

# INSPIRING AN ACTIVE HOCKEY FAMILY

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**Annual Report 2019-20**



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# Office Bearers

**President:** Terry Templeton  
**Vice President:** Rosie Rea

**Chair:** Billy Pollock  
**Vice Chair:** Peter Kelly  
**Honorary Treasurer:** Mervyn Logan

<b>Management Board:</b>	Iain Kelly	Competitions Committee
	Christopher McCandless	Coaching Committee
	Jamie Aiken	Umpires Committee
	Ann Rosa	Joint Schools Committee
	Eric Cunningham*	Finance Committee
	Gareth Herron	GDPR
	Jonathan Rose	
	Christine Reid	

\* Committee Chair, does not attend Management Board

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# Introduction from the Chair

Billy Pollock

On behalf of all the Ulster Hockey Management Board and Staff, I have pleasure in introducing the 11th Annual Report of the Ulster Hockey Union (UHU).

However in the very unusual circumstances of the Covid-19 Pandemic, our immediate thoughts are with the members of Ulster Hockey Family who have played major roles in the fight against the terrible virus and for anyone who has suffered personal loss of a family or friend loved one. A very sincere thanks to all our hockey health care professionals, Ulster Hockey is truly proud of you.

We look forward to supporting these members when we get back to hockey and they still have to cope with on-going restrictions, dealing with the mitigation against any possible second wave risk of the virus.

We also think of the much older members of the Branch or those shielding, who have been confined to their homes. Thank you to all the many Hockey friends who have supported each other in their individual challenging scenarios.

Thanks also the Clubs for managing the financial challenges, extremely difficult situations of furloughing employees and ensuring pitch maintenance, etc. Big shout-out to Clubs who have helped in their local communities, dealing with all the risks involved.

This concise review hopefully provides a useful insight into the 2019-2020 season, from the span of Youth Blitz level to the Elite Athlete level. This is only a brief resume of the vast number of work streams being delivered. It serves to highlight the significant work undertaken by our Staff, Standing Committees' Volunteers (from Clubs and Schools, Umpires and Coaches) and the UHU Management Board and Finance Committee Volunteers, throughout the year and further because of delayed AGM.

We were pleased to welcome our new Executive Manager Marc Scott in mid June 2019, following a very efficient recruitment and selection process. Marc brings a wealth of sport performance, governance and management experience to Ulster Hockey and is leading the Staff Team very satisfactorily and has already made real gains for local hockey.

Unfortunately, we lost Andrew Johnston to a future career move at the end of February after a significant tenure and exemplarily service as very much the 'face of Ulster Hockey'. We all wish Andrew the very best in his new career.

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We thank Andrew Brown, Ian Hughes, Shirley McCay and Jonathan McMeekin for their continued professional commitment as they represent Ulster Hockey. We are also delighted to welcome Nicki Bayes, Finance and Administration Officer and most recently Conor Savage (see Marc's report). All the Staff have been working from home from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 (to 1<sup>st</sup> July - progressive return) and have been finding innovative and creative ways of using lockdown to promote, plan and grow the sport we love.

Our partners JOMA (Teamwear Ireland) are enhancing the Ulster Hockey with the kit brand growth and Podium ensures our equipment is latest high standard.

We would applaud Clubs who are leading the way in Disabled participation in hockey, Youth Umpires, 'back to hockey', Youth Blitzes plus Masters and the 'walking hockey' initiative. Men's hockey is still in decline and we are open to any ideas to arrest that trend and stimulate growth the Men's Leagues. Please help in this regard if you can.

We have a collaborative culture working with Staff, Board, Clubs, Umpires, Coaches, Sponsors and Supporters plus the main Media links (thanks to the efforts of our local reporter John Flack, Nigel Ringland - BBC NI and Stephen Findlater 'The Hook Hockey').

Congratulations to all the Ulster Ladies, Men, Girls and Boys who have had great success with Ulster and Ireland! Many playing in top level competition successfully both at outdoor and indoor hockey. Particular congratulations go to the Ulster girls who achieved Olympic Qualification with Ireland Ladies. Captain Katie Mullan and the girls are doing a fantastic job promoting the sport in Ulster and Ireland. Ulster Men players continue to represent Ireland also in significant numbers and we congratulate Mark Tumulty's appointment as Ireland Men's Head Coach.

Congratulations to GB&NI Men's players Ian Sloan, David Ames and Mark Gleghorne on attaining Olympic Qualification with GB.

Special mention of Eugene Magee (Banbridge Hockey Club) on his International retirement after an incredible 295 Caps for Ireland!

We wish all our current and future Internationals continued success at all levels U16, U18, U21 and Senior level.

Congratulations to our two most recently appointed FIH Umpires, Linda Coughlan and Russell Donaldson and it's wonderful to see Ulster Umpires reaching this world-class level. Very best wishes to Linda and Russell for future tournament appointments.

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However, disappointingly Ireland Umpires have not had many appointments to recent major tournaments, so there is great opportunities for young Umpires to 'reach for the skies' blowing the whistle and travel the world!

EYHL demands have impacted significantly on the Ulster Leagues and the Umpires Committee is working hard at introduced new umpires, training and mentoring, but they need the vital help from the Clubs network of new recruits and past players to augment the small but dedicated Ulster Umpires pool of Ladies and Men.

Big thanks to our Ulster Hockey Sponsors. Key Stakeholders such as Denman, Belfast Telegraph, Linwoods, John Minnis Estate Agents, BDO NI, Barclay Communications, MMW (Millar McCall Wylie, Legal) and University of Ulster Jordanstown. We are indebted for this vital income generation to enable future development of our sport. Marc and the team have been doing a great job developing our relationships with current and new sponsors and also securing various local grant opportunities.

Our major investor Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI) continues to work closely with both Ulster Hockey and Hockey Ireland, however early indications from Sport NI are that 4% per year budget reductions will be introduced in next 4 years budget cycle 2021 to 2025. This plus previous grant cycle reductions, means we will be effectively working with half the investment level of 2016!!

We have been privileged to support our new charity, Northern Ireland Children's Hospice in a formal partnership (3 years), big thanks to Marc for this superb initiative.

We had made good progress with the plans for Incorporation and Charity status but are frustrated at a further slip in the formal Incorporation date to later in the autumn. The draft Articles of Association are ready and structure is set and Committee Terms of Reference are being finalised. We will be looking for more Volunteers for the Committees and new Board for the delayed AGM when we will go forward with Ulster Hockey Ltd. GDPR (EU General Data Protection Regulation) compliance and Data Management improvements continue to progress satisfactorily.

A new Code of Conduct has been introduced to include everybody. Please use it to significantly improve the culture, to remove any abuse against or by players, umpires, officials, volunteers and supporters. However, I have to repeat my annual call for due consideration before you make any appeal or complaint. The cost and time involved plus legal consultations continue to seriously deflect from other priorities.

Disciplinary matters have not been full addressed due to a number of issues. This is obviously a matter of concern and remedial action is being taken to address the current and legacy infringements.

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I would thank our President Terry Templeton, Vice-President Rosemary Rea and all the Voting Board Members for their tremendous commitment to the work of the Board in the past year and the many hours of additional effort. I would particularly thank the Hon Treasurer Mervyn Logan and the Vice-Chairperson Peter Kelly for their huge effort. Board attendance was very good and everyone was willing to participate, challenge and prepared take on intensive or sensitive tasks and actions. The Board co-opted Christine Reid and Christopher McCandless (Coaching) during the year to join Ann Rosa (Schools), Iain Kelly (Competitions), Jamie Aiken (Umpires), Jonathan Rose and Gareth Herron (GDPR). We have not attained the desired gender balance for the Board and I would ask for the Ladies to step up to any Board role gaps and that we are looking for – to give a more inclusive representation (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity) through all the various Committees and working groups also.

Iain Kelly, Marc Scott and myself have been heavily involved with Hockey Ireland and the Covid-19 impacts on playing and competitions, discussing the various updates. Hockey Ireland and the four Provinces and worked to manage a highly challenging scenario in the best way for all concerned. Unfortunately, we had to organise the Appeals Panel to hear 2 relegation related Appeals. These appeals were not upheld by the Independent Panel, who pointed out the 2019/20 Competitions Rules 2 (c) and the UHU Constitution Rule 21 (d) permitted the Competitions Committee decisions and Management Board procedural actions.

We wish particularly wish Ann Rosa an very enjoyable term as the next Hockey Ireland President for the next 2 years. Ann is a tremendous Ulster Hockey stalwart volunteer.

Thank you to Standing Committee Members for all their regular reports and their efforts. From the many who have daily/weekly responsible tasks to perform, to those who help out occasionally at events or collect entrance money 'at the gate'. These Volunteers put in so much work and it is all greatly appreciated.

In January 2020 (Belfast Telegraph Sports Awards) our Finance Committee Chair Eric Cunningham (South Antrim Men's HC) became the latest Ulster Hockey recipient of the prestigious 'W J Paddy Patterson Award' for outstanding commitment to Sport in Northern Ireland. A fantastic acknowledgement for Eric's many years of volunteer financial oversight for Ulster Hockey!

## UHU Management Board Attendance Record 2019/20

No	Board Member	2019						2020				TOTAL	
		Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		Apr
1	Billy Pollock - Chair	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
2	Peter Kelly - Vice Chair	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	90%
3	Mervyn Logan - Hon Treasurer	X		X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	70%
4	Ann Rosa - Chair Schools Comm	✓		✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	90%
5	Iain Kelly - Chair Competitions Comm	✓		X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	80%
6	Jamie Aiken - Chair Umpires Comm	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
7	Jonathan Rose - Member	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	90%
8	Gareth Herron - Member	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	90%
9	Terry Templeton - President (N/Voting)	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
10	Rosie Rea - Vice President (N/Voting)	✓		X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	80%
11	Christine Reid - Member	Sesceded 18th Jun		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	89%
12	Christopher McCandless - Coaching Comm	Sesceded 15th Oct				✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	63%

In conclusion and on behalf of all the Management Board, Committees and Staff, I would sincerely thank the Clubs Community for another year's great work ever challenging situations and we look forward to a successful next season which hopefully can be planned over the next few months, back to play protocols allowing.

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# Executive Manager's Report

Marc Scott

June 2020 marks a year in post for me....and what a year. No-one could have predicted the events of the last few months and that I'd be writing this report, and indeed undertaking my role of leading Ulster Hockey's operations from my dining room table. The COVID-19 situation has presented a number of challenges to Ulster Hockey but we must be mindful of priorities and recognise that our members and communities' health and wellbeing are of far more importance. With that in mind I hope all of our members and wider circle of friends and family are staying safe and well and I look forward to seeing everyone in and around the hockey pitch in the near future.

Throughout the period of lock-down, while the Ulster Hockey office has been closed and the staff working from home, and despite everyone's own personal challenges, every member of staff has stepped up the mark admirably and continued to deliver for Ulster Hockey and our members. There has been a clear focus on review and planning throughout this period and I'd hope the benefits of being afforded the time to step back from the delivery of hockey activity will be realised over the coming months and years. Other benefits have been realised in this recent period and working practices may change positively as a result. Our social media approach has become more interactive and our engagement with Hockey Ireland has been significantly increased through the use of technology and video conferencing. These practices can only provide a positive impact on the operations of Ulster Hockey.

The Chair's welcome provides a very comprehensive account of the last 12 months and I do not wish to repeat the detail. It is clear that 2019/20 was a very busy year for Ulster Hockey and a lot was achieved in the year. COVID-19 aside, the year was still not without its challenges.

## Domestic Hockey

Domestic hockey continues to be a key focus of Ulster Hockey, with a number of challenges to be addressed. We continue to face challenges around providing umpires; and there are continued challenges regards the league structures – particularly in the Men's game - and unfortunately the lock down has delayed the process of addressing these challenges. Ulster Hockey remains committed to continued improvement and the staff are committed to supporting the various committees in providing the best product to our members and stakeholders.

From an operational perspective, Andrew Johnston left the post of Domestic Hockey Officer in March 2020 leaving a significant gap. From a personal perspective this was a significant challenge as AJ was

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a crucial support to me in my role with his extensive knowledge of and immense passion for hockey. I wish AJ every success in his new career and hope to see him return to the Ulster Hockey family in some capacity in future where we can benefit from his talents. A robust recruitment process was undertaken in March 2020 and I am delighted to welcome Conor Savage to the team albeit following a delay in appointment. We have been fortunate enough to secure funding from The Executive Office Central Good Relations Programme and Conor will combine the Domestic Hockey Officer role with the newly developed Good Relations Officer role funded through this programme.

### Funding, Sponsors and Partners

We continue to operate in a sector which is operating against a back-drop of reduced public and lottery investment. This provides a challenge to Ulster Hockey to continue to grow and deliver success with reduced reliance on Sport NI and other grants from the public purse. On a positive note, we have continued to diversify our funding sources and the continued support of our sponsors is very much appreciated. We also welcome new partners of Millar McCall Wylie, Barclay Communications and University of Ulster to the Ulster Hockey family.

In terms of public funds, we have continued to receive welcome support from Sport NI, which makes an important contribution to our development function. We are continuing to perform well against our agreed targets for this funding and hope that this has a positive bearing on future funding, with the current 4-year investment cycle concluding in March 2021.

We have continued to receive support through the local authorities with investment being provided by Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council, Mid-Ulster Council and Belfast City Council across 2019-20. Again, we hope to continue to grow our relationships with the local Sports Development Officers and grow our sport across the province, with the appointment of a Good Relations Officer providing an opportunity to diversify the opportunities to engage the local Community Planning functions of local authorities and there will be some sector leading initiatives being delivered in the near future.

In 2019, we were proud and humbled to have established a partnership with the NI Children's Hospice as our official charity partner. This has been a mutually beneficial partnership to date and where the Ulster Hockey family has provided crucial financial support to the Hospice through generous fundraising, the partnership has brought significant positive exposure to Ulster Hockey. There are plans being developed to further develop the partnership and I urge you to dig deep and support our programme of events and campaigns with the Hospice.

### Company Structure

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It is with frustration that the AGM was postponed in May as there has been a substantial amount of work gone into considering the future structure of Ulster Hockey to include both the legal structure and the board/committee structures. Aligned to the future strategic objectives of Ulster Hockey, a new structure will be proposed at the re-arranged AGM, with the intention of adopting a fit-for-purpose, modern and strategic Board and Committee structure to provide efficient and effective leadership in the sport.

This restructure is being considered in the context of defining the strategic direction of Ulster Hockey over a longer term. Over the coming months there will be member engagement to finalise the long terms strategy and I would urge all clubs and members to engage positively and constructively in this process to inform the future direction of Ulster Hockey.

### Conclusion

The last year has been a learning curve for me, building my knowledge of the organisation, the sport and getting to know the personalities in the hockey family. From the outside, working in the sports sector locally I was acutely aware of the size of hockey, but when viewed from a new perspective I am now aware that the reach and scope of hockey is larger than anticipated but more importantly the potential of Ulster Hockey is immense. The Ulster Hockey team is committed to working to ensure we achieve as much of that potential as possible, allowing us to realise ambitious aspirations of growth and excellence.

While I appreciated that there would be some challenges in the role, a global pandemic was not necessarily what I had anticipated. However, the fact that Ulster Hockey has had the resilience to navigate this challenge effectively is testament to the hard work of the Board and Staff and indeed the strength of the Ulster Hockey family.

As with the rest of the sports sector, there will be a great number of challenges for Ulster Hockey to overcome in the short, medium and longer term however, the future is exciting for Ulster Hockey and over the coming months I hope that we can start to make progress towards realising this potential and seeing the sport continuing to thrive and grow at all levels. The Board and Staff have a shared vision and are committed to a successful and sustainable future and with the continued support of the committed volunteers – all of whom already make a priceless contribution to the sport – we can realise all of our ambitions while Inspiring and Active Hockey Family.

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# Talent Coach's Report

Shirley McCay

## Talent Identification and Performance

### 1 Talent Identification

In 2019-20 our approach to the identification, development and confirmation of talent for hockey continued to grow and develop. The projects that were carried out in 2018-19 were replicated and improved with great success and such initiatives continue to be firmly integrated within our overall approach to finding talent. New projects were also explored. Discussions with the other provinces around restructuring our underage programmes to better align to hockey Ireland age groups has been lengthy and in the next couple of years there looks set to be a number of key changes to our structures to improve the player pathway and provide maximal development. Such changes will need buy-in, support and a joined-up approach from all key stakeholders and we will endeavour to do our utmost to ensure as smooth and clear a transition as possible.

The opportunity for a school or club coach to contact us regarding a player they consider we should be interested in remains in place and has proved useful. This seeks to avoid the risk of a young talent falling through the net and is the first stage of a 'scouting' process. The second stage involves an invitation to a Camp or number of sessions relating to their performance age group. Our open-door policy is a core value and one that has allowed for later developers to showcase their abilities further along the 'traditional' player pathway.

The quality work being undertaken by our Youth Development Officer and Active Communities Coaches are aligned nicely with the Talent ID work carried out at younger age group levels, particularly at Primary School and under 13.

#### 1.1 Primary School Programme

In relation to Talent, May and June of 2019 saw the Primary School Talent Development Programme continue successfully for its third year. Given the large number of boys and girls playing hockey at Primary School age and record entries into the Primary School tournaments ran by Andrew Brown it is a natural step in encouraging the development of those considered to have talent at this age. It was also considered an important tool to retain our young players to hockey when they are provided with similar opportunities in other sports.

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32 boys and 54 girls participated across 6 regions, alongside the U13 programme. Training ran for 8 weeks, with nominations sought from those who participated in the Pearson and McCloy Cup in April 2018 (Primary School Finals day).

It is also worth noting that we asked those involved in the running of the Primary School Regional days to 'keep an eye' on any prospective talented players that may not have made it to the finals. This open door policy again seeks to try to avoid us missing any young players with potential. Three girls and boys were invited to Primary School Programme via this route.

## 1.2 U13 Regional Talent Academies

The Regional Talent Academy programme was carried out again in 2019 with 135 girls and 55 boys taking part. There were 6 regions – Coleraine, Lisburn, Omagh, Belfast, Lurgan and Newtownabbey. May and June were also identified as a time when those involved were not playing so much school or club hockey therefore weren't overplaying.

We were very lucky to have capable lead coaches as well as assistants who provided the girls and boys with a sound environment in which to enjoy their hockey amongst other players of similar capabilities. It was also to be noted that all groups included mixed participation ie girls training with boys and the feedback from coaches was that this worked well and should continue at this age group.

It is worth considering the numbers from Primary School to U13 on the girls' side increased to 135 whereas the increase on the boy's side was not as steep. It is clear that this is a particular age group at youth level where we need to invest on the boys' side to get more young males taking up the game and continuing into adulthood.

## 1.3 Talent Camps

Our ongoing Talent Camps continue to be highly popular. During the half term, Easter and Summer periods of 2019 they ran over three or four days in Ballymena, Wallace, Coleraine, Belfast, Banbridge, Raphoe, Newtonabbey and Omagh. These camps continue to be invite only therefore seek to bring together those considered to have talent. Often having talented players compete against and play with those of similar capabilities can provide them with an environment to prosper and pit themselves against quality players within that age group. We do however allow those nominated through our scouting process mentioned in the opening paragraphs to attend if the opportunity is right.

The content of our Talent Camps has been developed and tweaked to include specialist skills that can sometimes be overlooked or not focussed on during school or club training. These include elements like particular 3D skills, aerial balls, specific goal scoring methods and penalty corner techniques (injection and trapping).

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## 2 Talent Development

There is no doubt that our young players have more opportunities than ever before to showcase their talent. The comprehensive approach at Primary School and under 13 age level leads on to our Talent Development Programmes. These programmes not only strive to continue to develop players as they get older but also start to determine their level of talent.

As player welfare becomes ever more important emphasis in 2019-20 was placed on as much of an holistic approach to our underage talent as possible. For the first time they were able to access a number of workshops (parents as well) that centred around core issues away from the pitch that often cause stress or anxiety for varying reasons.

All those involved in our underage talent programmes had access to the workshops and feedback was very positive. Workshops included:

- Nutrition
- Body image
- Exam pressures
- Social media

### 2.1 U15 Talent Development Programme

Our Under 15 Talent Development Programme continues to be our main vehicle for doing this. It is a highly popular programme with places much sought after. This year we had 200 outfield players and 15 goalkeepers across 12 groups providing 24 hours of on field coaching. In 2019-20 we had a strong field of coaches working with each group. In advance of the commencement of the programme all coaches met to discuss a new resource document that was to be implemented across all the venues. This was to provide more guidance for coaches around session outline and align the sessions consistently for all players involved.

Whilst numbers for this programme are high and that suggests a wealth of talent, we do work to specifically identify the 'talent' from those deemed of potential interest from our assessment process. Tiered grading occurs according to assessment scoring and this determines what players are slotted into what group. This allows us to invest in a wide net of players whilst also starting to focus on the ongoing development of our lead players at this age group.

At the midway point of the programme the parents are invited to attend a workshop that outlines the pathway process and answers any questions they may have. This proves a useful method of communication and has also been replicated with our older performance groups. There was also a

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workshop delivered by Gordon McClland who is the founder of 'Working with Parents in Sport'. Gordon focussed on the parents and how they interact with their children in relation to their journey with Ulster. The feedback from this workshop is wholly positive with parents finding it very informative. At the end of the programme all participants were given a personalised red embroidered half zip jacket as part of their involvement.

There also continues to be a written feedback report submitted by each head coach to the Talent Coach and then passed on to each player. This is in addition to the continual verbal feedback given to the players at each session. An online survey is also submitted to each player and their parents to allow for feedback on aspects of the programme they enjoyed, what needed changed and their opinions on things like value for money, communication, written feedback and quality of coaching.

With all our development programmes, regardless of age, our focus is providing a sound and enjoyable learning environment that will assist the ongoing development of the players involved, while working at the same time to determine the potential level of each of the individuals.

### **3 Performance**

Our underage performance programme seek to confirm and further develop the talent that has been identified through our Talent Development Programmes. Despite working with little to no budget we continue to be offer quality training programmes and continued competitive events year on year. This has been possible due to planning ahead, developing partnerships with schools and universities, fundraising events and income generation through Talent Camps.

#### **3.1 U15**

Following the completion of our under 15 Talent Development Programme a panel was named to train for selection for a series v Scotland and beyond that Interprovincials. Both male and female squads were split into two regional panels trained twice a week in May and June, before selection in early June where they joined and trained together as one squad. Their May training block included games v Leinster and Munster U15 panels, something that we hope will continue to happen around this time of year.

In June of 2019 an Ulster under 15 male group travelled to Glasgow whilst their female counterparts welcomed Scotland to UUJ. The boys also travelled to Wales two weeks later whilst Wales U16 boys travelled to play at Shaw's Bridge. All games were competitive (girls drew their Wales series and the boys won their Wales series) and for our underage programmes this is the first taste of competitive hockey against an underage national side which is invaluable.

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### 3.2 U16

In February of 2019 seven Ulster boys and eight Ulster girls were selected for the Ireland under 16 squads.

After a break in July the female under 16 reconvened training in August. They were led by Davy Menaul, assisted by Christine Russell and Caroline Adams and managed by Emma Dunlop. Their training phase in August included a series win against Leinster and a series win against the UK Lions who introduced a girls' squad for the second time. They plan to return in August 2020 if rules permit. The U16 girls group trained twice a week through to their Interprovincials hosted by Munster in September. The girls finished unbeaten, 4 wins from 4 in a tough tournament held over 3 days. It was a fantastic reward for all the hard work and commitment shown by both players and staff. 12 girls from the squad were selected by the Irish under 16 head coach to trial. At the end of the 2019-20 year there were 9 Ulster girls in the Irish panel.

The under 16 boys trained twice and often three times a week resuming August 2019 in preparation for their Interprovincial tournament hosted by Ulster in September. They were led by Scott McCandless, assisted by Robyn Chambers and Jordan Robinson and managed by Hannah Walker. The boys also played a series v Leinster and the UK Lions in Mossley in August, winning every game. The Interprovincial tournament was held at Stormont and Ulster produced 4 exemplary performances, 4 wins, 23 goals for and 2 against. Not only were they unbeaten they played some wonderful hockey and their performance as a team matched the results. It has been a long time since any provincial team were such convincing winners of the title. 14 boys were selected by the Irish under 16 head coach to trial. At the end of the 2019-20 year there were still 15 Ulster boys in the Irish panel.

The commitment given by the players and parents throughout the year was second to none and we at Ulster Hockey are incredibly lucky to have such support at our disposal. Added to this, the coaching staff who committed long hours both on and off the pitch should receive much credit and praise. With added opportunities to our young talent comes added responsibility to nurture them and their work is greatly appreciated.

### 3.3 U18

In February of 2019 eight Ulster boys and five Ulster girls were selected for the Under 18 Ireland squads.

In late July 2019 our under 18 girls and boys panels travelled to Lilleshall for a series of games v Wales and England. This was a series designed to replicate the School Games which transitioned to a bi-

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annual event meaning there was no Games in 2019. This was a useful weekend with close results across the board.

After a break in July both groups trained twice / three times a week in preparation for the interprovincials in September. The boys were led by Stephen Cuddy and Patrick Grimes, assisted by Jamie Ireland and managed by Andrew Johnston. The girls were led by Joel Cathcart, assisted by Alex Speers and Carolyn Burns and managed by Shirelle Wilson. Both groups were grateful to a number of clubs that provided them with friendly fixtures in the lead up to the tournament and the umpires who gave of their time to officiate.

The girls finished the interpro tournament in Munster unbeaten, with 4 convincing wins in a tough competition where they play 4 games in 3 days. They played some fantastic hockey, scored some wonderful goals and defended with maturity when under pressure. The U18 girls group also included 8 girls who will return to U18 provincial hockey in 2019 which further adds to their achievements with such a young squad. It was a special weekend in Munster with both girls' underage squads bringing their respective trophies back to Ulster. 12 of the girls received under 18 Irish trials.

The boy's tournament hosted by Ulster and despite some promising performances the squad lost out to strong Leinster and Munster teams. Munster U18 won the title which was richly deserved based on their performances over the weekend. 11 of the boys' squad received under 18 Irish trials.

As mentioned with regard to our U16 squads, parents, players and coaching staff deserve much praise and credit for their hard work and commitment to an intense and busy schedule.

### 3.4 Under 21

An u21/u23 men's panel was formed in late 2019 with the aim of completing a series of fixtures v Leinster and Munster over March of 2020. The group was led by Adam Loudon and Jonny Quigley with assistance from Jonny Bell and Eugene Magee. Denis Pritchard (U21 Irish head coach) was to attend each fixture and from there select an U21/23 group for the remainder of the spring and summer, with a view that those in the U23 category could potentially join Mark Tumilty's senior men's programme. Ulster started the fixtures strongly with a 2-0 win over Leinster but the remaining fixtures fell victim to the Coronavirus pandemic. This is an important age group which must be kept engaged going forward in order to support the future of the men's national squad.

On the female side, the Ulster involvement with Ireland U21/23 was strong with 10 players involved with Dave Passmore's programme. The structure of the female programme varies from the men's therefore an U21 series/fixtures was not deemed necessary. The exodus of talented players

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(particularly on the female side) to study and play abroad is worrying and as a result an U21 Ulster girl's side as per 2018-19 was not feasible.

#### **4. Senior Internationals in 2019**

##### GB

Mark Gleghorne  
Ian Sloan (joint captain)  
David Ames

##### Ireland

###### Men

Jonny Bell  
Matthew Bell  
Chris Cargo  
Peter Caruth  
Paul Gleghorne  
John Jackson  
Neal Glassey  
Michael Robson  
Callum Robson  
Matthew Nelson  
Eugene Magee  
Sean Murray

###### Women

Shirley McCay  
Ayeisha McFerran  
Megan Frazer  
Zoe Wilson  
Katie Mullan  
Zara Malseed  
Lizzie Holden  
Jessica McMaster  
Erin Getty  
Serena Barr  
Bethany Barr

#### **5. Moving Forward**

It is clear to see that there is a lot of talent emanating from the ranks of Ulster hockey's underage performance groups. This is a product of hard work, dedication and commitment from the athletes and their parents; but also testimony to the efforts made by UH to provide them with a sound learning environment, quality coaching, competitive but healthy environments, and quality opposition.

It is vital that we continue to develop and support our young upcoming coaches who are involved with Ulster Hockey programmes right from Primary School through to Under 21. Hockey Ireland must endeavour to produce an effective coaching pathway and Ulster hockey will continue to seek to assist in providing opportunities to our young coaches and encouraging them to apply for Junior age group positions.

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As mentioned in the opening paragraphs it is likely there will be a number of key changes in the coming years in relation to who provincial hockey at underage level is structured. These changes will hopefully seek to better support those players coming out of U18 panels but possibly not yet ready for U21 international hockey. This age group gap is an underdeveloped area and currently vastly under supported, so changes going forward are welcome to enhance support for them amongst others.

Moving forward our key areas we will look to focus on from a talent identification and performance point of view are:

- A) Restructuring our provincial programmes so that they better dovetail in Hockey Ireland underage programmes.
- B) Restructuring our coaching committee – producing a group to support the Talent Coach, support the coaching and player pathways and provide pathway player managers to support our underage players involved in provincial programmes.
- C) Providing more structured and effective support to coaches working within Ulster hockey not only in UH programmes but also in schools and clubs.
- D) Most importantly working to ensure the coronavirus pandemic has as little a negative impact on the development of our young players as possible, and those in certain age brackets do not miss out on opportunities to play representative hockey for both Ulster and Ireland.

## **6. AOB**

### **6.1 Gumshield2Go partnership**

In the 2019-20 season it was agreed that the Gumshield2Go Company (partnered with Ulster Hockey) would fit and supply quality gum shields to our underage squads (under 16 and under 18 male and female) at no cost to parents. Fitting was scheduled for March 2020 but the coronavirus pandemic unfortunately cancelled everything. It is hoped that this arrangement can remain in place when training resumes.

### **6.2 Erasmus+**

Earlier in 2019 Ulster Hockey applied to Erasmus+ for some funding and were successful in their application. Erasmus+ is a European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. In its simplest form Erasmus+ provide funding for learners, in our case, hockey players, to undertake a programme in a country which is a world leader in their field to look at improving their skills development which they can then replicate back in Ulster. The funding secured was to allow 24 players and 4 staff to travel to Rotterdam for 13 nights over Easter 2020. When there were to train, play matches, watch top Dutch Club games and have cultural visits around the area.

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This trip looked set to be a fantastic opportunity for players at no cost to parents. Unfortunately, again due to the pandemic the trip has been postponed. At this time there is no confirmation that the trip will go ahead at a later date but we are hopeful something can be arranged.

### 6.3 Collaborative Strength & Conditioning programme

In late 2019 Talent development personnel from Ulster Rugby, Netball NI and Ulster Hockey met to determine how the sports could collaborate to support our young female athletes in relation to strength and conditioning provision. It was agreed that at U16/17 age the physical attributes needed to perform on the pitch/court were similar across the three sports. A plan was put in place to provide 3 'regional' bases in Magherafelt, Belfast and Lisburn, providing girls with an S&C programme delivered by qualified coaches over an 8 week period. This was then to be reviewed with a plan to put in place a second 'phase' of the programme going into the rest of 2020. Ulster hockey had girls involved however the programme was cut short after 3 weeks due to the pandemic. It is hoped that the rest of the programme will resume at some stage in the future.

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# Coach & Workforce Development Report

Jonathan McMeekin

A comprehensive workforce development programme has been undertaken between April 2019 and March 2020, which included a number of new courses and workshops. In total there were 67 learning opportunities across 26 different venues and the programme included:

Qualifications - Fundamentals Coaching Awards x 12, Level One Coaching Awards x 3, Young Leaders Awards X 11, Young Umpires Programme x 9 and the IHUA Umpires Rules Courses x 5. The overall attendance rate for the qualification courses was 94%.

CPD Opportunities -, Safeguarding Workshops, Erasmus+ Coach Education Trip, Teachers Training, Umpiring, Disability Sport NI Training, Working with Parents in Sport, Coaching Goalkeepers, First Aid , Umpire Development, and Youth Coaches workshops. All CPD courses were very well received and feedback has been very positive.

23 different tutors contributed to the delivery of the Workforce Development Programme during the year and we are very grateful to Sport NI and National Lottery funding which has supported this area of our work.

The Workforce Development Programme aims to link with the work of all the staff and meet the needs of clubs, schools, coaches, umpires, and volunteers. There are strong links with the Talent, Youth and Club Development officers, who also provide support toward specific areas to meet identified development needs.

## Young Umpires Programme

A total of 158 young umpires attended our 'Young Umpires Programme' training days at 9 venues across Ulster in season 2019/20, with 49 different clubs and Schools being represented. The Young Umpires course is 3 hours in duration and focuses on hockey umpiring at youth hockey levels. The course is broken into two parts with time spent on the theoretical part of being an umpire (rules, regulations, hand signals etc.) before moving outside to put the theory in to practice with young players.

During the season, young umpires have been given the opportunity to umpire at U9, U11 and U13 youth hockey blitz days and receive mentoring. A number also umpired at the Ulster U15 and U18 Indoor Championships this season alongside their more experienced senior counterparts. Particular thanks go to the IHUA and Ulster Umpires for their support of the programme and in particular to PJ Whyte and all the umpires who helped with the training days in September and have mentored the umpires at the youth blitzes held throughout the season.

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## Young Hockey Leaders Award

The programme aims to empower and engage 14-18 year-olds in volunteering within their clubs, introducing them to coaching, umpiring and team management pathways. The young leaders are a valuable asset to every club that runs the programme and we hope that the programme will grow in success as more clubs get involved. 200 plus young leaders attended 11 different courses in 2019.

One of our challenges is to make sure we retain those young people who go through the Young Umpires and Young Leaders programmes in our sport, ensuring they are aware of, encouraged and supported to progress along the coaching and umpiring pathways.

## Recognition and Reward - Ulster Hockey Coaching Awards

Ulster Hockey has recognised the achievements of three coaches and two umpires through the Annual Workforce Awards which this year has been presented to Janice Potts, Greg Thompson, Adam Morrison, Erin Guinn, David Agnew and Ian Strange.

Children's Coach of the Year Award which was presented to Janice Poots head of the junior section at Ballynahinch Hockey Club.

The winner of the Club Performance Coach of the Year was Greg Thompson from Pegasus. Pegasus collective trophy haul included the Denman Ulster Shield, winning the EY Hockey League and claiming the EY Champions Trophy at the end of the season. Greg was also awarded the Sport NI Performance coach of the year.

Adam Morrison was awarded with the Young Coach of the Year Award for his continuous efforts at Antrim Hockey Club. Adam is a fantastic role model for all the children he coaches.

Erin Guinn (Pegasus) won Young Umpire of the Year. She is dedicated, determined and enthusiastic about her umpiring. Erin was also selected to umpire the final of Ulster girls Indoor final at the Antrim Forum in 2019.

Club Umpire of the year went to David Agnew. David has made a significant contribution at Queens Hockey Club over the past number of seasons.

Ian Strange won Umpire of the Year, in what has been an outstanding season in terms of his development as an umpire. In a busy year Ian has been a regular IHL umpire and been given the responsibility of many Cup finals and internationals thought out the season.

## Erasmus+ Programme

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Ulster Hockey was successful in gaining Erasmus+ funding twice this in 2019. 8 coaches travelled to Amsterdam and Rotterdam Hockey Clubs, Netherlands in May and October to undertake a 5 day education programme.

The opportunity to spend 5 days at Amsterdam and HC Rotterdam to learn about the coaching and operations of the hockey club was a very useful and enjoyable coach learning experience. The group of coaches came away with lots of new knowledge, and reflections on existing knowledge.

Ulster Hockey also secured further funding for 14 day training camp for the Ulster U18 Girls squad.

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# Club Development Report

Ian Hughes

The 2019/2020 season marks the start of the Sporting Clubs program, previously Active Clubs funded by Sport Northern Ireland and the National Lottery. The program works alongside “*Ulster Hockey – Hockey Matters – Strategic Plan 2017-2021*” and resultant operational plans.

This facilitated the Sporting Clubs programmes to work with new areas and new communities to ‘grow our game’ and ‘inspire an active hockey family’.

As with previous years, I continue expressing my sincere thanks to all the club and school volunteers along with local authority staff that I have worked with this year.

The following report provides a synopsis of the work undertaken within the Sport Clubs Programme by the Participation and Development Coordinator

## Key Actions

- Encourage participation programmes in Primary and Secondary Schools to grow interest in Hockey and encourage progression to club membership.
- Grow Super Sixes and Extreme 8s format within primary and secondary schools.
- Seasonal Hockey Camps linked to current either club or school programs.
- New ways to play setting including ongoing Vets tournament.
- Maintain workforce resources (camp handbooks, safeguarding etc.) along with coaching database for all programs
- Continue working with clubs on Clubmark accreditation

Club Development in numbers:

Clubmark 

Accredited clubs    Re accreditation

 3

 3

Folder Complete    Working Towards

 2

 12

Holiday Camps

Summer

 10

Halloween

 2

Easter

 2

Total Players

 428

School Hubs

Working Areas

 6

Total Schools

 62

Total % Growth

 48%

Total Players

 992

Ways to Play

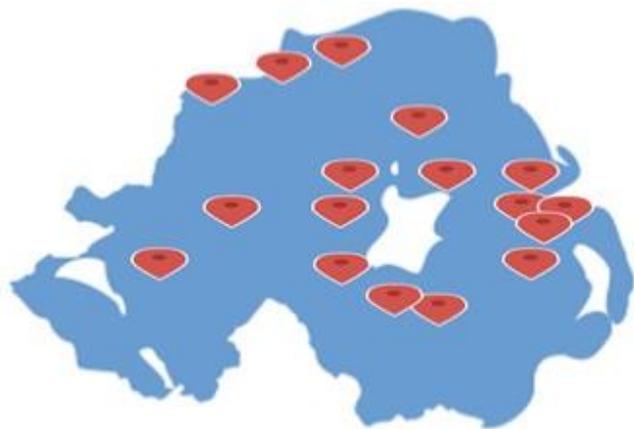
Walking Hockey Hub

 2

Vets Teams

 20

Program Coverage



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# Youth Development Report

Andrew Brown

## Youth Hockey Review

This season has seen more boys and girls playing across all age groups with more U9 club blitzes, U11/U13 UHU blitzes and more U15 fixtures across the province. Unfortunately, due to the current pandemic we were unable to conclude any of the age groups. Looking towards next season the primary hope is that we hit off in September and have a full hockey season. Playing numbers are steadily increasing each season, however, youth dropout is still evident as boys and girls transition through each age group and especially from junior hockey to senior hockey. With the correct youth hockey structures in place moving forward we hope to see that percentage decreasing and our young players staying in the game – thus creating an ‘Active Hockey Family.’

## Youth Consultations

Due to the current COVID -19 pandemic youth consultations were held online. Two consultations were conducted for girls hockey and one for boys. All three were well attended with discussions around youth hockey structures, support, guidance and what way youth hockey will look moving forward into the new season. Thank you to those clubs that attended and contributed to each discussion.

## BDO NI McCloy and Pearson Cup (Primary Schools)

The BDO NI McCloy and Pearson Cup had 216 registered teams taking part. This growth over the last 3/4 years has been down to the continuing work that our development staff undertake throughout the season. The added support of BDO NI has been incredibly supportive in our pursuit of engaging with more primary schools across the province. Unfortunately, due to the current pandemic the last four festivals had to be postponed along with the finals days.

### BDO NI Youth Indoor

Are Youth Indoor series took place across three dates at the Antrim Forum Leisure Centre in December 19 and January 20. 24 girls’ teams and 12 boy’s teams took part in the event. This continues to be a fantastic initiative with an increase in demand for this format of the game from our clubs. It also has been used as a stage to upskill are young umpires and coaches.

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## Concluding remarks

The continued work being done by coaches, youth officers, parents and guardians on a day to day basis by mostly volunteers is critical to the continued growth of hockey in the province. I am indebted to the continued support of Youth Officers right across Ulster. Without their help and guidance over the course of the youth season I wouldn't have the knowledge I have, so thank – you. Our stakeholders have been fantastic this youth season between local councils, Sport NI, BDO NI and our clubs, thank you.

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# Finance Committee Report

Mervyn Logan – Honorary Treasurer

Financially speaking, 2019/2020 was always going to be a difficult year. We had both reducing income streams and upward pressure on costs. That said, sterling efforts on the part of all staff and volunteers produced very respectable results, albeit it was for a shortened year.

The early finish to the season became very difficult to manage, with some playing programmes being either deferred or cancelled. Additionally, some anticipated costs did not materialise within the year, but others may rear their heads later in 2020, if we can get started properly this summer.

To make things more difficult, Ulster Hockey lost a significant member of staff, with Andrew 'AJ' Johnston's move to start another career and we wish him well in all his endeavours. We were able to appoint a PT bookkeeper. All of the staff have worked hard during the past year and must be given recognition for their input.

The following figures are pre-audit (full audited accounts will be presented ahead of the rescheduled AGM);

- 1 All in all, our income is down in almost every sector – by some £31K in total against budget, but, in mitigation, total costs also fell by £20K against budget.
- 2 The effect is that we will finish the year some £11K behind budget.
- 3 Profit is reported at £18K, largely funded by unused accruals from the previous year.

Ulster Hockey remains viable and capable of providing a wide range of programmes to all interested parties. The forthcoming season will bring many new and, as yet, unknown problems as we attempt to reinstate some degree of normality and migrate to the new company structure.

The finance committee remains eager to accommodate as many programmes and initiatives as it can, but, as always, prudence must remain the watchword.

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# Competitions Committee Report

Iain Kelly – Competitions Committee Chair

<b>Chair</b>	Iain Kelly
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	Sheree Totten
<b>Secretary</b>	Gemma Menaul
<b>Fixtures Secretary (Ladies)</b>	Ann Shiels
<b>Fixtures Secretary (Mens)</b>	Jamie Shilliday
<b>Members</b>	Brian Caruth Margaret McCormack Alan Turner

The Competitions Committee is elected each year at Ulster Hockey's Annual General Meeting and is responsible for the organisation and management of all competitions played for the various League and Cups Trophies presented by Ulster Hockey (excluding School and Under Age competitions).

This year the Committee welcomed two new members, Jamie Shilliday and Alan Turner and I would like to thank them both for their contributions throughout the year, along with thanking the returning members for their continuing efforts. Jamie replaced Raymond Hughes as the Men's Fixtures Secretary and I hope he didn't find the experience too traumatic! I would like to put on record my thanks to Raymond for his many years of service in the Men's Fixtures Secretary role, which is one of the most demanding roles in Ulster Hockey.

The members of the Committee share a desire to provide all clubs and their teams with competitive fixtures whilst ensuring that rules and regulations are adhered to by monitoring registrations and handling queries and disputes in a fair and equitable manner. To some, this may not always seem to be the case but all decisions that the Committee arrive at are made with the benefit of all the information that is available. This will include factors such as other competitions in which the participating teams are competing – both domestic and national; provincial and international player commitments – both at senior and junior age group levels; commitments of school players that regularly play in the teams involved; venue availability; umpire availability and commercial viability (which continues to be extremely important in the scenario of reducing grant funding that Ulster Hockey finds itself in).

Ensuring league and cup competitions are arranged and administered is a huge task with, in each season, in excess of 2,000 matches having to be scheduled along with the registrations of over 6,000 players. Our sport is administered in the main by volunteers, who give up their free time and registrations are scrutinised as closely as possible however there is also an onus on clubs to ensure

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that the rules surrounding registrations and transfers are adhered to. Guidance or assistance in this regard is available, so if in doubt, please ask.

Competitive matches are important to maintain participation in our sport. The Committee is acutely aware of the widening standards that are apparent in some leagues, as evidenced by large score-lines, particularly in some men's leagues. The Committee and the UH Management Board is keen to address this issue and as part of this process, during the season, issued a survey to the Honorary Secretaries and Match Secretaries of all men's clubs seeking their club's views on league structures. I would like to thank the clubs for their responses but it was disappointing that some clubs returned two responses and these responses in many cases differed. I believe that this underlines the complexity of this issue and that more consultation is required between all the clubs and UH to reach the best outcome for all.

Thankfully the weather did not severely impact the 2019/20 season but unfortunately we did have an unprecedented situation brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. This led to Hockey Ireland suspending all hockey on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and then on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020 declaring that in the interest of the health and safety of the hockey community and all people on the island of Ireland that the 2019/20 hockey season or all league, cup and all other domestic hockey competitions in Ireland were deemed to have finished. Further, on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020, the Hockey Ireland Board directed that Branches were to use a percentage equalisation method to complete league standings in their respective province. In accordance with these directions, the league winners as listed below were determined.

I sincerely hope we can have a full but safe 2020/21 season however, as at the time of writing this, no definitive date has been given for hockey to recommence, there is the possibility of a reduced season and fixtures may have to be amended accordingly. This is something that the Competitions Committee and the UH Management Board will be monitoring closely. I would urge clubs and in particular, their Fixtures Secretaries, to work with closely with the relevant UH Fixtures Secretaries to ensure matches are played when scheduled and not seek rearrangements unless absolutely necessary.

I would like to close by thanking all the club office bearers and volunteers in clubs who work to deliver senior hockey across Ulster. The Competitions Committee recognises that this is an ever growing challenge as there are more and more distractions competing for people's time. Our aim is to develop and encourage participation in hockey and we will do all that we reasonably can to assist and facilitate clubs whenever possible.

Finally, I want to express thanks, both on a personal basis and on behalf of everyone involved in hockey in Ulster, to all of the members of the Committee and to reiterate our appreciation to our Fixtures Secretaries, Ann Shiels and Jamie Shilliday for their work in arranging the fixtures. Without their efforts, structured hockey in Ulster would not be possible.

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# Honours

## LADIES LEAGUE WINNERS 2019-20

Premier League:	Queen's University 1st XI
Senior 1:	Armagh 1st XI
Senior 2:	NICS 1st XI
Senior 3:	Kilkeel 1st XI
Junior 1:	Pegasus 2nd XI
Junior 2:	Ballymoney 2nd XI
Junior 3:	Pegasus 3rd XI
Junior 4:	Ballymoney 3rd XI
Junior 5:	Belfast Harlequins 4th XI
Junior 6:	South Antrim 2nd XI
Junior 7:	Instonians 2nd XI
Junior 8:	Armagh 2nd XI
Junior 9:	South Antrim 3 <sup>rd</sup> XI

## LADIES CUP WINNERS 2019-20

Denman Ulster Shield:	Pegasus 1st XI
Senior Cup:	Priorians 1st XI
McConnell Shield:	Not Completed
Intermediate Cup:	Not Completed
Junior Cup:	Not Completed
Minor Cup:	Not Completed

## LADIES PLATE WINNERS 2019-20

Qualifying Plate:	Not Completed
Intermediate Plate:	Not Completed
Junior Plate:	Not Completed
Minor Plate:	Not Completed

## MEN'S LEAGUE WINNERS 2019-20

Premier League:	Cookstown 1st XI
Intermediate League:	Belfast Harlequins 1st XI
Junior League 1:	Cookstown 2nd XI
Junior League 2:	NICS 2nd XI
Junior League 3:	Belfast Harlequins 2nd XI
Junior League 4:	Lisnagarvey 5th XI
Junior League 5:	Raphoe 3rd XI

## MEN'S CUP WINNERS 2019-20

Kirk Cup:	Banbridge 1st XI
Anderson Cup:	Not Completed
Linden Cup:	Belfast Harlequins 1st XI
Sussex Regiment Cup:	Not Completed
Intermediate Cup:	Not Completed
McClements Cup:	Not Completed
Junior Shield:	Not Completed
Minor Cup:	Not Completed
Corken Cup:	Not Completed
McCabe Cup:	Lisnagarvey 2nd XI
Junior League 1 Cup:	Cookstown 2nd XI
Junior League 2 Cup:	Kilkeel 2nd XI
Junior League 3 Cup:	Belfast Harlequins 2nd XI
Junior League 4 Cup:	Lisnagarvey 5th XI
Junior League 5 Cup:	Belfast Harlequins 3rd XI

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# Coach's Committee Report

Marc Scott – Executive Manager

2019/20 has seen some positive developments regards the re-establishment of a committee to oversee the development of the coaching system. Whilst the overall committee structure is subject to review as part of the wider organizational structure, it was agreed that there was an urgency to fill the gap. Christopher McCandless as returned to the Board and kindly chaired a working group drawing on experienced members from range of backgrounds in the sport to map out the purpose of the committee and future direction of the Coaching and Pathways function. Across April and May 2020, this group met on several occasions and it was agreed that the Committee would have the following terms:

- promoting and developing the coaching of Hockey throughout Ulster in line with national and international standards; and alignment of all areas of the pathway with a player centred approach;
- influencing national standards through sharing best practice and promoting structured and consistent approaches;
- collaboration with other Provinces, other hockey associations and sports associations to gather and share best practice;
- managing players through the pathways programmes, ensuring that (identified, talented) players are provided with appropriate opportunities to develop their skills, experience and knowledge that will equip them to progress to their chosen level of performance, including senior international representation.
- overseeing all areas of player welfare ensuring a safe environment with a strong culture or integrity and player safety.

A number of the working group have agreed to continue as members of the newly constituted Committee and Ulster Hockey looks forwards to seeing progress in the development of the systems in this area and providing positive support and guidance to coaches and talented players under the strategic guidance of the Coaching & Pathways Committee.

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# Schools' Committee

## Ann Rosa, Joint Schools' Committee Chair

### Girls Schools' Competitions:

The Superleague cups were played in the Autumn term with Rainey Endowed and Belfast High School winners of the A & B competitions.

The finals of the all the other competitions were completed from 4<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Belfast Royal Academy 1<sup>st</sup> X1 was to represent Ulster in the Kate Russell on 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> March in Galway and Killicomaine Junior High School to host the June Smith on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> April but, due to the Coronavirus Lockdown restrictions, the tournaments were cancelled.

<b>Competition</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Runners-up</b>
Superleague A Cup	Rainey Endowed	Banbridge Academy
Superleague B Cup	Belfast High School	Carrickfergus Grammar
Belfast Telegraph Schools' Cup	Belfast Royal Academy	Friends School
Senior Shield	Rainey Endowed	Victoria College
Senior Plate	Coleraine Grammar	Antrim Grammar
McDowell Cup	Ballyclare High School	Rainey Endowed
McDowell Shield	Methodist College	Strathearn School
McDowell Plate	Wallace High School	Grosvenor Grammar
Gibson Cup ( 3 <sup>rd</sup> X1)	Strathearn School	Ballyclare High School
4 <sup>th</sup> X1 Cup	Methodist College	Ballymena Academy
Junior Cup	Killicomaine Junior High School	Strathearn School
Junior Shield	Sullivan Upper School	Lurgan Junior High School
Junior Plate	Ballyclare High School	Coleraine Grammar
U14 High Schools' Cup	Banbridge High School	Ballyclare Secondary School
U 16 High Schools' Cup	Markethill High School	Castlederg High School
U 18 High Schools' Cup	Ballyclare Secondary School	Lagan College

### Boys Schools' Competitions:

7 ulster Schools took part in the Irish Schools' Tournament in Dublin in October but none reached the semi-final stages of the main and plate cups.

The McCullough Cup was played in the Autumn term with the final on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Friends School defeated Wallace High School 3-0 to win this exciting final.

<b>Competition</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Runners-up</b>
McCullough Cup	Friends School	Wallace High School
John Minnis Estates Burney Cup	Friends School & Sullivan Upper joint winners	

The final of the John Minnis Estates Burney Cup was due to be played on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This would have been the 100<sup>th</sup> year of this prestigious competition. The suspension of all hockey and the subsequent decision to consider the 2019/20 season over meant that this historic occasion could not be fulfilled. The Ulster Hockey Board announced that the finalists, Friends School and Sullivan Upper would share the title as joint winners. Ulster Hockey hopes to host a reception to formally recognize the teams and present the medals.

The remaining finals were scheduled to be played in late March but had to be cancelled due to the lockdown restrictions.

<b>Competition</b>	<b>Finalists</b>	
Prior Shield	Friends School 2 <sup>nd</sup> X1 & Wallace High School 2 <sup>nd</sup> X1	Both teams to receive winners' medals
Dowdall Cup	At semi-final stage	
Richardson Cup	Just one semi-final completed. Bangor Grammar School in final	
Ferris Cup	Banbridge Academy & Campbell College	Both teams to receive winners' medals
Bannister Bowl	At semi-final stage	

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# Umpires Committee Report

Jamie Aiken, Umpires Committee Chair

Like all sports associations the 2019/20 season is one that will definitely go down in history for all the wrong reasons. There is no doubt that COVID 19 and its effect on sport will be talked about for years to come and its impact will be felt for many months ahead.

I would like to thank all my colleagues in umpiring for their support in my year as chair of umpires and for their help in all aspects of our game from simply umpiring matches, or coaching and assessing colleagues, to serving on the various committees in Ulster and Ireland to help develop and support our umpires.

Thanks must go to the members of both the Executive and Development committees for their hard and selfless work during the past 12 months. Many have taken on new tasks and all have worked hard to support and develop umpires and umpiring in Ulster and across Ireland.

We have developed many new policies including Guidance on Promotion Demotion, Panel Moves, Social Media, and Umpire Etiquette and Responsibilities. This work will continue into the coming seasons so that we have better documentation to support umpires at all levels in Ulster. Following on from this a new support web site was setup to allow umpires to have an online source of information, [www.ulsterhockeyumpires.net](http://www.ulsterhockeyumpires.net) We have supplemented this by the use of social media on WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter.

Discipline on the pitch remains an issue with the incidents of foul language, verbal abuse, and codes of conduct on the increase. The lack of an effective disciplinary procedure has not helped in this regard and most players and coaches know that if they get a significant card at the moment it is unlikely to be dealt with. This also makes it very hard to convince umpires to submit card reports if there is nothing being done with them. I would urge Ulster Hockey to address this issue as soon as possible

Looking ahead to coming seasons there is a significant crisis coming to Ulster umpiring and across Ireland as a whole. Simply put there are not enough umpires. This is only going to get worse when EYHL 2 is introduced, and it will come. Add to that an aging population of umpires with the average age of umpires in Ulster at 49, with many A panel umpires in their fifties and sixties, it is a problem that will affect the sport significantly if there is not sea change in the attitude to umpire development at club level.

Ulster Hockey and Ulster Umpires have been working hard to develop new umpires and the introduction of the young umpire programme and elite umpire group is a great start but I believe the onus lies firmly with the clubs as that is where the next generation of umpires must come from. In the Netherlands, all senior players must pass a rules test before being allowed to play and they must umpire hockey at club level as well, I believe that Ulster needs to look at a similar process.

Ideally, we would like to see umpiring developed and regulated at all levels in Ulster Hockey from Premier to Junior 7, with every umpire that officiates at any game having passed the rules test and the practical umpiring programme. We want to build the same progress path for umpires as players so that as you get better you umpire the next level of hockey up. Build into that a talent spotting system

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to identify and fast track those umpires with the most potential so that we have the best umpires in the country umpiring the best games in the country. This will not only develop more umpires but will allow our coaches and assessors to stop having to umpire each week but rather become fully committed to supporting the new umpires rather than still blowing the whistle!!!

A special word of congratulations must go to our two most recent FIH appointed umpires, Linda Coughlan and Russell Donaldson whose years of hard work and dedication to the sport has now seen them promoted to FIH umpires. I wish them both continued success in their umpiring careers. Congratulations also to all panel umpires who were promoted during this season. It is one of our biggest regrets that we simply do not have enough coaches and assessors to fully support our umpires and this is something that must be addressed over the next few seasons.

Finally, I would wish all clubs, teams, players, coaches, and umpires a successful start to hockey in 20/21 and I look forward to working with you all again as soon as we can.

# Partners & Sponsors



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# NI Children's Hospice

## Ulster Hockey's Official Charity Partner

In 2019 Ulster Hockey struck an agreement to make the NI Children's Hospice the official charity partner. Northern Ireland Children's Hospice is a local charity providing specialist respite, symptom management and end of life palliative care to over 370 infants, children and young people living with life-limiting and life-threatening illnesses both in the family home and in the Children's Hospice in Newtownabbey.



The NI Children's Hospice supports children and their families through a range of services. These services include end of life care, care at home, supported short breaks where children and families can come and enjoy tailored activities in a safe environment with specially trained staff on hand at all times and care for the whole family.

Having visited the Hospice in October 2019, the Ulster Hockey Chair and Staff saw for ourselves the inspirational work ongoing at the Hospice. As there is limited public funding provided to support the crucial work of the Hospice, it is important that the Ulster Hockey family continues to support the Hospice.

Since the launch of the partnership, a number of activities have taken place and we have already raised close to £10,000 towards our headline target of funding a full time nurse for the Hospice.

Recognition has to go to Catherine O'Hara from the Hospice for driving the partnership; Shirley McCay and Ian Hughes for taking part in the Santa Run 10k, Billy Pollock and Marc Scott for shaving their beards, Patrick Grimes and Stephen Cuddy for shaving their heads and of course Luke Roleston, Stephen Arbuthnot and Dane Ward for making the painful sacrifice of waxing their legs.

The Hospice continues to need our support and Ulster Hockey hopes you can dig deep and contribute to this worthy cause over the next year.