



**VOLLEYBALL
ENGLAND**

**Volleyball England
Annual Report 2026**



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A Welcome from the Chair

It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of Volleyball England over the past six months. From the outset, I have been struck by the warmth of the welcome I have received across the volleyball community of clubs, volunteers, athletes, officials, staff and partners alike. This is a sport built on passion and commitment, and that spirit is evident at every level of the game.

Over this period, I have taken every opportunity to listen, learn and engage with the community. I have been fortunate to attend a number of key events across the calendar, including Queen & King of the Court, Super Series and Cup Finals, as well as the Awards Afternoon and the 70th anniversary celebrations. Each of these moments has reinforced the strength, pride and vibrancy of our sport, and the deep connection people feel to volleyball in all its forms.

What stands out most clearly is the depth of dedication within our community, alongside a shared ambition to grow the sport in a sustainable and inclusive way. I have seen first-hand how volleyball brings people together across all formats of the sport, and how each discipline plays a vital role in our collective future.

In beach volleyball, I am encouraged by the progress being made in facility development, the successful hosting of international events, and the strengthening of athlete pathways. Within the indoor game, there is strong momentum behind raising standards across the National Volleyball League, alongside continued enhancements to the Super League and junior competition structures. Sitting volleyball also continues to evolve, with exciting work underway to expand access and strengthen existing participation pathways.

Underpinning this progress is a strong and stable organisation. Volleyball England remains in a healthy financial position, providing a solid platform from which to invest in the future of the sport. We are equally committed to high standards of governance, supported by a skilled and diverse Board whose expertise spans finance, strategy, governance, disability sport and deep knowledge of volleyball across playing, coaching and officiating.

None of this progress happens in isolation. Collaboration sits at the heart of our approach. We are committed to working closely with our members, particularly on matters of policy and governance where it is appropriate to do so, ensuring that the direction of the sport reflects the voices and needs of the community. We also continue to draw on the valuable insight and expertise of our advisory groups as we pursue our shared ambitions.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our partners and stakeholders, including Sport England, UK Sport, FIVB, CEV, Volleyball England Foundation and the British Volleyball Federation. Your continued support and collaboration are essential to the sport's ongoing growth and success.

As I reflect on my first months in this role, I am optimistic about the future. There is clear progress being made, supported by strong foundations, but also significant opportunity ahead. By continuing to work together, listening, learning and building on our shared strengths, I am confident that we can take volleyball in England to new heights.

None of this progress would have been possible without the dedication and belief of volleyball's communities in their entirety. From our clubs, coaches, officials and volunteers to our partners, staff and supporters, your passion fuels everything we do.



Rowena Hackwood



Executive Reflections

This year has been one of meaningful progress, strategic development and continued ambition across Volleyball England. While challenges remain, there is clear evidence of forward momentum across performance, participation, governance and operations.

A key highlight has been the expansion of our international beach volleyball portfolio. Building on previous successes, we have hosted Senior and Youth NEVZA events alongside the prestigious Queen & King of the Court Crown Series. These events not only elevate England's standing within the international beach volleyball community, but also provide invaluable competitive opportunities for our athletes, coaches and officials.

Safeguarding has remained a central priority. Over the past year, we have strengthened both our processes and delivery through the expansion of our Safeguarding Technical Advisor Group, increased dedicated capacity within the Hub and developed enhanced training and resources. This work is fundamental to ensuring that volleyball remains a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for all.



10

The world ranking achieved by England's Javier and Joaquin Bello in May 2025

Operationally, the organisation has undergone a significant transition with our relocation to Loughborough after 16 years in Kettering. This move positions us closer to key partners and within a high-performance sporting environment, creating new opportunities for collaboration, innovation and growth.

We have also taken important steps to improve inclusion within our talent pathways through the launch of the Ann Jarvis Hardship Fund. This initiative aims to reduce financial barriers and ensure that talented athletes, regardless of background, have the opportunity to progress within the sport.

On the international stage, we have celebrated excellence, most notably with Javier and Joaquin Bello's progression into the world's top 10, a remarkable achievement that reflects both personal dedication and the strength of the support system around our athletes.

Domestically, Super League Live has continued to grow and evolve, enhancing the visibility and accessibility of elite indoor volleyball. Alongside this, we have progressed our regional strategy planning, ensuring that our approach is better aligned with local needs and opportunities, and supports sustainable growth across the country.

It is important to recognise the exceptional efforts of the Hub team. Their commitment, resilience and professionalism underpin everything we deliver as an organisation. The achievements in 2025-26 are a direct reflection of their hard work and dedication.

Last, but by no means least, a sincere thank you to all volleyball's communities. To those who work tirelessly every week within their clubs and local communities to deliver fun, engaging and inclusive opportunities, your contribution is invaluable. You are the heartbeat of our sport, and we never for a second lose sight of the vital role you play in its success and growth.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on nurturing strong foundations, supporting our people, strengthening our systems and creating opportunities across all formats of the game. Together, we are shaping a future for volleyball in England that is ambitious, inclusive and sustainable.

Charlie Ford

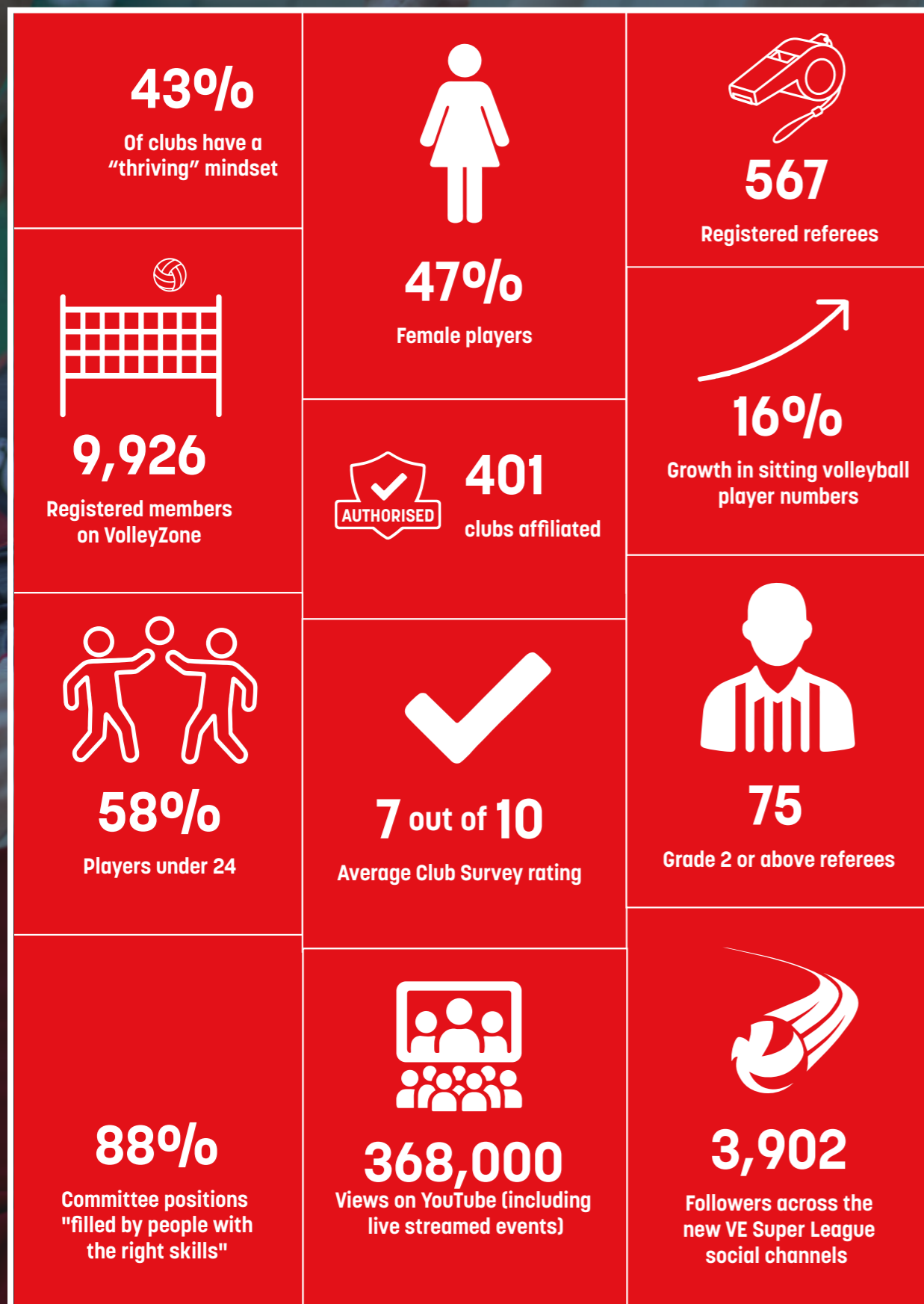
Charlie Ford, Chief Executive Officer

Guin Batten

Guin Batten, Deputy Chief Executive Officer



2025-2026: A Year in Numbers



2025-26 Timeline

April London Giants men clinch the Super League title at the first time of asking with victory over Essex Rebels, who gain some solace thanks to their National Cup victory. Malory Eagles clinch a league and cup double in the women's competitions.

May London take three of the four titles on offer, and North West (U15 Boys) the other, at the Inter Regional Championships. Meanwhile, Freddie Bialokoz and Issa Batrane take silver in the Beach Pro Tour Futures event in Wuhan.

June Enrique Bello and Niko Gleed secure the men's title at the inaugural NEVZA Beach England competition in Bridlington, while Norwegians Sunniva Helland-Hansen and Nina Pavlova claim the women's title.

July Ludvig Ringøen and Sebastian Kjemperud (Norway, U18) and Andreas Brinck and Villads Napier (Denmark, U20) are among the winners at the NEVZA Youth Championships 2025 in Bridlington and later go on to win the World and European Championships respectively in their age groups.

August England's Javier and Joaquin Bello reach the last 16 at the 2025 European Championships after a standout win over home favourites Nils Ehlers and Clemens Wickler in Düsseldorf, Germany.

September Volleyball England's Officials Working Group Lead Nick Heckford acts as a Challenge Referee at the FIVB Men's World Championships 2025 in Manila, The Philippines.

October Following the move from the National Volleyball Centre in Kettering, the first major event is held at Loughborough University with the staging of Super League Opening Weekend 2025 at the Sir David Wallace Building.

November The first-ever indoor Queen & King of the Court event is staged at Crystal Palace National Sports Centre, where Freddie Bialokoz and Issa Batrane reach the final. Javier and Joaquin Bello become England's first ever pair to play at a FIVB World Beach Volleyball Championships (in Adelaide, Australia).

December The inaugural Independent Schools' National Volleyball Cup Finals are staged at Bromsgrove School featuring both boys' and girls' competitions. CPSU praises Volleyball England for its strong safeguarding policies and processes.

January Volleyball England wins the right to stage its first ever World Beach Pro Tour (BPT) event, with the Futures Event to be held in late June, either side of NEVZA Senior and Junior events.

February Oxford University (women) and University of Warwick (men) are crowned Student Cup Champions in Norwich. Carol Gordon is appointed Head Coach of the England Senior women's team on a permanent basis.

March UEL win five out of five to retain the Student Sitting Cup title, and the maiden U18, U16 and U15 Super 6 tournaments (replacing Last 8) are contested in Loughborough ahead of Cup Finals Weekend.

What Does Your Membership Fund

1. Developing skilled coaches, referees and volunteers across England
2. Workshops and tailored resources to support your volleyball journey
3. Building the foundation and clear route to nurture future talent
4. Running support groups for coaches, officials and volunteers
5. Safeguarding support to all members
6. Building infrastructures for athlete development
7. Discounted VolleyStore alongside partner offers
8. Insurance cover for clubs and members providing much-needed peace of mind



9. Driving inclusion to ensure everyone can enjoy the sport
10. Expanding domestic competitions and bringing global events to England
11. Raising volleyball's profile through stronger marketing and visibility
12. Direct member support via our Hub Team running support groups for coaches, officials and volunteers
13. Continued anti-doping educational support to athletes
14. Supporting the Volleyball England Foundation's work
15. Building partnerships that elevate sports and its values
16. Partnering with charities to reach underserved communities

People Plan and DIAP

2025-26 marked the first full year of delivery for both the People Plan and the Diversity and Inclusivity Action Plan. At the heart of these plans is a clear ambition: to foster a deep-rooted sense of belonging across the entire volleyball community.

Below are key highlights from the past 12 months, aligned to the five strategic objectives.



A: Communities that feel valued and engaged

Formation of the Player Community Group, ensuring player voice is embedded within the decision-making structure. This year, the group engaged directly with the Board on key challenges facing players and delivered an insight session on the beach player pathway.

The 70th Anniversary Celebration was held alongside the Cup Finals and Annual Awards; the journey of the organisation was showcased through the lived experience of 14 members.

The original Amateur Volleyball Association minute book was digitised, making this important historical resource accessible to members.

B: Enough people doing the right roles

The Club Hub website page continued to provide advice and tools to support volunteer recruitment across the clubs.

Referees were deployed nationally to the Super League to ensure that the best officials are consistently appointed to the highest-level fixtures.

Four new Beach Referee Developers were trained and deployed to support the increase in the number of beach referees.



C: People with the right skills for the role

Nearly 500 volunteers completed the Volleyball England Safeguarding Children and Adults course, strengthening safeguarding knowledge across the network.

The Assistant Coach Award was updated and moved onto the new Volleyball England Learning platform.

The number of people taking the Coach Award increased by 25%.

D: Inclusive and diverse communities of people

The Volleyball England Diversity and Inclusivity Policy was modernised in collaboration with the EDI Advocacy group.

Volleyball England appointed its first ever female chair to the Board, marking a significant milestone in leadership diversity.

All professional and governance interview panels were gender balanced.

E: A safe place that protects people from harm

Seven clubs start using the online Globacol Club portal to securely store and track safeguarding records.

Post paddling became mandated across all national competitions to reinforce player welfare and safety standards.



Get Keep Grow

Get Keep Grow continued to put people and places at the heart of volleyball's development in England during 2025-26. Stronger relationships with clubs, regions, counties and the higher education sector helped improve the member experience, while advancing inclusion, safeguarding and engagement at the same time.

Supporting regions

As part of the ongoing work to help Regions and Counties to implement a regional plan and become more connected to their clubs, the Regional Chairs came together at Opening Weekend in Loughborough, creating a shared platform for collaboration and closer regional working across England.

Alongside this, Volleyball England provided direct support to regional strategy development, including guidance around Hardship Fund support, helping regions respond to local challenges more effectively.

Building stronger clubs

Clubs benefited from Inclusive Environment Workshops and one-to-one online club development sessions, supporting safer, more welcoming and more sustainable club environments.

Seven clubs piloted the Globocol Club Portal, enabling Club Welfare Officers to securely store and track safeguarding records, improving governance and compliance at club level.

Clubs were supported to build a stronger digital presence on VolleyZone, increasing

use of Club Hub resources and improving data quality across the sport.

Facility usage data was shared by clubs to help Volleyball England better understand the national facilities picture, supporting future local and national planning discussions.

HEVO turns 15

The 2025-26 period saw the Higher Education Volleyball Officer Programme celebrate a milestone 15th year.

Higher Education Volleyball Officers (HEVOs) have continued to play a significant role in growing participation, reaching more than 4,000 unique participants through recreational volleyball activity.

Relationships with universities and colleges, meanwhile, continued to strengthen, supporting the transition from student participation into sustained club involvement and volunteering pathways.

Helping communities to feel valued

Seven judges from volleyball and the wider sporting community were appointed to the Annual Awards 2026 panel, reinforcing transparency, credibility and celebration across the sport.

The Annual Award nominations period opened at the start of the season with 121 nominations received in total.

Volleyball England also supported National Volunteer Week in June 2025, which included providing template certificates and recognition for clubs.

Membership holding strong

Overall membership numbers remained high, just below the 10,000 mark at 9,987 with a gender split of 53% male, 45% female and 2% other.

Volleyball England also collaborated with Berkshire Volleyball Association to onboard them onto VolleyZone, enabling them to strengthen their digital engagement with clubs.

4,000+
participants engaged
in volleyball with
HEVO help



Safeguarding matters

The focus over the 12-month period has been on strengthening systems, improving confidence at club level and embedding safeguarding as a shared responsibility across the volleyball community.

As part of this, a Club Welfare Officer Workshop was delivered to 30 attendees and provided targeted learning and discussion spaces, focusing on confidence, consistency and the practical application of safeguarding guidance.

More detailed DBS guidance gave greater clarity on who requires a DBS check, when it is needed and how this aligns with safeguarding roles.

The launch of Let the Players Play campaign towards the end of the period promotes consistent messaging around respect, enjoyment and development-focused participation.

It also encouraged clubs, spectators, coaches and volunteers to reflect on behaviours that influence player wellbeing, as well as aligning welfare, safeguarding and participation principles into a single, accessible message.

Sitting volleyball

The 2025-26 Sitting Grand Prix ran with a new format used in the U18 Super Series, with eight teams consistently entering. Sitting Bucks and Help for Heroes reached Cup Finals Weekend for the second year running.

The Ken Edwards Trophy, the prize for the Sitting Cup winners, was contested in April and ran with six teams.

South Hants eventually came out on top, retaining the trophy they won in 2024-25, while Salisbury Spitfires clinched Shield victory – their first time winning a trophy.

Across the season the number of registered players for the GP increased to 87, up from 78 last year.

Students of the game

Moving into its second year, the student competition was renamed the Student Sitting Cup, Eight teams entered and five took part with UEL the winners.

The event was part of the plan to hopefully secure BUCS integration, with three more events planned for the new season.

Shaping development

The Sitting Volleyball Joint Working Group met throughout the year, not just to act as facilitators, but also to oversee matters of discipline.

Elsewhere, domestic sitting volleyball players were regularly featured across podcasts, interviews and digital resources by Volleyball England, with a particular focus during Disability History Month, amplifying lived experience and increasing visibility of the discipline.

Case Study: A new sitting newsletter

The Sitting Volleyball Newsletter was launched in December 2025 as part of Disability History Month, achieving a 41% open rate with its first edition, demonstrating a strong appetite for tailored, discipline-specific communication.



Included in the content was information on domestic competitions – both completed and coming up, links to podcasts featuring sitting personalities, GB and international news and upcoming events and developmental opportunities.

After putting out a call to members and players for ideas, the publication has now been named Sit and Spike.



An Ace Service

It was another big year for competitions and events across volleyball, sitting volleyball and beach volleyball, producing some firsts for the sport in England, as well as some memorable moments.

Life's a Beach

This year provided another significant step forward for beach volleyball in England, marked by the successful delivery of major international competitions, innovative event formats and the securing of a historic first tournament on the global circuit.

Bridlington hosted both NEVZA Senior and Youth competitions in June, creating a high-quality international environment for 26 senior and 32 junior English athletes, six English referees and hundreds of volunteers.



The successful delivery of both competitions demonstrated growing organisational capability and reinforced Bridlington's reputation as a reliable host venue, while also strengthening the alignment between junior and senior pathways within England's beach volleyball performance system.

Queens and Kings in the Palace

The staging of Queen and King of the Court at Crystal Palace National Sports Centre marked a landmark moment for the sport in England, bringing a globally recognised format indoors for the first time in a highly engaging setting.

The event attracted almost 1,000 spectators, creating a vibrant and energetic atmosphere that underlined the entertainment potential of beach volleyball. The weekend competition combined world-class play with a dynamic presentation style, showcasing elite athletes alongside strong English performances and making use of sand from the London 2012 Olympic Games to create a unique connection to the sport's legacy.

The year was capped off by a major strategic milestone being achieved... the successful application to host England's first-ever Beach Pro Tour event, awarded by the CEV. It is scheduled to take place at Bridlington's Belvedere Beach in June 2026, creating a two-week competition programme alongside Senior NEVZA and Youth NEVZA (U18 and U20).

This achievement reflects sustained progress in infrastructure, delivery capability and partnership development, building on the success of previous international events and firmly establishing England as a credible host on the global stage. It also represents a significant step forward in its long-term event hosting ambitions.



Junior Volleyball and its five-year vision

The Junior Super Series has continued to strengthen the national performance pathway, providing U18 teams with a structured and competitive 15-game season delivered across five game weeks. The format ensured regular, meaningful competition opportunities, all hosted in the high-performance environment at Loughborough University.

Participation across the wider Junior Grand Prix Series showed positive growth, with an 8% increase in Tier 1 entries compared to the previous season and a total of 2,800 junior athletes taking part nationwide.

Such growth reflects increasing demand for high-quality competition opportunities and highlights the programme's expanding reach. Alongside this, the series achieved a strong overall satisfaction score of 8 out of 10, demonstrating that the competition structure, delivery and athlete experience continue to meet the needs and expectations of participants and stakeholders.

To build on this momentum, a new five-year vision for junior volleyball has been developed, setting out a clear strategic direction focused on creating a more inclusive, connected and sustainable programme.

Central to this vision are three key priorities: establishing a fully connected national junior competition pathway to support player progression, developing a consistent and high-quality approach to competition delivery across all regions and strengthening the underlying infrastructure required to ensure long-term sustainability.

CASE STUDY : National Volleyball League (NVL) development

Significant progress has been made in implementing the NVL five-year vision, with the introduction of a newly formatted 168-team league structure designed to create a clearer and more consistent progression model across all tiers of competition. It represents a major step towards aligning the league with long-term development goals.

Alongside structural changes, improvements have been made to governance and support frameworks within the league. The NVL Self-Report process was successfully completed by all member teams, with submissions analysed and followed by the provision of tailored feedback to each club, alongside targeted support aimed at driving standards, enhancing compliance and supporting continuous improvement across the league.

In addition, enhanced processes for player registrations have been introduced, including clearer visa requirements and a more robust internal transfer procedure, strengthening compliance and transparency across the competition.

Further progress has been achieved through the implementation of updated standards within the 2025-26 regulations, embedding new rule interpretations across both the NVL and the wider national competition framework. These developments ensure greater consistency in officiating and competition delivery, while reinforcing the ambition set out in the five-year vision to modernise and professionalise the league.

Super League on the rise

The Super League Finals held at Crystal Palace in April 2025 marked a significant milestone in the growth of the domestic game, with fan attendance increasing by 200% compared to previous events.

The enhanced atmosphere and scale of the finals demonstrated the rising profile of the competition and its ability to attract and engage larger audiences, reinforcing its importance as a flagship event within the volleyball calendar.

This momentum continued into the Super League Opening Weekend in October, which became the first major domestic volleyball event hosted at Loughborough University since the establishment of the partnership.

The event saw attendance treble compared to 2024, alongside a 23% increase in broadcast viewership, highlighting both the growing in-

person appeal of the league and its expanding digital reach. Together, these metrics underline the strengthening visibility and commercial potential of the Super League.

Off the court, important steps were taken to professionalise the competition, beginning with the first-ever Super League Media Day in September 2025 at Loughborough University. This initiative formed part of a broader effort to elevate the league's profile and presentation.

Further progress was made with the appointment of Alex Porter to the Competitions Working Group, bringing valuable leadership experience to drive the next phase of development.

The group is focused on uniting teams as key stakeholders and establishing a clear set of Super League standards, providing a structured framework to support the long-term vision of a more professional and sustainable competition.





Continued growth

The National Cup and Shield competitions continued to demonstrate strong growth, with participation increasing by 23% in the men's competition and 18% in the women's competition.

The upward trend reflects the ongoing appeal and competitiveness of the national knockout format, as well as the continued engagement of clubs across the country.

Alongside this, the Student Cup reached a significant milestone, with over 100 teams entering the competition for the first time, underscoring the vibrancy of university-level volleyball and the increasing appetite for an alternative competition structure within the student pathway.

Within the Sitting Volleyball Grand Prix, participation levels remained stable with eight teams competing; however, the overall standard and quality of delivery saw notable improvement.

The installation of a dedicated sitting volleyball floor at each event elevated the level of play and athlete experience, while an increase in the number of matches livestreamed extended the reach and visibility of the competition.

These developments reflect a commitment to raising standards and improving accessibility, while continuing to support the growth of sitting volleyball as an inclusive and high-performance discipline.



8%

the increase in Junior
Grand Prix Tier 1
entries year on year

Volleyball for Life (Talent)

The Volleyball England Talent Pathway continues to evolve in a bid to make progress at international level, with a number of meaningful changes coming into effect over the course of the 2025-26 period.

Age group changes

Firstly, the Talent Pathway transitioned to revised age group categories, with U17 squads moving to U18 and U19 squads moving to U20 to align more closely with the international competition structure, ensuring athletes are better prepared to compete in CEV U18 and U20 European Championships.

As part of the new structure, Head Coaches were appointed across each age group, with Sam Shenton (U20 Men), Darren Lewis (U20 Women), Ryan Murphy (U18 Men) and Alex Chinery (U18 Women) leading the programme.

In line with the focus on European competition, programmes were expanded to include increased international exposure, with teams competing in events such as the Global Challenge (Croatia), Winter Cup (Italy) and Volleyball England Student Cup and Shield.

Alongside this, overseas camps and scrimmage opportunities were also a regular feature, strengthening preparation for international performance.



150+
athletes nominated
for the U18
assessment day

CASE STUDY: Talent Zones introduced

Interest in the U18 programme continued to grow, with over 150 athletes nominated and 80 attending the assessment day.

To further support player development, Talent Zones have been introduced to sit below the U18 squads, providing a more accessible and connected system with a strong focus on individual athlete development.

Four zones have been established – North (Lancashire, Yorkshire and North), Central (Midlands), London and East (London, Essex and Kent), and South and West (Sussex, Surrey and West) – each led by appointed Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches to ensure consistent, high-quality delivery nationwide. The first cohort of athletes will join the programme in September 2026





Heading up the Seniors

Carol Gordon was appointed Head Coach of the England Senior Women's programme, alongside Simon Loftus as Head Coach of the England Senior Men's programme.

Both programmes have continued to expand training and competition opportunities for U22 and Senior athletes, with a focus on strengthening preparation environments and supporting the identification and recruitment of future national team players.



U22 teams in action

In July 2025, England's U22 women (Slovakia) and U22 men (Italy) returned to the European Championship qualification competition following a prolonged absence.

The teams faced strong opposition, including Poland and Slovakia, providing a valuable opportunity to test themselves against high-level international competition.

Meanwhile, the Senior Men played in the Nordic Cup where they faced Denmark and Norway, who were both preparing for imminent European Championships qualifying campaigns, as well as a France U22 side, many of whom were getting ready for the U21 World Championships in China.



Volleyball for Life (Workforce)

It remains a priority for Volleyball England to help develop a strong cohort of referees, coaches and administrators to further develop the sport in line with The Game Plan, with good progress made in a number of areas over the 2025-26 period.

New Beach Volleyball Referee Developers

The introduction of the Referee Developer role marks a step forward in beach volleyball referee education, shifting from observation to active, in-match support.

Four new Beach Referee Developers – Katy Hooton, Sam Field, Paul Whittle and Michael Avery – are now trained and deployed at key events to provide real-time guidance and feedback.

At the same time, the Grade 4 Beach Referee course has been strengthened with the addition of practical, competition-based assessment, ensuring officials gain hands-on experience and more effective development

250

learners have accessed the revised Assistant Coach Award course online



National Referee Development Programme

The National Referee Development Programme (NRDP) continued to play a central role in strengthening the officiating workforce, with 37 referees engaged in a structured development environment designed to raise standards and ensure consistency.

A key feature of the programme has been the introduction of a more collegiate approach to feedback, aligned to international best practice, fostering shared learning and continuous improvement within officiating teams.

The NRDP is closely aligned to the Super League, with referees deployed nationally and travelling where required to ensure that the best officials are appointed to the highest-level fixtures. This approach has strengthened consistency, enhanced match quality and supported development in high-performance environments.

Referee webinars and pre-season briefings in all three disciplines continue to play a vital role in keeping officials up to date with the latest rule interpretations, ensuring consistency across competitions, while increased opportunities for development – including rules tests, NVL regulations tests and Volleyball England Officials Academy (VEOA) quizzes – support referee competence and confidence for officials at all levels.



CASE STUDY: The continued inspiration of Her Call

Her Call continues to grow as a key initiative supporting the development and engagement of female referees, providing a regular forum for learning, discussion and peer support.



The programme has attracted strong attendance throughout the year, featuring a range of guest speakers who have shared their experiences at the highest levels, including Carol Gordon, Head Coach England Senior Women, and Helene Geldof, an international volleyball referee from the Netherlands.

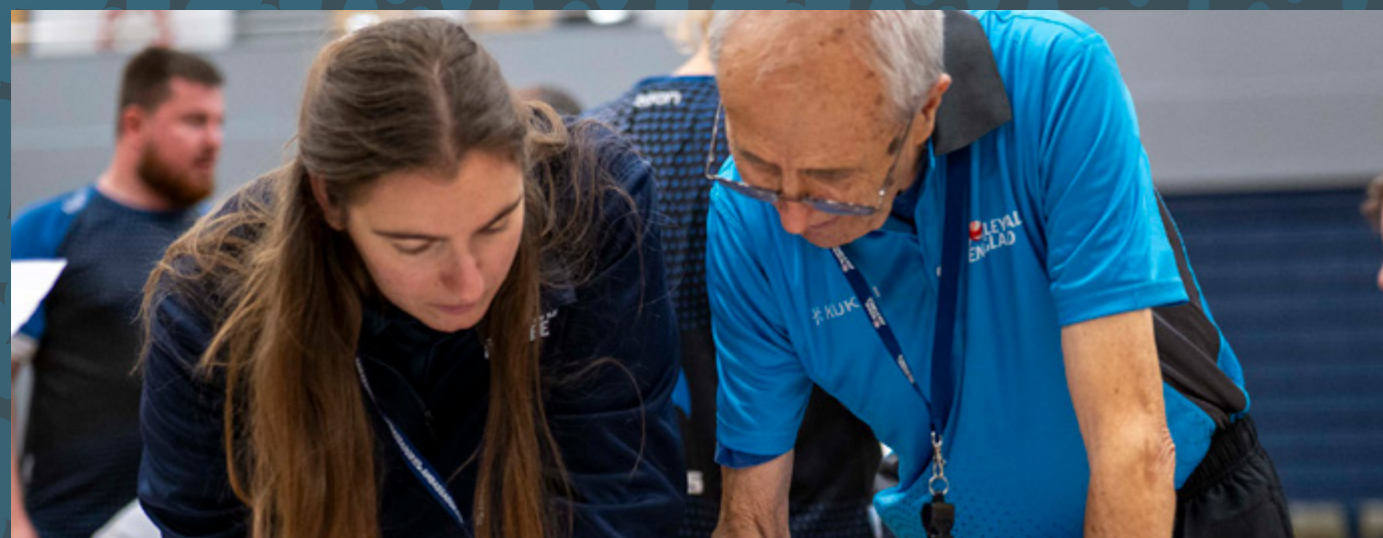
Flying the flag

Volleyball England continues to achieve strong international representation, with referees including Sebastian Widlarz, Katarina Cepinova, Nick Heckford, Dominik Biegajlo, Paul Whittle and Alexandru Calin appointed across a wide range of CEV competitions and major European events.

These appointments span the Champions League, Challenge Cup, EuroLeague and European Championships across indoor, beach and sitting disciplines, reflecting the growing reputation of English officials on the international stage.

This is further strengthened by Greg Thompson's qualification at the first-ever World ParaVolley Beach Referee Course, and Dee Wauchope's appointment as a jury member at the European Sitting Volleyball Championships.

Volleyball England officials also continue to be widely utilised across Europe as CEV Technical Delegates and Supervisors in both indoor and beach competitions with Lenny Barry, James Murphy, Simon Cowie, Charlie Hedgcock and Alex Smith gaining appointments.



Coach Education

The Assistant Coach Award has been revised in response to learner and tutor feedback, creating a more accessible and flexible experience.

Now accessed through Volleyball England Learning, which hosts both the course and all supporting materials, it enables learners to engage with content at their own pace, with nearly 250 learners accessing the updated

programme to date, reflecting strong demand across the coaching workforce.

The Club Coach Award has seen growing demand across both beach volleyball and volleyball, too, with a 25% increase in demand for the volleyball course.

Safeguarding standards remained a priority, with 463 individuals completing the Volleyball England Safeguarding Children and Adults course.

Anti-doping

Anti-doping Assurance Framework

Volleyball England remains compliant with the UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) Assurance Framework, reinforcing our collective commitment to clean sport and protecting the integrity of volleyball for all participants.

Testing

In 2025, no adverse findings were reported by UKAD for volleyball. More information can be found at [UKAD.org.uk](https://www.ukad.org.uk)

Clean Sport Education

England beach volleyball player Javier Bello joined the UKAD Athlete Commission ensuring the athlete voice is heard at the heart of anti-doping decision making in the UK.

In partnership with FIVB, all Team England players and support personnel completed clean sport education.

The U18 and U20 indoor squads received clean sport education during the December camp, including guidance on the new Volleyball England Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) decision-making tool, introduced by the Chief Medical Officer.

200

athletes have received clean sport training.



DISE

The Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE) programme continued to evolve during 2025-26, with the second full year of delivery under the revised model further embedding a more athlete-centred and flexible approach to learning and development.

The cohort that began in 2023 successfully progressed towards programme completion, with the vast majority of athletes remaining engaged throughout the two-year journey.

At the same time, the 2024 intake continued through the programme, benefiting from an enhanced support structure focused on individual development, personal reflection and dual-career preparation.

Personalised planning

The revised DiSE framework has continued to move away from workbook-based learning towards more personalised development planning, allowing athletes greater ownership of their Individual Athlete Plans and encouraging independent thinking around performance, wellbeing, and future aspirations.

Increased one-to-one engagement has remained central to the programme, helping athletes balance the demands of education, training and competition.



A holistic approach

Alongside the Lead DiSE Tutor, the programme continued to utilise a wider specialist support team including external tutors, nutrition support and sport psychology provision, with two psychologists contributing to athlete development across both performance and personal wellbeing areas.

Throughout the year, DiSE athletes also benefited from a broader range of workshops and learning opportunities designed to support holistic athlete development, reinforcing Volleyball England's commitment to developing not only better players, but more rounded individuals prepared for future pathways both within and beyond the sport.

Remaining person-centred

Looking ahead, Volleyball England will shortly be reviewing the programme, working alongside Indoor Performance Director Alex Porter, and aiming to ensure that athlete support remains adaptable, person-centred and aligned to the evolving needs of developing volleyball athletes.



Beach Volleyball

Building on the momentum and partnerships created through the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games legacy programme, Beach Volleyball has continued to strengthen its strategic position across facilities, workforce development, international events and place-based influencing.

Facilities development

Volleyball England has continued the scoping and feasibility work for an indoor four-court beach facility, while also supporting the development of beach volleyball projects and facilities in key urban locations including London, Bristol and Loughborough.



These projects form part of a broader ambition to position beach volleyball facilities as community wellbeing and placemaking assets, creating opportunities for physical activity, social connection and urban activation.

Place-based positioning and influencing

Volleyball England has continued to develop the strategic positioning of beach volleyball within wider conversations around urban wellbeing, placemaking and community activation.

Emerging work around urban beach volleyball facilities demonstrates how sand-based sports environments can contribute to healthier cities by giving access to restorative natural materials within compact urban settings.

This approach aligns beach volleyball with wider policy priorities including increasing physical activity, improving mental wellbeing, activating underused land and supporting community engagement.

Through continued collaboration with partners, landowners and city stakeholders, the organisation is seeking to position beach volleyball as both a sporting and placemaking solution capable of delivering long-term social and environmental impact.

International events

England successfully delivered the NEVZA Senior and Youth Beach Volleyball Championships in Bridlington, further strengthening the country's reputation for hosting international beach volleyball competitions.

In partnership with Sportworx, Volleyball England also supported the delivery of the world's first indoor Queen & King of the Court event at Crystal Palace, showcasing innovation within the sport and creating a unique spectator and athlete experience.



29

English pairs gained international experience at the NEVZA Senior and Youth tournaments in Bridlington.

Heritage Project

The Volleyball England Heritage Project has continued to make significant progress in preserving, documenting and celebrating the history of the sport across England.

Through the work of the Heritage Working Group (Ian Cooper, Geoff Allen, Ron Richards and Richard Harrison), the project is creating both a permanent historical record and a growing platform through which the stories, people and milestones that have shaped the sport can be shared with future generations.

Asset digitisation and preservation

Work to digitise Volleyball England’s historical assets has continued steadily throughout the year. Significant progress has been made towards completing the digitisation of annual reports, AGM papers, magazines and other key publications, creating the foundations of a long-term accessible archive.

A major milestone has also been the successful location of Dr Don Anthony’s original files, including a minute book covering the period from 1955–1972.

Plans are now in place to digitise these materials, alongside exploring restoration and preservation options due to the condition of the documents. These records represent an important part of the sport’s formative history and will contribute significantly to the understanding of volleyball’s development in England.

Capturing stories and experiences

The Heritage Podcast series has continued to grow as an important oral history project, capturing the experiences and reflections of individuals who have played key roles in the development of the sport.

Conversations have already included Gordon Neale, Richard Callicott, Freda Bussey, Ann Jarvis and Ron Richards, with many more planned.

Recognising the importance of inclusivity and accessibility within the project, the group has also arranged a number of in-person visits for contributors who may not feel comfortable participating in recorded podcast interviews, ensuring that valuable stories and perspectives are still captured and preserved.



Heritage website and digital archive

The heritage section of the Volleyball England website is being expanded to provide a central digital archive for historical materials, competition statistics, records and publications. Alongside preserving the national history of the sport, the project is also developing guidance to help clubs explore and document their own histories and understand how local stories contribute to the wider narrative of volleyball in England.

This work is intended not only to preserve historical information, but also to strengthen connections between generations within the volleyball community and increase awareness of the sport’s heritage across clubs, volunteers and participants.

The event, held at Loughborough University, highlighted the important contribution made by generations of individuals across volleyball’s communities and reinforced the importance of preserving and sharing these stories for the future.

Also invited were members of the newly-established Player Community Group, who talked about their bright hopes for the future of the sport.

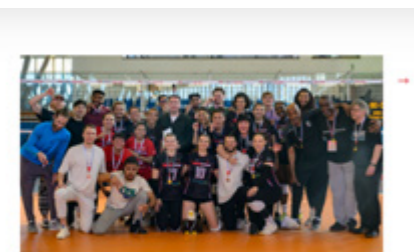
Looking ahead

Over the next 12 to 18 months, the Heritage Project will continue to expand its scope and ambition. Future developments include the creation of a physical archive space within the new Loughborough facility currently in development, event mapping work to better document the sport’s historical footprint and deeper collaboration with clubs to strengthen understanding of volleyball’s recorded history across England.

Together, these initiatives will help ensure that the history of volleyball in England is not only preserved, but actively used to inform, inspire, and connect future generations within the sport.

70th Anniversary Celebration Ceremony

The year also saw Volleyball England celebrate its 70th anniversary, bringing together former players, volunteers, officials, and key figures from across the sport to reflect on volleyball’s development and achievements over the past seven decades.



Competitions Honours Board



Magazines



Annual Reports

Finance Report

An update from Financial Consultant Kevin Fletcher.....

Finance people like to prepare a budget for the year ahead then ideally achieve the plan with very few shocks. This has been achieved at Volleyball England, continuing the progress made in recent years.

The continued strength of our membership and the success of our competitions and workforce training programmes have allowed us to reduce our reliance on Sport England (SE) funding even further. It now makes up just under 30% of our total revenue, down nearly 6% year on year.

Sport England continued to support Volleyball England during 25-26 with the Year 4 'System Partner' award of £456,782. The organisation also received an additional £24,337 to support its high-performance beach programme.

As the Birmingham 22 NGB Participation, Innovation and Digital Fund nears completion an amount of £25,836 was drawn to amplify legacy ambitions. An amount of £100,000 has been successfully applied for from Commonwealth Games England to assist beach athletes to prepare for LA 2028. Funding also continues to be received from the FIVB to fund beach and talent coaches.

Volleyball activity continues to be very encouraging in terms of the National Volleyball League, Student Cup entries, Junior Cup entries

and membership all showing huge year on year growth. Competitions have hosted another major event (NEVZA), generating more than £65,000 in revenue. In addition, there was a 107% year on year increase in Volleystore income as it moved into its second full year. These efforts have allowed Volleyball England to continue to grow total revenue, up 2.5% year on year.

Duncan & Toplis, Auditors and Business Consultants, audited and signed off Volleyball England's 24-25 Financial Statements with no adjustments to the Management Accounts presented at the 2025 AGM. This is never taken for granted and allows Volleyball England's Senior Leadership Team to make decisions based on accurate financial data throughout the year.



Turnover £1,868,632 +2.5%

SE Grant Income £120,445 +107%

Total Grant Income £560,870 30% of total income

Where did the money come from?

Sport England Grants 2025-26	£560,870
FIVB Empowerment Fund	£ 95,385
Commercial Income	£53,917
Talent Income	£206,494
Technical Courses	£109,194
Student Income	£ 13,027
Membership	£ 92,277
Diploma in Sporting Excellence	£180,930
Competition & Events	£436,093
Volleystore Income	£120,445
TOTAL	£1,868,632

Where did the money go?

Operating Cost (incl. Dig Transformation)	£388,516
Salaries	£687,761
Commercial Cost	£ 1,316
Talent	£258,403
Technical Courses	£ 62,355
Student	£25,267
FIVB Empowerment Expenses	£71,236
Diploma in Sporting Excellence	£57,241
Competition & Events	£217,358
Volleystore Cost of Sales	£91,775
TOTAL	£1,861,228

Volleyball England Foundation

It has been another busy year for the Volleyball England Foundation. In partnership with Volleyball England, the organisation been developing a long-term plan that will support and enhance the delivery of The Game Plan.

The strategy is designed to focus on particular areas, especially inclusion and supporting development projects designed to engage with hard-to-reach communities.

Birmingham Legacy Programme

The Foundation continues to work in Birmingham as part of the 2022 Commonwealth Games Legacy. In partnership with Birmingham Sport, and using equipment the Foundation provided, children across the city, including in some of the hardest to reach areas, enjoyed a summer of volleyball.

A number of schools are developing after-school and lunchtime clubs using equipment donated by the Foundation and support continues to help the development of community clubs in Birmingham.

The Foundation also provides ongoing support fo Birmingham Polish Heritage Day by providing outdoor volleyball equipment for the 20 teams taking part. The event is open to any community group in Birmingham.

7

athletes supported in the first round of the Ann Jarvis Hardship Fund

Beach Volleyball Development Centres (BVDCs)

Last summer, the Foundation supported the Beach Volleyball Development Centres, funding their respective outreach programmes, aimed at engaging children from hard-to-reach areas around their centres. It was a first experience on the sand for thousands of young people.

Rufus took part at Yellowwave and said: "Volleyball is the first sport I have ever really engaged with outside of school. Being autistic team sports can sometimes be a challenge, but I have absolutely loved these sessions."

"Without this opportunity, I wouldn't have discovered how much I enjoy the sport," added another participant, Lily. "These sessions have given me confidence, progression and a real passion."

Olly said: "The coaches are really kind and positive, and they make the sessions exciting while helping us improve."

The Foundation is looking forward to supporting the next stage of BVDC development.

Sitting Volleyball Development

The Foundation continues to focus on supporting the sitting volleyball community with its Trustees sitting on the Working Group and supporting the development a of a long-term plan for the discipline, working alongside Volleyball England and the British Volleyball Federation.

There has also been support for one-off sitting activities through linking them to other sporting and disability groups in their locality, encouraging those from outside the volleyball community to take part in this fast moving, dynamic discipline.

LGBTQ+ Project

After two years of research and development, the LGBTQ+ project, including an online learning module, will be launched at this year's AGM in Loughborough on 20th July.

The Foundation would like to thank all the clubs and individuals who have engaged with this project and 'The Good Trouble' for their continued efforts. The aim of the project is to break down barriers and make volleyball a safe space for everyone to enjoy, living the words "inclusive by design."



Ann Jarvis Hardship Fund

This 2025-26 season, in partnership with Volleyball England, the Foundation has been supporting the Ann Jarvis Hardship Fund, which provides discretionary funding to support English volleyball talent on the performance pathway.

The fund helps to cover essential costs such as training, travel and competition fees. In the first round, seven indoor athletes received support from the fund, which is named after England's most capped player of all time.

The next round will be launched in the summer, during which time the Foundation will continue to be active in supporting English volleyball players reach their full potential via the Foundation's Just Giving pages.

The added bonus of giving directly to the Foundation for the purpose of Ann Jarvis is that these donations attract Gift Aid, further increasing the pool of funds available for distribution.

Supporting clubs

The Foundation continues to support clubs looking for additional support, particularly when seeking grant funding.

Over the last 12 months, the organisation has worked with clubs looking for funding for coaching courses, equipment and advice on how to work in partnership with their facility, utilising the considerable knowledge base held within the Foundation to support sustainable club development over the longer term.



Social media growth

The Foundation's social media platforms continue to grow, being visited by individuals from all parts of the globe, who share how volleyball is being developed in some of the world's most rural and deprived areas.

It's amazing to see how resourceful people can be when they want to play volleyball, whether in the streets of cities, in farmland or in paddy fields.

The organisation is now back on Facebook and recently celebrated its 50th monthly newsletter. Sharing and promoting local initiatives around English clubs, the Foundation maintains a positive presence in this space.

Thanks go to everyone who has supported this year, donating and bidding on the Christmas Auction, providing stories and donating through the Just Giving pages.

Financial position

The Foundation continues to be in a strong financial position. It received income from a variety of sources, including donations. This year, it was grateful to receive funds in memory of Simone Medonos who passed away at 81, who helped establish Volleyball in Norway and coached both in Norway and England. It was a sport that shaped his life and he loved it. As a tribute to him and all he gave to the sport, his friends and family decided that donations to Volleyball England Foundation was a way to honour his life.

Other income came from Christmas Auction, a raffle at the National Finals and grants. The main expenditure this year was donations to the BVDCs to engage children from hard-to-reach areas around their facilities. We still retain funds for the GB Sitting women and to support players on the Volleyball England performance pathway helping cover costs of training camps, travel and kit.

At the end of the financial year, we have a balance of £63,000.

Trustees

A huge thanks also goes to the team of dedicated volunteer Trustees, not only for supporting the Foundation but also for giving their time and knowledge to a number of the Volleyball England working groups.

Greg Brown and Janet Inman sit on the wider Sitting Volleyball Working Group as well as attending regular joint Volleyball England Foundation, Volleyball England and British Volleyball Federation strategy meetings.

They are also consulted by and loan their expertise to Volleyball England in relation to the Ann Jarvis Hardship Fund player allocation process. Janet is also part of the Safeguarding Management team and the Counties and Regions working Group. Simone Turner is the Foundation's representative on the Heritage Project Group and Robert Blaszcak is a member of the Commercial Working Group.



The Trustees, as part of their annual review, will undertake a gap analysis early in the next period with a view to undertaking a further round of trustee recruitment. In the past, the Foundation has attracted a number of talented individuals who wish to volunteer, and it is expected that this will continue in the future.

Regional Reports

East Midlands Volleyball Association

2025-26 overview

Whilst on the surface nothing much seems to have changed, underneath that a lot of work has been taking place to bring the Association back in line with other regions.

There has been an increase in the number of teams competing at various levels of competition and participation in the Junior competitions is beginning to grow.

On the court, there have been some notable success stories, and the administration side of the game needs improving to match.

A much-needed redevelopment of the region's website is underway, whilst competition rules are being enhanced and the constitution is under review.

33

Grade 4 referees qualified in the East Midlands during 2025-26

After years of promising, a "come and try" sitting volleyball event took place in early May. The Association has two very successful sitting teams in the region – Nottingham Casualties and Lincoln Imps – and there is a determination to be more inclusive and bring more people into the sport.

Course successes

There have been two Grade 4 Referee Courses over the 2025-26 period, which has seen an additional 33 Grade 4 Referees qualify.

Both courses were hosted by universities, with spaces made available for non-students to help strengthen the Regional and Local Leagues.

Referee development has had a further boost with the fact that BUCS Premier League fixtures now require Grade 3 Regional Referees as a minimum. As the region has five teams in the top two divisions, a system of mentoring new referees is being developed.

Two coaching courses were completed before the end of the season. The annual Volleyball England Club Coach Award course was held in Loughborough in October and an Assistant Coach Award Course was completed in May.

This season has been much of a holding year for the region, with 2026-27 looking to be a year of moving forward both on and off the court.



Strong Junior interest

The Junior Talent Pathways have again been very active with an increased number of Juniors attending the regional training before the Inter-Regional squads were chosen for the May Competition.

The revamped Inter-Regional Beach Tournament in Wales last summer also saw the region represented in all the competitions.

With the increased demand for higher level referees and a more enhanced Junior development programme, the region is looking to double the number of courses held in both disciplines in the future.

Referee and coach numbers on the increase

The number of clubs registered has declined from last year, with the reason being that fewer schools are registering.

As the East Midlands moves more towards greater Junior Development, the importance of the link between club and school becomes more important and the need to register is one factor to enhance that link.

The number of referees registering has increased from last year (33 to 54). Likewise, the number of registered coaches has increased as junior development expands.

Trent teams earn NVL titles

The East Midlands has been well represented within the National Volleyball League, with nine clubs entering 16 teams.

Notable achievements this year were the University of Nottingham Women's team gaining promotion back to the MAAREE Women's Super League, having been relegated in 2024-25. Undefeated across the season, they conceded just two sets.

Darkstar Derbyshire were crowned Men's Division 2 North Champions while Leicester Athena, having dropped out of the Women's Division 1, saw their Division 3 Central side promoted through the NVL Play-offs.

Student successes

The student sides were even more successful. University of Nottingham Men finished top of the Northern Premier League and were crowned National Champions with victory over Newcastle.

Loughborough Students Women followed up their success in the National Trophy with promotion to the Premier Division, meaning the region now boasts five of the top 12 teams.

There were promotions, too, for Nottingham Trent University in both the Midlands Men's Divisions 2 and 3.



Regional and local leagues

The Men's Regional League saw an increase of in teams from 14 to 19, however, there was a decrease from 12 to 11 in the Women's equivalent.

Within the Local Leagues, Leicestershire has a thriving competition, with seven teams in each of the Men's, Women's and Mixed Leagues.

Lincolnshire have a league of six Men's teams, whilst Northamptonshire have two Men's leagues with a total of 13 teams and a Women's league of eight teams.

Junior and sitting competition

Six clubs have been represented throughout the season in the Junior Grand Prix, which has provided a solid base for the Regional Junior Development Training.

For this year's Inter-Regional Competition, the 49 players and coaches come from 11 clubs throughout the region.

The Nottingham Casualties Sitting Volleyball team also had yet another successful season, with the highlight of their season being winning the silver medal at the Stavanger Sitting Cup.

London Volleyball Association

Despite some challenges, overall it has been a good year for London Volleyball.

The Queen and King of the Court beach volleyball competition was a particular highlight, taking place indoors for the first time on a specially built court at Crystal Palace on 28th and 29th November 2025.

The elite level event brought 20 of the world's top male and female beach teams to battle in London, with hundreds of spectators packing out the stadium for the two-day event.

The start of the 25-26 period had also seen Crystal Palace act as the venue for the Volleyball England Super League Final 4 came to London for the first time, having moved from the National Volleyball Centre in Kettering.

London teams Malory Eagles and London Giants maintained a strong presence at the top of the Super League, winning the women's and men's crowns respectively.

The London local volleyball scene, meanwhile, has continued to grow, with record numbers of teams participating in the indoor six-a-side league, thriving London junior development and a steady number of informal social volleyball sessions across the capital.

32

teams competing in
the South West Senior
Championships

Administratively, the region suffered a setback with Chair Sandra Simoes needing to step away from the role part way through the year due to a combination of personal circumstances.

An interim Chair (Roger Mullings) was appointed in January 2026, with the aim of continuing the previous excellent growth overseen, addressing outstanding issues and working on the LVA's infrastructure and governance.

Referee advancement and management

Overall this was a significant positive, with the Association, which manages referee appointments for the London League and BUCS Universities across the region, ensuring that 95% of all games had appointed referees.

Positive feedback was received from clubs about referee appointments, which were based on referees' grades and the level of the competition.

With a need to consolidate referee development, time in the first half of the season was devoted to establishment of a formal observations framework, ensuring the refereeing pathway aligns closely with Volleyball England's core values and standards.

Since then, there has been a focus on maximising opportunities at major events such as the London Youth Games, All Nations, the LVA Play-offs, and private tournaments, providing valuable match experience for developing referees, along with larger observation and feedback programmes.

During the year, there were 11 promotions from grade 4 to 3R. In 2026-27, the Association will continue the development of new referees with a consistent approach to ensure all gain the required experience and knowledge for the role.



A structured coaching support programme

The coaching development side has progressed more slowly than had been initially planned.

However, work is now underway with a number of highly experienced coaches to create a more structured support programme for developing coaches.

This is particularly the case in areas that have historically been challenging, including middle-setter connections, timing and fundamental body mechanics.

Junior development

The LVA's boys' and girls' junior development programmes have continued, with training camps held approximately monthly throughout 2025-26.

Both boys and girls' training led to London participation in the annual Inter Regionals tournament in late May. At the start, the boys had the additional highlight of participating in the 2026 Cornacchia World Cup in Italy.

It was a credit to the boys involved and to the coaching team, who carried out fundraising activities to cover tournament costs, enabling them to finish in 22nd place out of 36.

44

points amassed by Telford en route to winning NVL Division 3 Central with a 100% record

London Indoor League on the up

The London Indoor League has continued to thrive and grow in 2025-26, with 2,145 player registrations, up 250 from the previous year.

In total, 122 teams competed, up from 104, with **22 new teams**, including one prison-based men's team.

In all, a total of **845 matches** were contested – **476 men's and 369 women's**.

Change in scoring system

The scoring system of the league was changed so that, similar to NVL, three points were awarded for a win and one point for winning two sets.

However, as London clubs have limitations in court availability, rules were in place where a match draw is possible and, in this event, the outcome is two points each.

The league came to a close with the season-ending play-offs which took place at the start of May at Mulberry School in Bethnal Green.

The venue featured three courts side by side and there were a couple of hundred spectators and players present to witness two courts of fiercely competitive matches that decided promotion and relegation in the men's and women's leagues.

The third court was a showcase of junior volleyball with matches between London's Inter-Regional teams and a high-quality practice pre-tournament between countries participating in the upcoming All Nations tournament.

Administration progression

For the League Administrators, the priority was consolidation of VolleyZone usage for player/personnel registrations and league management.

Now in its second year, the experience has improved since year one, but some issues remain. It is hoped these will be resolved in advance of the 2026-27 season.

Future plans

Among the key ambitions are improving infrastructure, and providing all officials with controlled email accounts, MS Office suite and Sharepoint for a single consistent working environment.

Alongside that there is the goal to improve governance by working on a significant update to the constitution, ensuring all procedures are fully codified and centrally accessible and establishing a new infrastructure for the handling of issues and complaints.

South West Volleyball Association

The South West Volleyball Association (SWVA) continues to flourish, with a full senior and junior competitive programme and active local associations.

There is a large junior development programme being developed through the regional junior squad training programmes for indoor and beach.

Long-standing Chair, Dave Reece, stepped down at the last AGM and was thanked for his outstanding contribution, which continues as



Vice-Chair. Michaela Willis has stepped into the role and has made a major contribution in her first year in post.

There are other new volunteers in officer posts and on additional sub-committees who have also made an impact.

Coaching courses and regional squads

A number of courses were planned, but unfortunately only one Coach Award course took place. It is an ongoing problem for the region and its local areas, being difficult to arrange in a geographically spread region, as well as issues with cost and timing.

This is due to be discussed at the next SWVA AGM to see if interest can be re-kindled in award courses.

The region continues to put a lot of effort into the training of its regional junior squads, who train regularly through the season from September until the Inter Regional Championships in May (for indoor volleyball), as well as through the summer for the beach volleyball teams.

In addition to the benefit for the players, the junior squads also act as a development opportunity for squad coaches, with many moving from assistant coach to squad coach over the years.

A number of squad members and their parents have gone on to make further contributions to volleyball as coaches and volunteers after their time with the squads. The programme takes a lot of organisation, but is well worth the effort.

Beach events

In the summer of 2025, junior regional beach teams took part in the Inter Regional Beach event and the Home Nations beach event.

The 2026 programme is about to start and there are plans to enter similar events this year and to look for additional competitive opportunities for the region's junior teams.

Fluctuating numbers

The number of affiliated clubs in the region and its areas has remained stable, with coach registrations up on last year, but referee registrations down.

Most local area associations have seen stable membership, though some face serious issues over the availability of facilities.

There remains good communications between the region and its area associations, with regular reports to the SWVA meetings.

League action

The region has been pleased to see an increase in the number entries to the SW Leagues, with 16 teams in both men's and women's leagues, requiring two divisions for both.

Vets popularity

The men's leagues were won by Wiltshire Mavericks and Swansea, while the women's divisions were won by Torexe and Wiltshire Mavericks.

The South West Vets tournament in November had 11 entries this year and was won by Torexe Saga Louts.

With increased demand for participation in the South West Senior Championships, the decision has been made to use two sports halls to allow additional entries with 18 men's and 14 women's teams playing on five courts over two days, including an added plate competition.

Junior participation

The JuVoTo (U12 to U15 mini volleyball) series has featured four events across the region, featuring 45 teams.

A new development this season has been a range of very successful beginners 6v6 tournaments for boys and girls, which is hoped can be expanded again next season.

Local link-ups

As a region, the SWVA works closely with five local associations that provide league competitions, where all teams are affiliated.

When no recognised local association exists, the teams from those areas tend to travel to take part in the five recognised local leagues.

Committee work

Regional executive committee meetings take place three times a year, are well attended and contribute to the planning of development of volleyball across the region.

Work has taken place this year to establish a safeguarding committee and a hardship fund.



It was good to see the re-establishment of the face-to-face Volleyball England Regions meeting in October, allowing representatives to share good practice and to hear of the subsequently published Volleyball England regional plans.

50th anniversary for Wessex

SWVA would like to congratulate Wessex VC as they celebrate their 50th anniversary.

The club and its leaders have contributed hugely to volleyball in the South West over the last 50 years, and continue to do so.

Thanks also go to all those who give up so much of their time to make organised volleyball possible across the region.

West Midlands Volleyball Association

The West Midlands has enjoyed an excellent 2025-26, with clubs from the region achieving at the highest levels and huge numbers of juniors coming through at almost all of the region's clubs.

A highlight was seeing Newcastle Staffs' group of talented U15 girls make it all the way to the national final – huge congratulations to them – as well as representation from all of the clubs who sent teams to the Grand Prix.

Juniors on the rise

This has been another high-quality year in terms of the talent seen in the region, from juniors all the way through to the National Volleyball League.

Junior activity continues to grow, with significant numbers of junior players now

representing their clubs in National League action, with some being Division 1 regulars.

In terms of senior activity, it has been especially pleasing that the continued and sustained growth in the numbers of clubs from the region participating in the NVL has not diminished the number or quality of teams in the regional league.

New senior clubs holding their own

Indeed, after 2024-25 saw the emergence of three new clubs to the region, it's been a real highlight to welcome an additional two more new clubs in Birmingham Aces and Timings VC.

These new clubs are more than holding their own, with Birmingham United and BDS Gurdwara securing back-to-back promotions in subsequent years, meaning they will join Men's Division 1 next year – a mouthwatering prospect with standards in that division already high.

NVL highlights

On the NVL front, Telford emerged victorious at the top of Men's Division 3 Central to gain promotion at the first time of asking, while Birmingham City narrowly missed out on following them with a five-set loss in the play-offs.

With representation from Newcastle Staffs – Men's Division 1 North winners – at the other end of the NVL pyramid, it's a sure sign that the West Midlands has a host of talent at all levels of the game.



Encouraging collaboration

In terms of coaches and officials, against a tough backdrop for volunteers, the vast majority of clubs in the region provide a qualified coach for every regional game, as well as qualified officials.

Some of the newer clubs have teamed up to ensure they can officiate each other's games despite being in their infancy, which is a really great collaborative effort to ensure standards are upheld.

Development of less experienced youngsters

The biggest advancement this season across the region has been the growth in competitive action for younger and less experienced junior players.

The region's clubs with junior sections have organised themselves into an east and a west section to ensure the juniors have places to play competitively, without having to travel across a region, which spans a huge area from the Welsh borders in the west to Rugby in the east.

Following the model set by the long-established Juvolle and Juvoto tournaments, these competitions have occurred regularly all year, with the focus on participation and no player being left behind.

If a player's teammates can't attend to make up a full team, they are encouraged to attend anyway and join another team on the day.

The social media photos and video shared from these tournaments show just how valuable they are in making sure young

players develop their love for the game as well as their talent. With the numbers of girls' teams matching the boys, there is plenty to be optimistic about.

Indeed, last season's Inter Regional Championships offered a real insight into quite how much talent there is in the region, with all four squads at U15 and U17 level securing semi-final spots.

Yorkshire Volleyball Association

Volleyball in the Yorkshire region during 2025-26 continued to develop well in some aspects, while facing similar challenges from previous seasons in other areas.

There is a well organised regional league structure, as well as junior development programmes, both for indoor and beach volleyball. The region has a dedicated Executive Committee, with all but one post filled.

Coaches and officials in focus

Increasing the number of coaches and officials is one area where the region needs to focus. All clubs in Yorkshire, as in other regions, traditionally rely on a small pool of volunteers, and this needs to be addressed.

For various reasons, there have not been any coaching courses in the region this season. On the refereeing side, however, there is a Grade 4 course organised for the near future, with another provisionally planned for the beginning of next season.

The future plan is to organise at least one coaching course and at least one referee course every season.

An increase in people

The number of affiliated clubs in the region has remained stable, with two new clubs applying to join the association.

While some clubs have struggled for numbers, overall the number of people joining the sport seems to be increasing. While this is great for volleyball, the number of coaches and referees needs to increase proportionately.

Super League and NVL

The number of teams from the region playing in the NVL remained the same as the previous season, where Yorkshire was again represented by Leeds Gorse, Sheffield, Hull Thunder, York, Harrogate, The Miners Doncaster and Sheffield Springers.

Unfortunately, there will not be any teams from the region playing at the highest level in 26-27 as both Leeds Gorse Men's and Women's teams were relegated from the Super League.

On a positive note, though, York Falcons achieved promotion to Women's Division 2 North via the play-offs – so huge congratulations to them.

Leeds teams prominent in Regional League

Clubs were again offered three levels of competition at regional level for both men and women.

The number of teams entering the leagues was slightly down on last season, with only one new team entering. Of particular concern



was that two clubs were unable to enter women's teams this season due to lack of players.

The winners of the men's leagues were Harrogate Goats, Leeds University and Leeds Gorse, while taking the women's titles were Leeds Gorse, Leeds University and Leeds Soarers.

Local Leagues

The region's only local association, the Hull and East Yorkshire Volleyball Association (HEYVA), ran a mixed local league for 12 teams, split into two divisions. The winners were Stapleton Volleyball and Hull Royals.

Junior Competitions

Teams from Leeds Gorse, Hull Thunder and Sheffield competed in the Volleyball England Tier 1 competitions, and, overall, there was a decrease in the number of teams entered from the region compared with last season.

Yorkshire clubs also organised four Tier 2 tournaments for Under 15 Boys and Girls.

Leeds Gorse flew the flag with distinction for the region as their U18 Girls and U16 Boys reached the National Finals. Leeds Gorse U18 Boys who won their fourth National title in a row... a fantastic achievement!

Inter Regionals

At the 2025 Inter Regional Championships, both the U17 Boys and U17 Girls were runners-up, while the U15 Boys finished sixth and the U15 Girls finished seventh.

All the squads have been looking forward to the 2026 tournament and, as ever, are

grateful to the Bridlington Beach Volleyball Tournament, which supports the Junior Programme in Yorkshire.

Excelling in beach volleyball

This is one area that goes from strength to strength, due mainly to the work of Skyball Beach Volleyball Club.

Yorkshire will again host the NEVZA Senior and Junior Beach Championships at Bridlington, with the addition this year of the Beach Pro Tour Futures event.

Eight athletes from Yorkshire have been selected to represent England at Bridlington, and two of these, Josh Cosgrove and Maks Makowski have also been selected for the Beach Nations Cup Preliminary Event in Turkey.

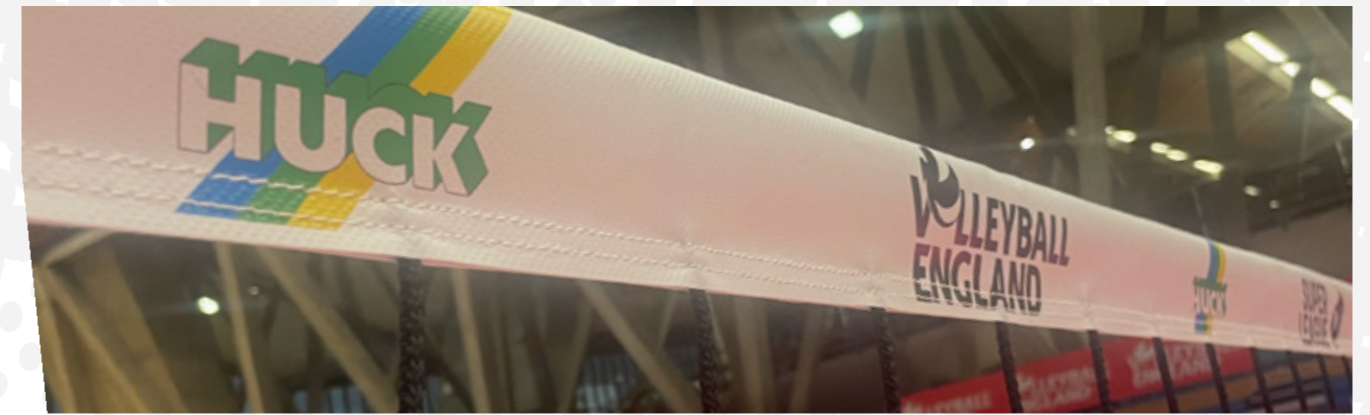
The completion of the beach courts at one of the Gorse Academies will only serve to enhance the opportunities for Yorkshire's beach players.



Partners

Volleyball England would like to thank its valued partners for their continued support in helping the sport's development.

- Kukri Sports
- Sport England
- Mikasa
- MAAREE
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- Volleyball England Foundation
- British Volleyball Federation
- Kukri Sports
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