzie (IM) - Interim Chair/ SOC Representative  
Craig Figes (CF) – Swim England Water Polo Programme Lead  
Elliot McHugh (EM) – Youth Representative  
Dave Andrews (DA) – Secretary of BWPL

1.	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>
	In the absence of IM the group, which formed a quorum, unanimously agreed to proceed with the meeting. The group elected CC to chair the meeting.
2.	<b>Apologies</b>
	Ahead of the meeting, apologies were received from Ian Mackenzie, Craig Figes and Elliot McHugh.  Absence was noted from Adam Older (AO) and Paul Metcalf (PM).
3.	<b>Conflict of Interest</b>
	There were no initial conflicts of interest raised. The group reviewed the agenda in the absence of IM and agreed that items 9 and 12 should be postponed.
4.	<b>Development Update</b>
	4.1 Club Health Tracker
	AF joined the meeting and introduced herself to the group and her role within the SE development team. AF presented to the group, a report into the findings from the Club Health Tracker (CHT), which was open for all clubs to complete for the first couple of month of the year until it was closed for a period of analysis and consultation between SE and the engaged clubs.  RY asked what percentage of clubs (just Water Polo clubs/ aquatic clubs overall) do the findings represent?

AF answered that 14% of Water Polo clubs and 22% of aquatic clubs overall engaged with the survey.

SK asked what the regional breakdown was regarding engagement.

AF replied that in terms of number of engaged Water Polo club, there were:

- 2 from the North West,
- 1 from the North East,
- 2 from London,
- 0 from the East Region,
- 5 from the East Midlands,
- 1 from the West Midlands,
- 5 from the South East,
- 4 from the South West,

AF noted that the East Midlands did particularly well engaging with their clubs with 66% having completed the survey. AF explained that the regional team would congratulate the clubs who had already engaged with the survey in their weekly email, which prompted other clubs to also engage.

CC proposed that the results of the Club Health Tracker should be considered as part of EM's review of the strategy.

The CHT will next be released to all clubs between October and December.

**Action – AF and SK to work together on a Water Polo specific Communications plan.**

**5. BWPL Player Eligibility Status**

CC outlined a proposal on behalf of David Andrews (DA) who was unable to attend the meeting.

This proposal is a result of discussions between DA and IM and seeks to address the BWPL's concern that there are currently players who are participating in the league who are ineligible to compete and therefore this detrimentally affects the results.

Currently rules require any player born in the UK who wishes to compete in another European country must apply and hold a LEN certificate. British Swimming are responsible for the processing of these certificates. A player seeking to return to play in the UK must apply for a LEN certificate.

The BWPL have proposed a system, which would strengthen the British Swimming process for matches within the league. Clubs could report any athlete that they believe is ineligible to play. The report would need to specify the name, club and match during which the player took place.

Furthermore, the report would need to include evidence that they are ineligible to play in the league. This would need to be submitted to the league by midday on the Wednesday following the match. The league would keep a record and then pass the report to a league adjudicator who sits outside of the league officials.

	<p>The adjudicator would come to a decision based on the evidence provided and, if appropriate, sanctions on the club would then be placed. At the conclusion of the process, the BWPL would pass the report to Swim England.</p> <p>RY asked where the appeal to the sanctions would go after the decision was made about a player?</p> <p>CC replied that this is an aspect that is being clarified by the legal team.</p> <p>CS raised a point that the BWPL would only be able to apply sanctions on the offending club; it would then be the responsibility of Swim England and/or British Swimming to sanction the player.</p> <p>RY further asked where the record of a player transferring to another club outside of the UK would be found.</p> <p>CC replied that the list is held by only British Swimming and therefore does not show up on Swim England’s internal database.</p> <p>The BWPL are keen for a robust communication campaign if the process is agreed upon to ensure that all players/ clubs are aware.</p> <p>The group raised no objections to the proposal.</p> <p><b>Action – the draft proposal to be circulated to the group.</b></p>
6.	<b>Competition regulations review</b>
	6.1 Age banding for competitions
	<p>DE joined the meeting at 19:25 to discuss the proposed changes to the current age bandings proposed by IM.</p> <p>DE introduced herself and her role as the Sport Science Sport Medicine Manager for Swim England. DE explained after reviewing the competition regulations, the new proposal is for an under 9’s level, under 10’s level, under 11’s level and under 12’s level to bring this in line with other sports. DE mentioned that within rugby, a player who is physically ahead of their age group could play one-year age group ahead. SE are looking to adopt the same system.</p> <p>RY mentioned on behalf of Craig Figes that for smaller clubs, they might have a couple of players in a particular age group but not enough to make a team. Could a ‘Barbarians’ style competition take place during which clubs can team up to ensure there are enough numbers to make a team.</p> <p>The group agreed to the proposal.</p> <p><b>Action – IM to draft the regulations to encompass the age bandings.</b></p>
7.	<b>Development Update</b>
	7.1 Staffing

	<p>CC outlined to the group that George Wood; SE Sport Development Director stepped down on the 13<sup>th</sup> July. Ally White has been appointed to the role, which he will begin at the beginning of October.</p> <p>In addition, Swim England are in the process of advertising for a Head of Performance.</p> <p>CC is due to go on maternity leave during September.</p>
8.	<b>Water Polo Programme Lead</b>
	8.1 Programme update
	<p>RY provided the group with an update to the Water Polo programme.</p> <p>In the senior programmes, the women won their qualification group and have started to prepare for the European Championships. The men did not qualify, however this was to be expected.</p> <p>In the junior programmes, the under 17 girls have been preparing for the European Championships in Turkey. The under 19 boys and girls teams continue to prepare for next year with both teams entering the senior EU nation tournaments in December.</p> <p>The under 19's girls are trialing a new heart rate monitoring system as a way of helping the national team coaches monitor home training and as a way of helping provide feedback their training programmes and identifying improvements that could be made.</p> <p>Players born 2007/2008 (male and female) have undergone trials and / or been selected for the Talent Games. As a result, both squads are large in number to begin with, however will reduce over the first 2-6 months.</p> <p>AM provided the group with an update about the Talent Games. Two Talent Games have currently taken place with overall very positive feedback being received. MH delivered Table Official courses at both games increasing the number of officials engaging with the sport. Parent and player education was also delivered at both games.</p>
9.	<b>Strategy review</b>
	9.1 Look at where we are
	<b>POSTPONED</b>
10.	<b>Officials</b>
	10.1 Dress code
	<p>Prior to the meeting, the group received a proposal from CS explaining that from 1st September 2023, Water Polo referees at Swim England National Age Group competitions will be required to wear long black trousers. The regions and local leagues will be strongly encouraged to adopt this policy to make the sport more inclusive and accessible for volunteers on poolside.</p> <p>No member raised any objections to the proposal.</p> <p><b>Action – CS to proceed with circulating the dress code policy change with the Water Polo community.</b></p>

	<b>Action – EB to speak with the SE comms team about the publication of the policy change.</b>
11.	<b>Communications review</b>
	11.1 Update on progress
	<p>SK presented the group with a matrix, which has been set up to develop a communications connection between Swim England communications team and Water Polo England. The general principle with the matrix is to establish which elements of Water Polo Swim England would lead on, with Water Polo England repost, and which elements the reverse would take place.</p> <p>The group had no further comments on the matrix.</p> <p><b>Action – CC and EB to work with Kate Rudkin to progress further with the implementation of the matrix.</b></p>
12.	<b>Hardship Fund</b>
	<b>POSTPONED</b>
13.	<b>A.O.B</b>
	Floor
	<p>MH raised an issue around the number of clubs entering the National Age Groups being too high and therefore proposing that the top 12 clubs from last year should be invited to the competition. If one of the twelve clubs do not want to compete, their place is offer to any club who did not make the top 12 clubs.</p> <p>The group agreed with the proposal.</p> <p>In addition, the under 17's/ under 19's qualifications round for the National Age Group dates currently clash with the Talent Squads training dates.</p> <p><b>Action – EB to speak with CF around the dates for the Talent Squads.</b></p> <p>CS raised the point around the development of the regulations in light of CC soon departure to maternity leave.</p> <p><b>Action - CC, CS and Guy Ward to meet as a refresh about the development of regulations.</b></p> <p>SK raised a point around the implementation of the team manager, coach and chaperone supervision ratios during competition. It was agreed that there would be a meeting between Helen Weeks, CS and SK to discuss 'scenarios' to clarify the policy for the Water Polo community.</p> <p><b>Action – CC to link up Helen Weeks, CS and SK to discuss contextualising the policy for Water Polo.</b></p> <p>MH mentioned that he has an additional commitment on Thursday, so proposed future meeting changing to a Wednesday.</p> <p>The group agreed with the proposed change.</p>

	CC closed the meeting at 20:20.
14.	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>
	27 <sup>th</sup> September