

Surrey Association of Cricket Officials (SACO)
County Appointments Officer Report for 2023

1. The 2023 season was my seventh as your SACO County Appointments Officer (CAO). **The workload of the CAO has expanded significantly since I first took on the role which is a healthy sign as demand for our services has grown.** For that reason, **I was delighted to have the assistance of Graeme Hall and Richard Wood last season.**
2. **Graeme managed appointments required for the Surrey CCC Performance Department** (i.e. internal age-group games) and **Richard with the growing list of schools' appointments.** Both Graeme and Richard have agreed to continue their support and we will have a planning meeting in the week before the AGM to agree our approach to appointments this season. Our mantra is to **"appoint the right umpires for the right games"**. In practice this means looking for opportunities to pair newer umpires with experienced ones to support the former in their early days. It also means ensuring we comply with guidance issued centrally, by ECB ACO, on minimum umpire grading for national ECB competitions. My role includes working closely with the County Development Officer to provide more challenging opportunities for those umpires with a realistic prospect of future advancement to the M2 grade (which covers National Panel umpires). Such umpires are prioritised for later rounds of ECB national competitions and multi-day cricket.
3. **Regular circulars were sent out (21 across the season) to all SACO umpires during the season** to advertise clubs and schools that had approached me for help sourcing umpires. **I estimate that SACO were responsible for at least 550 umpire appointments (each umpire counting as one appointment) as detailed below.** In addition to these, there were several ad hoc appointments or referrals to clubs seeking umpires through the SACO bureau service so the final number is probably closer to 600 umpire appointments across the whole season.
4. **Before the season started SACO was asked to make regular appointments for four schools: Hampton, KCS Wimbledon, St. John's Leatherhead and RGS Guildford.** During the season we were also approached by Allyn's and by several other schools to help with ad hoc appointments. **Across the whole season we made 93 umpire appointments to such matches (up from 67 in 2022; a 39% rise).** With a couple of exceptions, all schools settled their invoices promptly allowing me to reimburse most umpires at the end of the season. Resignation of cricket masters held up some payments but all umpires were re-imbursed before the end of 2023. Apologies to the few members who had to wait patiently for payment.
5. **University fixtures continued to be the most problematic to organise.** Very late requests for umpires for matches (sometimes the day before the game), expecting umpires to stand at both ends, double-booked pitches and late (or non) payment of fees being among the problems. As with last season, SACO covered the non-payment of fees to honour the commitment members had made by making themselves available to stand in these games. The Surrey ACO Treasurer was requested to pay out £325 to umpires who had not been paid. As with this season, I will refuse to appoint to non-payers in 2024 until they pay their outstanding debt. **Across the**

season, we made 34 umpire appointments to university fixtures (compares with 33 in 2022).

6. In 2023 we took over entirely the appointment of umpires requested by the **British Gorkhali Cricket League (BGCL)** having shared this with the Hampshire ACO in 2022. This is a Sunday afternoon competition with fixtures held at grounds around the Hampshire/Surrey borders. **We made 29 appointments to these fixtures including appointing both umpires to stand in the Final game at Aldershot CC and one umpire in a BGCL fixture versus the MCC.** All those umpires involved in these fixtures again commented on how enjoyable these games were to umpire and I was pleased **the organisers agreed to raise the match fees from £47 to £50 per umpire in the 2023 season.** The BGCL also settled their payments promptly which was also welcome.
7. The Surrey CCC reverted to asking SACO to provide 2 umpires for most of their programme of Performance Department cricket. **We made 230 appointments on behalf of the Surrey Performance Department with 55 SACO members accepting one or more.** The advantage of having Graeme involved in these appointments is that he could steer appointments to new members and those requiring observations for ACO accreditation purposes. Prior to the season starting, Surrey CCC agreed to raise match fees for umpires in recognition of the rising cost of living. Fees for Surrey Academy and CAG Under 18s were raised to £66, £53 for Boys CAG Under 13s to 15s and £50 for all other age-groups. All these payments were claimed from Surrey CCC by the appointed umpires and, with one or two exceptions, were settled promptly.
8. **As County Appointments Officer, I was asked to nominate umpires for appointment to several ECB competitions.** This included around 100 appointments covering the:
 - National Club Championship
 - Boys County Age-Group matches (Under 18s, Under 16s and Under 14s)
 - Regional Women's Academy matches
 - County Women's games
 - County Girls Age-Group matches (Under 18s and Under 15s)
9. **The problems experienced in 2021 and 2022 with the timely payment of umpire expenses by the ECB was not repeated** (with one or two exceptions). The ECB raised their 2023 match fees for games that CAOs appoint to from £30 to £40 (mileage will remain at 40p per mile). The same rate will be on offer in 2024.
10. **We continued to support the Surrey Cricket Foundation in appointing around 40 umpires to several of their significant matches including Girls Finals days and the Surrey Junior Cricket Championship Finals matches. We made 14 appointments to Surrey Disability fixtures during the 2023 season and appointed two umpires to the first Walking Cricket Final.** Unfortunately, as with many fixtures this season, the latter fell foul of the weather and was postponed until the start of the 2024 season.
11. Appointments were also made to national ECB competitions and several nominations of Surrey ACO members for Regional/National appointments were successful. This

included **Madhur Hemnani being appointed to the ECB National Club T20 Area Finals at the County Ground Hove** and **Stuart Todd to the National Village Cup Final at Lord's**.

12. **Finally, as ever I would like to thank all those SACO members who made themselves available for the wide range of games that we are asked to appoint umpires.** The feedback from those seeking the services of SACO to appoint umpires to stand in their games was again very positive with no significant issues raised with me this season.

John Flatley
Surrey ACO
County Appointments Officer
4th March 2024