



Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Water Polo Leadership Group Meeting
16th December 2025

Present:	Jackie Spinks (JS)	Water Polo Manager
	Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Director Representative
	Edi Brkovic (EB)	Watford
	Simon Lecomber (SL)	Colchester
	Tim Whitwham (TW)	Bedford
	James Walker (JW)	Chelmsford

Also present: Emma Winter (EW), Regional Administrator

25/19 Apologies

- 25/19.1 JS opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. The meeting was declared inquorate.
- 25/19.2 Apologies received from Jonathan Lowy (JL), Hertford and Martin Vinter (MV) Colchester.
- 25/19.3 EB left the meeting at 7:30pm and SL left the meeting at 7.40pm.

25/20 Declarations of conflict of interest

- 25/20.1 None declared.

25/21 Previous minutes

- 25/21.1 The previous minutes had been circulated.
- 25/21.2 The minutes were approved.

25/22 Matters arising

- 25/22.1 JS confirmed that the only outstanding item from the previous minutes related to the team selection policy, which was included as a substantive agenda item later in the meeting.
- 25/22.2 EW confirmed that a list of referees within the Region was available.

JS highlighted the need to also maintain a list of qualified team managers (TM1 and TM2).

25/23

2026 Plan and Budget

25/23.1 JS presented the draft 2026 Plan and Budget, noting that this was her first iteration and had been based on the structure of the previous year, alongside consultation with regional coaches.

25/23.2 JS outlined proposed income assumptions, including regional training athlete fees budgeted at £450. A key question was raised as to whether session fees should increase from £10 to £15 per athlete.

EB advised that the cost was unlikely to be a barrier if the quality and structure of sessions were improved, noting that travel costs already exceeded the difference. TW agreed that perceived value was more important than nominal cost.

25/23.3 JS explained that inter-regional training income and costume sales were budgeted at zero, and that inter-regional competition income was cost-neutral, covering tournament fees, facilities and officials only.

25/23.4 JS proposed allocating budget to support County Championships participation, noting limited current information and the intention to assist counties where possible once further detail was available.

25/23.5 The inclusion of regional 'Grand Prix' style events was discussed. TW and IM questioned the terminology, suggesting that the term 'Grand Prix' could deter beginners.

It was agreed that future beginner-focused events should be described as festivals or development tournaments rather than 'Grand Prix'.

25/24

Regional Academy training

25/24.1 JS outlined a proposed shift in regional training delivery, moving away from open, unstructured sessions towards age-specific, match-play focused sessions.

25/24.2 JS proposed starting with under-14 sessions, structured as coached match play, with players grouped on the day and coaches assigned per team.

It was questioned whether this format is a training session or a competition?

JS advised the intention was training through gameplay rather than formal competition. TW noted that any organised match-play effectively functions as a competition, even without club representation.

25/24.3 EB suggested a blended model, incorporating a themed coaching focus (e.g. defence, man-up/man-down) followed by applied gameplay, to ensure developmental value.

25/24.4 Discussion highlighted that wide age ranges in previous sessions reduced effectiveness, discouraging both advanced and beginner players.

25/24.5 JS confirmed that sessions would be booked for two hours, with an emphasis on structured delivery and clear objectives.

The Group discussed challenges in finding suitable pool times for training sessions.

25/24.6 Significant discussion focused on the ongoing shortage of female players, particularly at under-14 and under-16 levels.



EB proposed collecting data from clubs on player numbers by age and gender to inform realistic planning.

It was agreed that EW would contact all regional clubs to request player numbers by age group and gender, without requiring names.

It was asked whether ability level should be included when gathering data?

EB and TW advised that the initial focus should be on participation numbers, with ability considerations addressed once viability was established.

Action: EW to contact all regional clubs to request player numbers by age group and gender.

IM confirmed that once data was received, a short follow-up meeting would be convened to review numbers and agree priorities.

25/24.7 JS and TW discussed historic issues where girls' teams could not be entered for inter-regional competitions because of insufficient numbers.

The Group agreed that growing participation, particularly among girls, should take priority over short-term competitive outcomes.

25/24.8 The Group discussed organising a 2-hour training session for under-14 players, with Tim proposing a 30-minute gameplay segment that would be filmed and shared with clubs. It was agreed to include video consent forms in the application process.

25/24.9 A discussion took place regarding calendar clashes with the London League, Talent Centres, exams and national competitions. Saturday late-afternoon sessions were preferred to minimise conflicts.

EB offered to share relevant calendar information to assist with future scheduling.

25/24.10 TW offered to write up some defensive-focused plans, though he noted he would not be available for the first session on 31st January 2026.

25/25 Inter-Regionals team selection policy

25/25.1 The Group reviewed and discussed amendments to the team selection policy.

IM noted that the World Aquatics rules had changed and that the Region is allowed to take up to 14 players.

25/25.2 It was asked how selection will be managed without formal trials?

JS confirmed that selection trials would still take place separately from regional training sessions.

25/25.3 It was agreed to make the slight changes to the policy regarding the number of players.

Action: JS to amend the policy to reflect the changes

25/25.4 The Group discussed coaching assignments for youth teams, with MV potentially taking the under-16s and SL serving as assistant coach.

A need was identified to find coaches for the under-14s and under-18s teams.

25/26 Any other business

25/26.1 No additional items were raised.

25/27 Confidential items

25/27.1 No confidential items

25/28 Next meeting

25/28.1 Proposed meeting dates for 2026, to be held at 6:30pm:

- 29th January 2026
- 21st May 2026
- 3rd September 2026
- 19th November 2026