

**Surrey Association of Cricket Officials (SACO)**  
County Appointments Officer Report for 2025

1. The 2025 season was my ninth as your SACO County Appointments Officer (CAO) and **I am offering myself up for re-election for a final term**. While I now have partially retired from paid employment and have a bit more time to devote to voluntary work, I think there comes a time when fresh thinking is needed. Therefore, working with your Committee, I will endeavour to find a deputy who can shadow me for at least a season before I step down by the end of the 2028 season at the latest.
2. **I was grateful, for the third season, to have the assistance of Graeme Hall and Richard Wood in managing appointments for the Surrey CCC Performance Department** (i.e. internal age-group games) and **schools**.
3. 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 appointment to national ECB competitions. My role includes working closely with the County Development Officer to provide opportunities for those seeking grade progression. In the open game, those M3 umpires with a realistic prospect of future advancement to the M2 grade (which covers National Panel umpires) continue to be prioritised for later rounds of ECB national competitions and multi-day cricket.
4. **Regular circulars were sent out (24 across the season) to all SACO umpires during the season** to advertise clubs and schools that had approached me for help sourcing umpires. These circulars were supplemented by call outs via WTU memos in response to short-term ad hoc requests. **SACO were responsible for at least 575 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 (which I don't keep a record of) so the **final number will be well over 600 umpire appointments across the whole season**.
5. Regular appointments were made for 3 public schools: Hampton, St. John's Leatherhead and RGS Guildford), as well as several ad hoc appointments for Alleyn's and Dunnotar. **We increased the number of matches to which we appointed (at least one) umpire: up from around 70 games last season to 110 this one. It was pleasing to be asked to appoint to several State school matches** including Godalming College, George Abbot School and St Francis Xavier 6th Form College.
6. University fixtures continued to be the most problematic to organise but think we had fewer issues this season than last. **Across the season, we made just 24 umpire appointments to university fixtures** (compares with 37 in 2024, 34 in 2023 and 33 in 2022).
7. We continued to take responsibility for the appointment of umpires requested by the **British Gorkhali Cricket League (BGCL)** supported by the Hampshire ACO on several weeks as we were unable to cover all appointments. This is a Sunday afternoon competition with fixtures held at grounds around the Hampshire/Surrey borders. **We**

**only made 21 appointments this season (down from 28 the previous year) and relied on support from Hampshire ACO to fill several gaps.** The greater difficulty covering these games reflects the growing demand for umpires on Sunday combined with fewer umpires willing to stand both days on a weekend.

8. The **Surrey CCC Performance Department** again asked SACO to appoint to lots of their internal squad and County Age Group (CAG) matches. **Over 300 appointments were made including around 60 to Girls CAG matches.** The advantage of having Graeme involved in these appointments is that he could steer these towards new members and those requiring observations for ACO accreditation purposes. Match fees in 2025 remained the same as in 2023 and 2024 and we will be in discussion with Surrey CCC about reviewing these payments before the start of the 2026 season.
9. **We struggled covering the youngest age-group games on a Sunday with two umpires** reflecting several factors: a) a reduction in the number of newly qualified umpires coming through the training pipeline, b) growing demand for umpires, for example to cover women's and girl's matches and c) fewer umpires appearing willing to stand both days of the weekend. Where there was a shortage of umpires we had to prioritise the older age-group matches which meant that we were unable to appoint to several under 10s matches. **Added to the above factors, Graeme and I received feedback that doing two under 10s games back-to-back, on a self-catering basis, with little time between games was unattractive.** We fed this back to Tom Benge, at Surrey CCC, and hope these points will be taken on board for the 2026 season.
10. **As County Appointments Officer, I was asked to nominate umpires for several ECB competitions appointed at a regional or national basis. This totalled 46 appointments as set out below.** This was considerably down on previous seasons with the professionalisation of Tier 1 Women's cricket and such appointments now being done centrally by the ECB Officiating Department.
  - National Club Championship – 26 appointments
  - Over 50s County Cup – 2 appointments
  - Under 15 County Bunbury Warm Up Matches – 2 appointments
  - Under 16 County Cup – 2 appointments
  - Vitality Under 18 County T20 – 6 appointments
  - Under 18 County Championship (3 day) – 4 appointments
  - Under 18 County Cup – 2 appointments
  - Women's Vitality U19 Club T20 – 2 appointments
11. We continued to support the Surrey Cricket Foundation in **appointing to 25 Surrey Junior Cricket Championship Finals matches.** This included the Under 19s T20 final to which Stephen Bartlem and Digby Hunt were appointed for the first time standing in a competitive match at the Oval. **We also supported the Surrey Schools Cricket Association where we made appointments to 12 finals games across various age-groups.**
12. **I am grateful for Jeremy Beckwith's support in processing in the region of £15.5k umpire payments this season for SACO appointed games.** It was felt prudent that these should pass through the Association's accounts rather than my personal one, not least to avoid the risk that HMRC thinking it represented personal income or that I was

acting as an employer and avoiding tax and national insurance! As in previous seasons, we still have some issues with having to chase invoices and there are still one or two outstanding. Nevertheless, Jeremy made payment to all SACO appointed umpires promptly at season end.

13. **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  
21<sup>st</sup> February 2026