

# EH ARTIFICIAL GRASS PLAYING SURFACE POLICY

July 2016



ENGLAND  
HOCKEY

The aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance of what type of Artificial Grass Pitch surface is acceptable for the different levels of hockey.

This policy replaces the England Hockey '3G Policy' that existed from 2009 to 2016.

## Background

Historically hockey was traditionally played on grass hockey pitches; however this began to change in the 1980's with the evolution of Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs). The first generations of AGPs were sand-based and over time progressed into sand-dressed and 'water-based' surfaces. Now in England more than 99% of club hockey is played on AGPs.

In the mid-2000's a new long pile rubber crumb filled surface (usually known as 'Third Generation' or 3G) was developed, the characteristics of this surface were less suitable for hockey, with a slower ball roll and less consistent run of the ball providing an inferior experience for players. In light of this England Hockey developed a '3G Policy' that stated the following:

*'Long pile (3G) surfaces that are certified by the FIH would be permitted for local and regional league competition (except regional premiership divisions)'*

Based on the feedback and experience gained between 2009 and 2016, England Hockey has recently reviewed this policy to develop a more holistic approach for determining the right surface for hockey. At the heart of this strategy is a focus on player experience as the critical factor driving this policy change.

The main changes to the policy is to reduce the amount of club and higher level hockey that England Hockey recommends can be played on 3G pitches in light of the feedback from players. The policy also clarifies the appropriate hockey provision on all artificial grass surfaces.

It is recognised that in some circumstances this change will require a period of transition for an organisation to comply with the new expectations. Largely this will apply to the few clubs and university teams that use 3G pitches. England Hockey will provide support on a case by case basis. Please contact [facilities@englandhockey.co.uk](mailto:facilities@englandhockey.co.uk) if you have any questions.

## England Hockey Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy – July 2016

The following table outlines the surface type and the recommended playing level for the surface.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Surface</b>	<b>Playing Level</b>	<b>Playing Level</b>
England Hockey <i>Category 1</i>	Water surface approved within the FIH Global/National Parameters	<b><i>Essential</i></b> International Hockey- Training and matches.	<b><i>Desirable</i></b> Domestic National Premier competition  Higher levels of EH Player Pathway Performance Centres and upwards
England Hockey <i>Category 2</i>	Sand dressed surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	<b><i>Essential</i></b> Domestic National Premier competition  Higher levels of player pathway: Academy Centres and Upwards	<b><i>Desirable</i></b> All adult and junior League Hockey  Intermediate or advanced School Hockey  EH competitions for clubs and schools (excluding domestic national league)
England Hockey <i>Category 3</i>	Sand based surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	<b><i>Essential</i></b> All adult and junior club training and league Hockey  EH competitions for clubs and schools**  Intermediate or advanced schools hockey	<b><i>Desirable</i></b>
England Hockey <i>Category 4</i>	All long pile (3G) surfaces	<b><i>Essential</i></b> None	<b><i>Desirable</i></b> Lower level hockey (Introductory level) when no category 1-3 surface is available. *

\* We would recommend an appropriate ball to meet the standards of the player and the surface

\*\* EH school competition provision is likely to change in September 2017 when this guidance may be updated. It is likely that some lower levels of competitive school hockey provision within the EH competition structure will be allowed on 3G AGPs.

### **Why the change in policy?**

We have continually monitored the thoughts and perceptions of our players and the evidence shows that hockey players do not wish to play on long pile (3G) surfaces (even those certified by the FIH). They feel that their hockey experience is negatively affected by the type of surface and it is adversely affecting the game and quality of the participation experience.

### **Other Surfaces**

As the policy is based on player experience there are obviously other surfaces such as grass and macadam on which hockey can be played. Whilst these are not the preferred surfaces for a higher standard of competitive hockey they are perfectly suitable for introductory or less competitive play. As with participation on any surface a suitable risk assessment is advised to be undertaken to ensure the provider of the activity does not assume any liability.

### **Impact of the change of policy**

Existing clubs that use compliant 3G pitches will be given an appropriate period of time to transition to an appropriate surface. This will need to be agreed on a case by case basis to which England Hockey will provide support.

EH would expect that all appropriate competitions (e.g. cups and leagues) would align to this new policy and agree reasonable and fair timescales with any party that is currently not compliant with this revised policy.