



ENGLAND
HANDBALL

The Ascent

Handball's Winning Strategy 2022-2030

Contents

3 Introduction

5 Foreword

9 Our five strategic pillars:

Young people and schools 14

Inclusion and social impact 20

Clubs, people and places 24

Driving Awareness 32

Lasting Partnerships 36

42 Governance

44 Targets

46 Summary



Who we are



At England Handball, our role is to govern and facilitate competitions, events, programmes and opportunities for anyone who wants to play handball in this country.

Working with partners across the whole of the handball community, we provide support, practical help and innovative ideas to help handball in England survive and thrive.

Together with our partners, we have bold ambitions to grow the sport throughout the remainder of this decade; significantly increasing the popularity of handball, the number of regular players and the diversity of our audiences.

**This is our strategy
for 2022 – 2030**

Foreword

The origins of handball in England can be traced back to the late 1960's and as a sport it has grown steadily in popularity since that time.

The legacy of the Olympic Games in London during 2012 proved to be something of a catalyst for the game, helping to develop a new generation of talented players that helped to propel the sport forward. It was quickly followed by the formation of five new Development leagues and two Cup competitions,

increasing awareness and excitement about handball across the nation.

Fast forward to the present day, and we find ourselves at a pivotal moment for handball in England. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on sport across the world has been monumental, and for sports like handball that rely on the support of grass roots volunteers and communities, there is no doubt we face an uphill battle just to get back on track.



The actions we take right now will define the future of our sport. The level of ambition we demonstrate and the decisions we make are crucial. I have no doubt that it can be done, but we must be bold. We must be brave. And we must stick together.

The current state of play

Every sport in England has been severely impacted by the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns – some more than others – but we all start from a relatively level playing field as we look to come back from these events. We must make sure we build back stronger than ever before and use this unique opportunity to grow and establish handball as a mainstream sport in this country.

Prior to the pandemic, **more than 20,000 adults** and **nearly 30,000 children** and young people played handball regularly, and these numbers had stayed consistent for several years.

New research* indicates that these numbers represent just a fraction of our sport's future potential. Circa 30% of children are interested in playing handball at school and 28% of young people aged 16-24 are interested in trying or playing regularly.

Whilst awareness of our sport is low, there is a live and vibrant opportunity to capitalise on interest amongst younger audiences and build a stronger future post pandemic.

Defining our focus

In addition to bouncing back, our new strategy must be focused on growth, and we need to adopt a mindset that allows us to push a number of key areas. These include growing the number of people playing handball; increasing the reach and profile of our work; expanding the diversity of communities playing and watching our sport and making more resources available to help people continue playing, teaching and developing handball in England.

We have created our new strategy in partnership with our stakeholders; a result of hundreds of conversations and insight-gathering exercises over the past twelve months.

We spent significant time on this process because we wanted to get it right. We listened to volunteers, coaches, staff, players, non-players, partners, fans, and even rival sports and international governing bodies. We had to open ourselves up to feedback, look back at the things we have done well and where we could improve, and consider what the future might hold. Many have volunteered their time and their thoughts for no personal gain, and we hope they will be proud of the outcome.

Mike Bain
CEO
England Handball



It's time for
us all to start
The Ascent.

“The potential to grow the game of handball in England is huge. With the right foundations and support in place, we believe England Handball will take our sport to more people than ever before and unlock handball’s full potential.”

Michael Wiederer, President of the European Handball Federation (EHF)

Timeline

A History of Handball in England

The history of handball in England goes back more than 50 years, with a rich heritage of games on both the national and international stage. Our timeline here tells the story of how the sport has grown since it first arrived in this country.



1968

British Handball Association founded



1968

Great Britain take on West Germany in the UK's first international handball match, which took place at St. Bonaventures School Fields in Liverpool

Our Vision

Our vision is simple yet bold; something we think everyone can embrace and get behind:

“We will establish handball as one of the top three indoor team sports in England”

We are focused on growth in this strategy and that means we want more people - particularly children and young people - playing handball. From gym halls to beaches, local parks to urban areas, we believe handball is a sport that can be played anywhere. This versatility is key to the future growth of handball and presents us with an unbelievable opportunity – one that we must capitalise on.

Adults (aged 16+) who have taken part in sport and physical activity at least twice in the last 28 days

Team Sports	May 18-19	Nov 18-19	May 19-20	Nov 19-20
Dodgeball	46,900	45,100	49,900	34,900
Handball	18,600	21,100	20,300	14,500
Netball	319,400	321,200	283,700	169,600
Volleyball	73,400	48,200	48,600	40,000
Basketball	280,900	278,800	264,600	226,800
Individual Sports	May 18-19	Nov 18-19	May 19-20	Nov 19-20
Badminton	812,400	772,900	746,500	556,600
Gymnastics	251,200	218,000	232,600	175,100
Martial Arts	230,500	225,600	266,600	182,200
Table Tennis	425,000	439,800	428,500	289,200



We already have
people from

more than 65
different nations
around the world
playing handball in
England,

but we can go further. We want different communities to experience and benefit from our sport and we want greater diversity, equity and inclusion amongst our players and our audiences.

We want more coaches, more volunteers, more officials and more fans. We want bigger and better competitions, leagues and events. We want more clubs, and more investment for our existing clubs and partners.

Handball
A Complete Guide B.J. Rowland



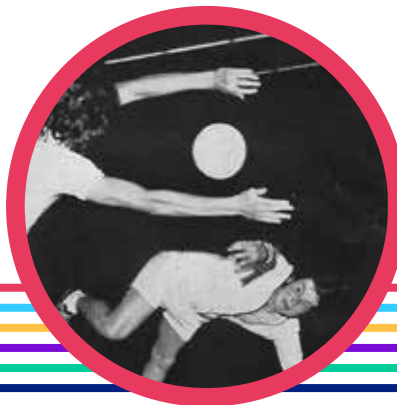
1970

The first book on handball was published in Great Britain; the title was 'Handball. A Complete Guide'

Our purpose

Aligned to our vision is our purpose – the essence of what England Handball and all of the people associated with it strive for every single day.

To inspire more people to play, watch and experience handball by engaging new and diverse communities, supporting our clubs and partners, and building a strong and sustainable handball infrastructure.



1972

GB men's take part in World Handball Championships in Spain



Our values

Inclusive

We welcome new communities, audiences, and individuals to our sport, and will work to break down any barriers that exist.

Passionate

We share the enjoyment and fun we experience through handball to inspire others to play.

Connected

We work together at every level of the game to grow handball.

Ambitious

We won't rest until handball has realised its potential in this country.





OUR FIVE STRATEGIC PILLARS

In order to deliver our strategy for the next eight years, we must have a clear focus on the key areas and priorities that will take us towards our primary goal – establishing handball as a top three mainstream sport in England.

From working with our stakeholders and the wider handball community, we have defined five strategic pillars which will provide a solid foundation and help our sport grow in multiple ways.



1975
National League
launched for
Men's team

1

Young people and schools

“We want more people - from all backgrounds - to experience how fun and inclusive handball can be to play and watch. We will invest in new and targeted programmes that make that happen.”

With running, jumping, throwing and catching, handball has all the elements to make it the perfect sport for young people. Handball has already established strong roots in schools and academic institutions across the country, but the research we have commissioned clearly highlights an opportunity to do more.

Our first strategic pillar contains a set of actions that will allow us to reach more young people than ever before, introducing the game to young players and nurturing them to ensure handball is a sport they will love for the rest of their lives.

Action 1.1

Launch and scale a dedicated primary school campaign that introduces young children to handball.

Develop and implement digital and physical training courses for primary school teachers.

Provide primary schools with the equipment, toolkits and lesson plans they need.

Develop fun and engaging inter and intra-school competition/festival models.



4,000
New primary schools
engaged by 2030



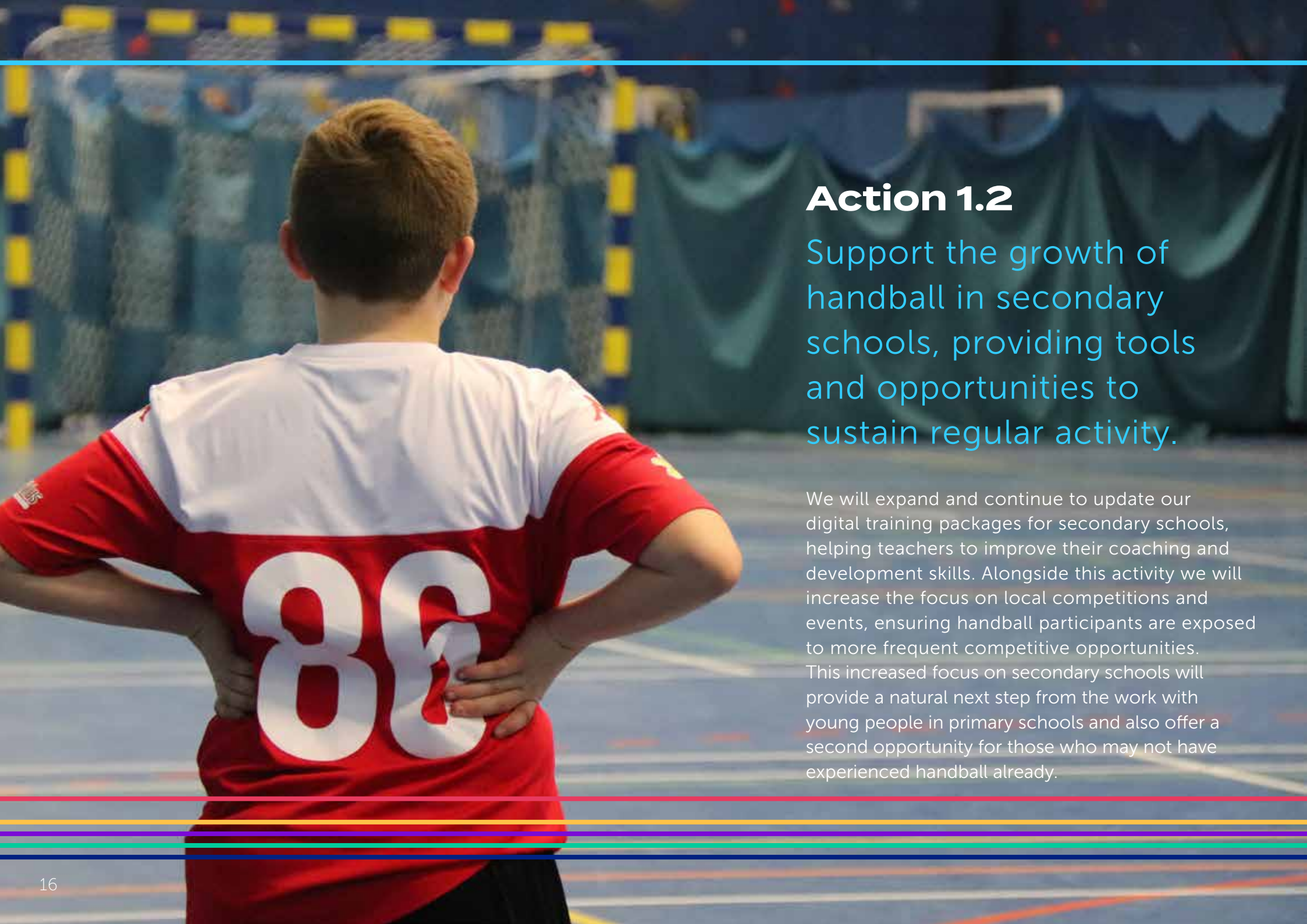
1977

Championship League
launched for Men's teams



1985

Commonwealth Handball
Association created



Action 1.2

Support the growth of handball in secondary schools, providing tools and opportunities to sustain regular activity.

We will expand and continue to update our digital training packages for secondary schools, helping teachers to improve their coaching and development skills. Alongside this activity we will increase the focus on local competitions and events, ensuring handball participants are exposed to more frequent competitive opportunities. This increased focus on secondary schools will provide a natural next step from the work with young people in primary schools and also offer a second opportunity for those who may not have experienced handball already.

Action 1.3

Capitalise on British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) recognition to drive handball investment and participation at university level.

Continue to invest in our workforce and develop coaches and development staff at university level to shape and deliver regular recreational handball activities for students.

Provide support to universities looking to enter teams into BUCS handball competitions through additional coach education and more regular competitive opportunities.



1986

Annual Home International Handball tournament established between England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Wales become champions.

Action 1.4

Build an inclusive, open and progressive talent pathway for everyone.

13-16



Support schools and clubs to develop age-appropriate talent identification methods for young people up to the age of 16, providing opportunities for progression and identification.

16-18



Create new opportunities for young people aged 16-18 to engage in handball and progress their talent alongside their education via the Diploma in Sporting Excellence programme.



1990
EHA established



1994
EHA establishes coach education programme and workforce.



Action 1.5

Increase training opportunities for talent pathway athletes and enhance the athlete experience.

- Enhance our inter-regional competition programme to facilitate greater exposure to competitive environments. To ensure this action is intertwined with our focus on diversity, we will ensure regional and national programmes are accessible to individuals from low-socio-economic backgrounds by providing appropriate funding opportunities and delivering cost effective initiatives.

- To further enhance development for talent pathway athletes, we will provide all groups with opportunities to access training camps or competitive opportunities in Europe (for example, the Partille Cup in Sweden or the Generation Cup in Denmark).

2

Inclusion and social impact

“We want to take handball to new and diverse audiences whilst exploring and evaluating the social impact handball can have on the lives of individuals.”



200

New community venues involved in handball by 2030

Handball is a sport that brings together people and communities in a powerful way. Our data proves that with more than 65 different nationalities playing handball in England before the pandemic, we can use sport to make a positive difference in so many people's lives. Post-pandemic, as communities and social groups come back together, this will be more important than ever.

Action 2.1

Take handball into non-traditional community settings at scale.



We will identify communities all over England where handball can help to bring people together and support wellbeing. This will include areas where ethnic diversity is high, where resources are limited, or where mental wellbeing has been identified as a concern. We will build hot spots of handball activity in priority areas across England, identifying new community settings in areas where existing clubs exist or where new clubs are planned. Alongside this we will establish partnerships with local, community-led organisations and give them the training, equipment and support required to introduce handball to their communities, empowering local people to deliver handball programmes and sessions.



2008

EHA reconstitutes as company LTD by guarantee



2008

EHA officially becomes
a member of EHF

Action 2.2

Showcase the positive social impact of handball.

We will work with specialist partners to develop handball activities that further encourage social interaction and confidence building, utilising different formats of the sport. This will include additional training programmes and learning resources to support the growth of handball in communities.

We will implement monitoring, evaluation and learning principles and techniques that allow us to better track and articulate the impact of handball on community cohesion and mental wellbeing. And we will use this evidence to advocate for greater and more targeted investment in handball's growth.

Action 2.3

Create talent pathways that allow handball to be played more regularly.

Introduce clear talent pathways that ensure anyone from a non-traditional community setting understands how they can continue or advance in the sport.

Work closely with players at all levels to ensure the talent pathways are accessible and understood.

Closely monitor the success we have in helping players from diverse backgrounds pursue their journeys easily through the sport.



2009

EHA four-year plan is funded by Sport England



3

Clubs, people and places

“We want to support our existing clubs to become more resilient and our workforce to build new skills, whilst attracting more clubs and people to the sport.”

As an organisation, England Handball must work closely with the range of clubs across the country to ensure they have the support, infrastructure and skills they need to be sustainable. Coming out of the pandemic, this has to be a key priority and once we have established a strong and stable network of clubs, we will be able to scale and inspire others.



2009

EHA National Cup is launched



2009

First National Schools Competition organised with 59 teams





Action 3.1

Empower clubs through more effective governance, financial sustainability, safeguarding and leadership.

Capture and share examples of best practice amongst clubs in handball and elsewhere in a club 'blueprint', with a clear roadmap to help clubs across the nation learn from each other and grow.

Provide high-quality, comprehensive training and targeted support to volunteers, coaches and other club leaders in areas such as club and volunteer management, fundraising and income generation, safeguarding and governance.

Action 3.2

Build a comprehensive Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offer that enables the handball workforce to develop their skills at their own level and rhythm.

We will create and implement robust workforce development strategies for coaches, volunteers and officials that reflect their different needs and potential development pathways. We want to build on the achievements and enhance the skills of our existing workforce, which we can do by learning from best-practice in other sports and combining this with the experience and expertise of other independent advisors to develop best-in-class strategies for each area. Our focus will be to continue developing digital resources and training solutions to enable mass digital interaction. We will use digital platforms to enable blended teaching/learning experiences encouraging greater collaboration, shared learning and empowering anyone to deliver handball anywhere.



2010

National competitions framework launched including: Super 8 National League Men's & Women's, National Championship League (North & South) and Regional Development Leagues

2010

EHA National Coaching Qualification framework is recognised by UKCC/1st for Sport



Action 3.3

Create bespoke and advanced qualifications for the handball workforce that support the development of our elite talent.

We will implement Level Three and beyond coaching qualifications that equip coaches with the skills and resources needed to support our talent development pathway. Working together, we will build new, bespoke qualifications and courses that introduce new roles to the handball workforce and help to foster leaders of the future. We'll introduce Competition Organiser roles and help individuals to develop the skills required to co-ordinate community and elite competitions and explore additional specialised roles to further professionalise our sport and improve efficiency.

Action 3.4

Explore long-term solutions to provide stable, cost-effective and high-quality handball facility space.

We will build local, regional and national partnerships with leading facility operators to secure consistent, cost-effective hire costs and committed playing space for training and club competitions. In tandem, we will seek to identify options and secure investment for dedicated handball facilities in areas of high demand across the nation. We will explore working with other national governing bodies of sport and other community partners to secure joint investment into new facilities, while also broadening opportunities to play in and on non-typical playing spaces and surfaces.

2011

EHA Coaching Dream work is accepted by EHF and included in the EHF'S Rinck Convention



Action 3.5

Nurture and grow our club network by increasing participation amongst new audiences.

We will help our clubs become central hubs for local and regional activity, while also supporting them to deliver activity in schools and non-traditional community settings and build stronger pathways for new players to join through grassroots programmes and competitions created by England Handball. We will also challenge the club network to grow, facilitating the development of new clubs in areas of high demand and in areas where our community investment programme has proven successful in attracting new audiences. Ensuring our club network is strong and successful will also boost our national team and make top-level handball in England highly visible and attractive for players and partners.





40

New clubs by 2030



2011

EHA national
AASE programme
commences

4

Driving Awareness



50%
of all young people
under the age of 16
aware of handball

“We want to take our exciting sport into new areas, creating campaigns and new ideas that increase the visibility of handball to a range of diverse target audiences.”

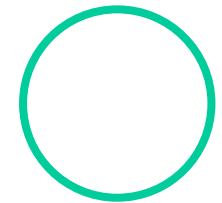
The potential for growth in handball is huge and to deliver our ambitious targets for increased participation we need to ensure more people know about our sport. We have already made progress to modernise our brand and our content, but we must continue to push forward with our marketing activity to drive awareness, interest and participation in the game. Handball needs to become ‘everyone’s favourite new sport’.

Action 4.1

Develop and implement a digital marketing strategy that drives awareness and participation in handball.

Work with partners and specialists to deliver national marketing campaigns via social media and other channels that encourage people to take part in handball.

Combine a range of tactics such as email marketing, PR, social media and targeted advertising to build a stronger connection with interested audiences and attempt to bring more people into the handball community.



2013

40 different nationalities represented in EHA membership



Action 4.2

Work with our partners and stakeholders to promote handball throughout England.

We will test and learn, and we will be innovative in our approach to try new ideas and tactics that help to raise awareness of handball, involving people from the handball community, supporters and partners to showcase our sport in as many ways as possible. We will utilise digital media to engage more effectively with partners and sponsors, enabling us to generate greater engagement and ultimately more significant revenue.



2013

97 teams playing
handball in England

Action 4.3

Establishing robust evaluation methods to ensure our marketing activity always stays on track

We will be thorough with our reporting and evaluation of marketing success in order to show progress against key targets and success. We will measure outputs, outtakes and outcomes, all connected to our ultimate goal of ensuring more people know about handball and more people are playing the sport. We will also continue to work with data providers to monitor awareness and consideration among our audiences when it comes to playing handball.



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2013

930 teams take part
in National Schools
Competition

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5

Lasting Partnerships

“We will assess existing partnerships and explore new ones to build a network of delivery, commercial and innovation stakeholders that can support and facilitate our growth.”

The strength of our external partnerships will help us grow in multiple ways – commercially, ly and strategically. There must be mutual benefit in every partnership we forge and by fully leveraging these, we will be able to extend the reach of our sport with the support of a strong network or partners that share our values and understand our ambitions.

4x

**Quadruple our
2021 income
by 2030**





Action 5.1

Develop stronger relationships with existing partners and embed more effective management and evaluation protocols.

2014

Regional Academy Programme (North West, South East, East, South West & Midlands) - 130 players on the programme with average number of players per region at 12 (girls) and 14 (boys)



We will review the value, performance and benefit of all existing partnerships and establish an ongoing management and evaluation process for all future partnerships. We will include regular review checkpoints in all partnership agreements and ensure key stakeholders, including clubs, are consulted in the evaluation of the partnership performance.



Action 5.2

Create dedicated engagement managers to cultivate strong and successful partner relationships

We will develop and implement a partner engagement plan that sets out planned communications with all partners and helps to build and nurture relationships with partners over time. We will assign dedicated relationship leads from England Handball to manage and nurture these partnerships, with a focus on engagement and long-term growth.



2015

Development Leagues launched in London, South, East, Midlands and North regions

Action 5.3

Identify and broker effective partnerships that support participation and growth in community and education settings.

Map, prioritise and nurture relationships with delivery partners, venue operators and digital providers who have the reach, expertise and capacity to help us grow handball in new areas. We will also establish partners that can help deliver greater value for our existing clubs and education settings.

Our focus will be to prioritise quality of partners over quantity; aiming to develop fewer but deeper relationships with leading delivery partners and venue operators that are more sustainable and easier to manage and evaluate.



2015

Men's National Shield launched



2017

Women's National Shield launched

Action 5.4

Build a diverse portfolio of commercial partners that help us to maximise revenues, increase visibility, and improve our infrastructure.

We will renew and re-launch our commercial strategy, maximising the value from our current assets and recognising changes in the corporate landscape. We will build and nurture an extensive pipeline of prospective commercial partners that have the resources, expertise and commitment to help us achieve our long-term strategic objectives.

Ensure clubs and partners benefit from national commercial relationships, whilst supporting clubs to develop the business development capacity and skills required to build and manage their own local and regional business partnerships in time.



2017

EHA becomes an official member of the International Handball Federation



2018

Handball celebrates 50 years in the UK

Action 5.5

Collaborate with partners to explore digital solutions that can improve the experiences of people playing handball, so it remains relevant and engaging.

We will explore new digital tools and platforms that encourage collaboration, enable online participation, and enhance the sport of handball. We will have open conversations with partners and review effective solutions established in other sports to ensure that the handball community is benefitting from the latest innovations.



2019

A record 1,725 teams take part in the National Schools Competition



Governance

Good governance underpins everything we do, and we want to continue to build a governing body that is fit for the future, providing the resources and services our clubs and partners need to help handball thrive.

At all times we must remain committed to exceeding Board diversity targets set out in the Code for Sports Governance, relating specifically to gender and ethnic diversity. This includes the creation and implementation of a Diversity Action Plan for the sport that directly addresses diversity amongst executives, staff and participants.

The communities and clubs we serve will always be at the heart of our decision making and it will be essential for us to utilise the newly formed Development Advisory Group – which comprises individuals with handball experience and others from outside of the sport – to consider the views of the handball community and inform strategic decisions and activities.

The newly formed Youth Advisory Group – young people aged 15-17 – will also help inform decisions and activities that support the growth of junior handball in England. By developing and activating a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan, we can ensure all interested parties are consulted and engaged in strategic decision-making.

Safeguarding

Alongside our governance we will continue to prioritise safeguarding, recognising our duty of care to anyone and everyone involved in handball.

The development and introduction of an agreed safeguarding standard that adheres to best-practice and learns from experiences and practices from other sports will be imperative to this.

This will be combined with investment in training and education to develop the safeguarding capacity and skills of all stakeholders in the sport, including leaders, coaches, officials and participants.

Our objective will be to ensure we continue to meet and exceeds all 58 requirements of the code for sports governance.



2019

77 teams playing handball in England



Targets



Financial

	4 YEAR TARGET	8 YEAR TARGET
Increase Income	Double 2021 income	Double 2026 income
Public Funding Reliance	50% of income	30% of income

INVESTMENT FROM IHF/EHF
£20k
per annum

INVESTMENT FROM 3RD PARTY
£100k
per annum



Clubs

	4 YEAR TARGET	8 YEAR TARGET
Growth in no. of teams playing in EH leagues	150 teams	175 teams
Growth in no. of teams playing in BUCS University Comp	70 teams	85 teams
Growth in number of clubs	20 new clubs	40 new clubs
Club satisfaction	75% satisfaction	85% satisfaction
Establishment of handball hubs	10 hubs	20 hubs

Participation

	4 YEAR TARGET	8 YEAR TARGET
Registered players	50% growth	50% growth
Active coaches	160 coaches	270 coaches
Active referees	100 referees	150 referees
Community programmes	100 programmes delivered	200 programmes delivered

	4 YEAR TARGET	8 YEAR TARGET
Primary school engagement	2000 new schools	4000 new schools
Secondary school engagement	3000 competing schools	6000 competing schools
Players in pathway	400	500

TALENT

2021

200 players on Regional Academy Programme: average number of players per region rises to 20 (girls) and 20 (boys)



Summary

England Handball's strategy for 2022-2030 is ambitious and progressive. But we also know it's achievable. From the outset of this strategic planning process, it has been clear to us that the handball community wanted us to commit to long-term growth. We believe **The Ascent** effectively captures these ambitions, centring on five key principles:

1 Building a governing body for our sport that has all the tools, resources and services our partners need to succeed

2 Significantly growing the number of people playing handball, with a focus on young people in education and community settings

3 Increasing the number of clubs, whilst support our existing clubs to become more resilient and grow

4 Securing and generating substantially increased and diverse revenue, at all levels of the sport

5 Working more closely with clubs, members, and partners – including the EHF and IHF – to deliver coordinated, significant growth



2021

66 different nationalities represented in EHA membership



Building this strategy has been a coordinated effort across clubs, community partners, coaches and volunteers and we are grateful for your ongoing commitment to our sport. If we can continue to harness that spirit of collaboration and togetherness – hallmarks of handball – then is no reason why we can't realise our vision to establish handball as one of the top three indoor team sports in England.



The Ascent will be a defining era for handball in England. And we will be relentless in our pursuit of making handball everyone's favourite new sport.

“Embedding handball into the lives of young people, whilst recognising diversity and being proactive in working with communities that can be hard to reach, will all be fundamental to the success of handball in England and across the world.”

Hassan Moustafa, President of the International Handball Federation (IHF)



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