

**Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting 25 April 2026 in person,
at Sir John Beckwith Lecture Theatre, Loughborough University.**

Directors Present	Titles
Rowena Hackwood [RHa]	Chair of the Board
Alison Shipway [AS]	Vice Chair
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Independent Director
Anton Kornilov [AK]	Elected Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Jess Keen [JK]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Jill Osleger [JO]	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Tracy Newton [TN]	Elected Director
Staff Present	
Charlie Ford [CF]	Chief Executive Officer
Guin Batten [GB]	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Ollie Hudson [OH]	Data and Insight Lead

EB/26-27/1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Phil French and Jake Sheaf.

1.1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures

There were none declared.

1.2 Approval of agenda

Agenda was approved by all.

The Chair noted that Sitting Volleyball had previously been indicated as a standing agenda item. CF confirmed that this update was integrated within the Executive Report and would be addressed when that item was reached. The Board agreed this was satisfactory.

1.3 Previous meetings

Minutes of 7 February and 23 February 2026 Board meetings were approved. RH requested that page numbers are added to the future minutes.

26.4 Matters Arising/Actions List

CF and GB highlighted the outstanding actions:

- Concussion policy would be published in due course.
- Safeguarding training links were being investigated as they were not being received by some Board members.
- Streaming issue was ongoing.
- AS and CF were working on a draft forward work programme for upcoming meetings.

26.5 Board Member Check In

The Chair noted that Board members had already had the opportunity to connect informally with one another ahead of the meeting. It was agreed that the formal check-in would not be taken as a standalone item, and that members would have the opportunity to continue informal conversation after the meeting.

EB/26-27/2 Exec Report

CF presented the Executive Report. The following was highlighted:

- The Broadcast Lead role had been appointed to.
- Almost all SPOs vacancies had been filled for the 2026-27 year.
- The Project Lead- Talent vacancy was still open.
- A proposed change to the code of conduct would include additional wording around spectator expectations and standards (adding section 9) as a result of issues raised during the 25-26 season. Also, this would align the document with Let the players play campaign. Board review and approved.
- In terms of sitting volleyball, headway was being made in terms of BUCS. Proof of concept had been submitted and feedback had been received. CF noted that we would receive an update and next steps by the end of July.
- TN enquired whether there should be a separate safeguarding report as part of Board papers considering the volume of activity and development in this area. Board discussed and agreed that a Safeguarding subgroup report would be added to the papers presented at Board. CF noted that safeguarding continues to feature heavily in board meetings and acknowledged that a significant amount of work went on behind the scenes. CF encouraged board members to take the opportunity to speak with Laura, the safeguarding manager, and to recognise the exceptional work she had been doing in handling a number of complex cases. It was noted that safeguarding sat high on the organisation's risk register, which the Board agreed justified the level of attention it received. GB stressed that the volume and quality of reporting was critical in identifying the trends in safeguarding reporting and consequently enforcing mitigation measures.

2.1 Annual Governance Statement and Report

- Annual Governance Statement and Report were discussed. On page 6, “chairman” to be changed to “chair”. JK asked for it to be more personalised and Board agreed. Board approved the statement and the report, but it will be further enhanced to make it an easy read for members.

EB/26-27/3 Subgroup reports

Volleyball for Life

- RH raised the issue of the national coach register and its purpose in providing an accessible list of qualified coaches for parents and others to view. TN reported that Laura had been undertaking a data capture audit of clubs and had identified that some coaching and safeguarding certificates were not being uploaded or visible for certain high-profile

clubs. The board discussed whether evidence of valid certification should be a mandatory requirement for annual registration, and it was acknowledged that while this was the intention, there remained some gaps in the system that were being worked through. A practical issue of coaches who are officially registered but not always present at sessions, with unregistered individuals sometimes stepping in, which represented a compliance risk was also raised by AS.

Get Keep Grow

- JP reported that Laura had asked for support in reviewing and updating the facilities document, which had been deprioritised for some time. JP offered to come into the office to assist with this work, and it was noted that some technical updating would also be required to align with the Sport England framework.
- CF raised a broader concern about the government's agenda around planning and housing, noting that Sport England was likely to be dropped as a mandatory consultee in the planning process, which posed a real threat to playing fields and sporting facilities. CF also highlighted that around 220 schools were having their sports facilities rebuilt due to unsafe building materials, but that the contractor involved was rebuilding them on a like-for-like basis rather than to an improved specification more suitable for school and community use. CF indicated that he was working through the Sport and Recreation Alliance to bring together indoor sports to campaign against this collectively.
- AK offered a personal example of a facility that had lost a court due to a contractor being unaware of the relevant specifications, which was described as a common problem. RHa noted that community facilities were routinely built to a lower standard than competition facilities, which created a cycle of lower expectations, reduced training quality, and diminished performance opportunities. The Board agreed that this was a significant issue and that campaigning loudly through the appropriate channels was the right course of action.

Ace Service

- JK reported that the events calendar was confirmed as live, and Board members were asked to keep it updated with their availability for officiating duties.
- JK reported that a Beach Pro Futures tournament was taking place in Bridlington over two weeks with four competitions and extensive community engagement, including local schools sending children as volunteers who would follow and support players from a chosen country. Trustees were encouraged to promote the event on social media.
- The Board discussed the publication of names in disciplinary matters, particularly in relation to players under the age of eighteen competing in Super League competitions. It was felt that naming underage players in public disciplinary records raised safeguarding concerns, and that responsibility for such matters should rest with the club rather than the individual.

Volleyball England Foundation

- Not provided.

Finance Strategy and Risk

- AH reported that in terms of strategy achievement, dashboard indicated the progress was at 85% that was in line with previous year.
- AH noted that the year-end position showed a gain of £7k against a budgeted loss of £23k, producing an overall positive variance of £31k.
- AH informed that Volley Store had evolved from an income-generating activity into more

of a community service provision due lack of availability of volleyball equipment.

Nomination Committee

- CF informed that the Committee had started recruitment of two elected Trustees and four delivery lead roles.

EB/26-27/4 Club Survey 25-26

OH presented the annual club survey, covering club mindset, and club satisfaction.

Club Mindset

- The latest Club Survey shows a significant increase in the proportion of 'thriving' clubs, with all other categories declining compared to the 2024/25 results. Notably, no clubs previously categorised as 'surviving' responded this season, and 80% of clubs are now affiliated.
- Themes cited by thriving clubs included strong membership growth across junior and senior sections, expanding player pathways, more teams entering both national and local competitions, and a growing volunteer, coach, and management base.
- Themes cited by bursting clubs centered on high demand without sufficient infrastructure, particularly around court space and venue availability. A shortage of coaches and volunteers was identified as the key personnel bottleneck, and there was growing interest from juniors and beginners that clubs were unable to accommodate.
- AS asked whether the survey scores linked to the Strategy dashboard. GB answered the survey findings was being used as a tool to help identify how clubs could be assisted by Laura. AK noted that the findings could help VE reflect on its services performance and the sport. RH encouraged CF to consider using AI in interrogating various existing data to obtain richer understanding of how the sport could be improved overall.

Key Club Issues

- The top three issues raised by clubs were consistent with previous years: coaches, cost of venues, and court type or availability for players.
- OH noted that venue costs had dropped as a concern for the first time since 2022, potentially because a higher proportion of thriving clubs had responded, and partly because venue availability, rather than cost, had emerged as a more significant issue.
- OH asked the Board how much difference formally including venue availability as an answer option might make, and there was broad agreement it could rank highly. Board agreed for this to be added to the survey options the following year.

Club Satisfaction

- Overall satisfaction had maintained at 7 out of 10, which was in line with pre-pandemic levels.
- Low satisfaction themes included issues with systems and technology, inconsistent rules, regulations and fines, and a perceived lack of practical club support.
- High satisfaction themes included helpful and responsive staff, useful benefits around insurance, competition entry, and resources, and growing confidence in the sport's direction and improvement generally.
- The Board discussed whether a Net Promoter Score question should be added to future surveys, as this would allow comparison with other national governing bodies and provide a more standardised measure of advocacy and satisfaction. It was agreed this merited consideration.

- In relation to service satisfaction, it was noted that generalised services such as the website and competition management scored higher satisfaction than personalised club services, though this was largely because a high proportion of respondents chose a neutral position rather than expressing dissatisfaction.

Board discussed:

- JK emphasised the importance of achieving a statistically significant response rate and suggested that if targets were not met, the organisation could consider extending the survey window, moving to focus groups, or integrating key questions into existing mandatory processes such as affiliation. JK raised the possibility of using AI to interrogate data. Incentivising responses rather than mandating them was also raised by JO. This would ensure getting responses from a wider pool of membership.
- OH confirmed that the current club survey format would be discontinued and replaced with a new club health check-in development with Laura, which would incorporate core questions from the existing survey alongside new content. The format would potentially be available year-round or on a rolling basis.
- RH raised the question of whether it might be valid to ask clubs about their expectations especially around education.
- AS emphasised the importance using the survey alongside all the other data related to club satisfaction.
- RHa thanked OH for the presentation. OH left.

EB/26-27/5 Beach Volleyball 5-Year Plan – Deep Dive

AK presented a paper exploring the strategic direction and ambition for beach volleyball in England, with a focus on the relationship between participation and performance and lessons from comparable nations:

- participation and performance were not mutually exclusive and the sport needed to consider both together.
- there were clear drop-off points in player journeys, particularly at the transition from school to university, which needed to be addressed.
- comparisons with countries of similar GDP, population size, and climate showed that others were achieving considerably stronger results, suggesting the constraints facing England were not unique.
- the only current measure of beach volleyball participation in the UK was entries to competitive tournaments, which had grown by nearly 50% in recent years but was likely a small fraction of total participation. Better measurement was considered essential.
- tracking performance at junior European level showed some patterns worth exploring, with strong under-18 results often translating into under-20 results, but with a notable drop-off at under-22 level, likely reflecting university attrition. The women's pathway was described as more inconsistent than the men's.

Board discussed:

- CF offered to approach colleagues at basketball who were looking at ways of tracking participation in a recreational outdoors version of basketball.
- AS observed that England, as an island nation with significant coastline, ought to perceive itself as a beach environment but did not, and that this was partly a perception challenge and partly a facilities constraint. AS noted, that UK Sport had expressed the view that beach volleyball did not currently represent a credible gold medal opportunity at Olympic

level, which created a funding challenge. Without articulating a clear Olympic ambition, it would be difficult to attract the levels of investment needed to make meaningful progress.

- RHa asked whether it was valid to articulate what the ambition looked like in terms of positioning beach volleyball.
- CF introduced the concept of bookending strategic ambition with reference to British Cycling's twin objectives of getting a million people cycling and winning a set number of Olympic medals, and Basketball Australia's programme reaching five hundred thousand young people annually alongside an ambition to be a top ten nation. CF suggested that VE needed to define its own equivalent bookends, one focused on the broadest possible participation base and one setting out a clear elite ambition.
- RH commented on the role of entrepreneurs and beach centre operators in providing the infrastructure for participation, arguing that the organisation's role was to enable and coordinate rather than control, and that the availability of places to play was the foundational requirement before anything else could grow.
- AH cited the Olympics as one of the main platforms for promotion of the sport but it seemed ineffective.
- GB commented that the talent identification would not work unless there are successful and long-lasting talent programmes in place to facilitate the "cherry picking". Coaches played their part in this process as well.
- The Bello brothers were cited on multiple occasions as change-makers who were currently performing in spite of the system rather than because of it, and as individuals who were demonstrating what was possible and setting new standards for what the pathway could look like.
- TN raised a question whether VE should be mirroring the indoor approach. TN then raised concern that talent identification was happening too early and too narrowly, with players being rejected before they had reached physical maturity.
- RH noted that England's junior players were competing against Nordic countries with considerably greater physical development, which created challenges in any like-for-like comparison.
- JK raised the question of whether the current pathway was working.
- The possibility of investing differently by gender or focusing specifically on junior development up to a certain age, was explored but broadly set aside as potentially counterproductive.
- The suggestion was made that Switzerland represented an instructive comparator, having achieved strong beach volleyball results without a significant indoor programme, demonstrating that a dedicated beach pathway was viable independently.
- JO noted that there was significant community funding available for activities using outdoor spaces, including beaches and canals, but that beach volleyball was not featuring in those conversations, which represented both a positioning challenge and an opportunity.

EB/26-27/6 Meeting Finalisation

6.1 Review of Actions

Actions were noted.

6.2 AOB

The Chair noted that two items of any other business would be dealt with separately, including a written update on board one-to-one conversations.

6.3 Meeting Close

Meeting closed at 12:04.

Actions

EB/25-26/17	Wording in the concussion policy still outstanding and would be shared as soon as ready.	GB
EB/25-26/26.4	GB to resend the link to safeguarding training to those that notify her.	GB
EB/25-26/27.1	GB would speak to JC re streaming junior games.	GB
EB/25-26/27.3	CF and AS to draft a proposed forward work programme for upcoming meetings.	CF/AS
EB/26-27/1	ASr to insert page numbers on the minutes	ASr
EB/26-27/2	The proposed changes to the code of conduct to be implemented. A separate safeguarding report to become part of the Sub-Group papers.	CF TN
EB/26-27/2.1	Annual Governance Statement and report to be enhanced before release.	CF/JK
EB/25-26/4	OH to include venue availability as an answer option to the survey options the following year.	OH



Board Meeting – Report Summary

The following paper provides summary information from the 25th April board pack which should be read in conjunction with the above-board meeting minutes:

EB/25-26/2 - EXECUTIVE REPORT

1. UKAD Assurance Submission

The 2026 Annual Submission was submitted to the UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) in March. The Annual Submission is the primary mechanism by which we provide evidence to UKAD annually against the [Assurance Framework](#) requirements, allow us to demonstrate ongoing compliance with the [UK National Anti-Doping Policy](#).

A new version of the World Anti-Doping Code expected to come into force in 2027. Alongside this, UKAD will be reviewing the Assurance Framework over the coming months, including the support and resources they provided.

Through the efforts of Prof Dane Vishnubala and Gillian Harrison, we have made strong progress in managing clean sport education compliance across the Senior Team players and their support staff. A structured Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) tracking process is now in place, marking a clear improvement on last year's position.

2. Sitting Volleyball Progress

The below report provides an update on progress across Sitting Volleyball activity since the last board meeting. It covers BUCS integration, higher education engagement, competitions, development activity, communications, and the work of the Sitting Volleyball Joint Working Group (SVJWG). Overall, activity continues to show steady growth, with positive engagement across universities, clubs, and competitions.

BUCS Integration

- The BUCS proof of concept paper has been returned with feedback. A revised draft is in progress, with a submission deadline of end of May, ahead of the BUCS Competitions Group meeting in July.
- The UEL tournament ran successfully, with five teams competing (from eight originally signed up).
- Engagement with Loughborough University has continued, including sessions delivered as part of Takeover Week. A planned IMS Varsity fixture between the University of Nottingham and Loughborough did not take place due to Nottingham withdrawing for player number reasons; however, Loughborough remain keen to continue engagement.
- University of Staffordshire Inclusion Day confirmed for Saturday 18th April.

HEVO Engagement

- Sitting Volleyball featured in Term 2 HEVO reports from Sheffield, Bath, Leicester and Southampton, with 10 sessions delivered since February.
- A pilot taster session at the University of Leeds attracted 31 participants.
- A session at UWE remains in the pipeline.

Competitions

- The Sitting Grand Prix has concluded, with eight teams entered at each event. The move to Loughborough has proven successful, particularly with the introduction of the new competition format. The last game will be the final at cup finals weekend between Sitting Bucks and H4H.
- The Sitting Cup took place on 12 April, with six teams participating (originally seven, with two teams combining).
 - South Hants retained the Cup
 - Salisbury Spitfires won the Shield for the first time
- Total registered players for the Sitting Grand Prix season finished at 88. This is a rise from the 24-25 season where we had 78.
- Ongoing correspondence continues with the Invictus Games Organising Committee in preparation for the Birmingham 2027 Games.

Development

- New and emerging initiatives include:
 - Nuneaton Volleyball Club delivered two successful sessions, with approximately 14 participants.
 - East London Lynx: the club secretary has completed her Assistant Coach Award and is planning to restart sessions.
 - Ongoing discussions around establishing a new club in Grimsby.
- A first draft of a collective coaching offer, developed collaboratively across all three organisations, has been produced and is now ready for further discussion and implementation planning.

Communications

- Continued, well received coverage of Sitting Volleyball across all channels, including new club activity and domestic and international competition coverage.

- We have resurrected the Sitting Volleyball in the UK Facebook group as another channel to share updates and news.
- The second edition of *Sit & Spike* was released in March and received a positive response. The distribution list now stands at 193 recipients.
- Ongoing discussions with Intotum Clothing regarding a potential future partnership.
- The 'Get Involved' page on the website has been refreshed to improve ease of access and navigation.

SVJWG

- The next SVJWG meeting is scheduled for Friday 24 April.
- Key focus areas will be:
 - Review of the first draft of the collective coaching offer

Summary / Key Points

- BUCS integration remains on track, with positive engagement and a clear timeline towards July approval.
- University and HEVO engagement continue to grow, with strong participation in pilot sessions.
- The competition programme is stable and well received.
- Club development activity is expanding geographically, supported by improved coaching capacity.
- Communications and visibility of Sitting Volleyball continue to strengthen.
- Collaborative work through the SVJWG is progressing key strategic priorities.

3. Annual Incident Reporting

The online incident reporting form is part of Volleyball England's wider approach to managing risk.

The form helps collect information quickly from across all Volleyball England-regulated activities. This helps the organisation better understand risks, injuries, and other potential harms in the sport.

The form was introduced in March 2024 and covers all activities that fall under Volleyball England's insurance. Staff, players, and volunteers are asked to use the form to report all accidents, injuries, incidents, damage, and near misses.

Each report creates a logged record of what happened and what action was taken, ideally by a person who was there at the time.

Over time, these reports build a clearer picture of common risks in volleyball. This information is used to improve safety and reduce harm to people and equipment.

The reports are also important if a player or member of the public later makes a liability claim. Claims can be made up to around five years after an incident, or longer in cases involving under-18s.

The system also allows equipment failures to be reported, so any safety concerns can be shared with the volleyball community and manufacturers.

Finally, the form provides a consistent way of recording incidents at club, county, and regional level as part of Volleyball England's overall risk management process.

Having an incident reporting process is recognised as effective practice for national governing bodies and helps promote a culture of learning and safety

This is how it is presented on the [website](#).

Year on Year Reported Incidents April to March

Table 1 Activity	2024-25	2025-26
Indoor	22	42
Sitting	1	1
Beach	1	2
Outdoor	1	0
Other	3	1
TOTAL Reported Incidents	28	46

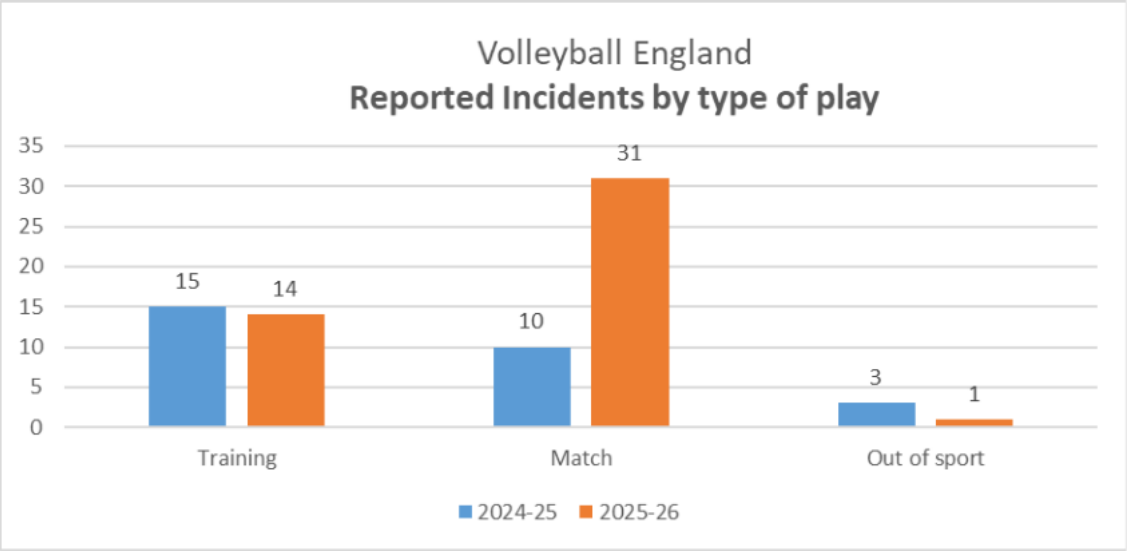
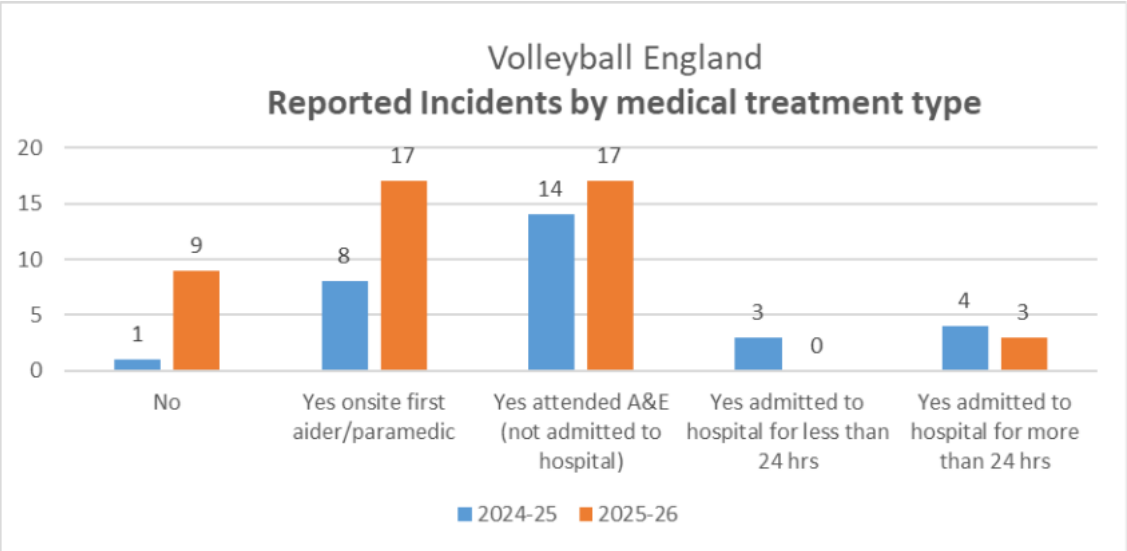


Table 2 Incident type	2024-25	2025-26
Injury	23	40
Medical condition	0	1
Emergency call out	3	2
Equipment Failure	1	0
Other	1	3



The internal Sport and Exercise Medicine Group reviews more serious incidents to triage appropriate follow-up actions, including communications, advisories, and the identification of learning opportunities.

Although the promotion of an open reporting culture is still in its early stages, the process has

already shown clear value. It has given us greater confidence in enforcing safety requirements in the NVL regulations, provided actual case studies for first aid training, and informed improvements to the national team operating procedures.