

**Assurance of Independence of Investigations and
Decision-Making by the Cricket Regulator**

Season 2025 Review

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Assurance of Independence of Investigations and Decision-Making by the Cricket Regulator

This report follows from Terms of Reference which identified the purpose as undernoted:

Purpose

1. It is intended that each year an independent assurance process will be carried out to confirm that there has been no interference or other inappropriate involvement in regulatory cases handled by the Cricket Regulator by the England and Wales Cricket Board ('ECB') personnel outside of the Cricket Regulator.
2. The purpose of this process is therefore to provide assurance that the Cricket Regulator has made its decisions free from interference from or other inappropriate involvement of ECB personnel in respect of:
 - a. The conduct of investigations;
 - b. Whether to charge Participants with breaches of the ECB's rules and regulations, and
 - c. Commencing and conducting disciplinary proceedings against Participants.
3. Providing assurance that the Cricket Regulator has established appropriate structures which enable collaboration with the ECB, and with both the recreational and professional game, while safeguarding the independence of all decision-making in:
 - a. Prevention and protection – promoting appropriate behaviour and ensuring people act in line with expected standards.
 - b. Audit and compliance – monitoring adherence to agreed policies and standards to maintain integrity across the game.

It is understood that the executive summary of findings will be published with a view of building trust and confidence in the Cricket Regulator and its processes.



Methodology – Case Assessment and Cricket Regulator Interviews

The independent investigation proceeded to analyse a selection of integrity and conduct cases to understand the approach to charging and the progress of cases together with the strategy of the Cricket Regulator team. The review is intended to identify any scope for improvement as well as identifying any adverse ECB involvement or influence in process.

The Cricket Regulator presented a comprehensive 2025 case log with around 130 regulatory cases and 15 were selected by the independent investigator for in-depth consideration. That analysis required the full disclosure of all Cricket Regulator papers, in each of the 15 cases. It was immediately apparent that the volume of cases managed by the Cricket Regulator in 2025 was approximately 80% higher than for 2024. This upward trend may well be due to the success of the Cricket Regulator in encouraging reporting and the positive relationships that have been built up with all stakeholders.

The cases were selected on a random basis to provide a breadth of issues for consideration across 1) anti-discrimination matters; 2) the women's game; 3) the international game; 4) coach behaviours; 5) social media cases and 6) selection policy challenges.

For completeness, the cases identified were as follows, and the short synopsis summary is simply for audit purposes:

- 1) [REDACTED] - **coach** [REDACTED] – allegation of inappropriate behaviour and sexual misconduct towards a female player.
- 2) [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] **professional cricketer** – allegation of a homophobic comment.
- 3) [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] **Professional Cricketer** – allegations of a racist comment being made in a social team setting.
- 4) [REDACTED] - [REDACTED] – allegations that the protected characteristic of race may have influenced the decision to not issue a contract to a player.
- 5) [REDACTED] – **Coach** [REDACTED] – separate and severable charges raised against the Coach in Case 1 above.



ENABLING FAIR PLAY

- 6) [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] – allegations of sexual misconduct towards an academy player.
- 7) [REDACTED] - [REDACTED] – allegation of a racist comment made in a social setting by a participant.
- 8) [REDACTED] - fully redacted.
- 9) [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] – allegations of inappropriate social media posts concerning umpire integrity.
- 10) [REDACTED] – **Coach** [REDACTED] – allegations of inappropriate sexualised comments around staff and team members.
- 11) [REDACTED] – allegations of breach of the Player and Match Officials Area Regulations.
- 12) [REDACTED] – **Coach** [REDACTED] – linked to case 10 above and concerning an additional allegation of improper sexualised comments to a player.
- 13) [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] – allegation of homophobic comment by a professional player against a recreational player.
- 14) [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] **Team Manager** – sexual misconduct.
- 15) Allegation of racism at [REDACTED] in 2001.

The case papers then enabled focused interviews with the Cricket Regulator team. Those interviews were conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams and were recorded to enable post-interview scrutiny. The interviews were held with:

- a) Chris Haward KPM, Managing Director of the Cricket Regulator;
- b) Ryan Smith, Head of Integrity;
- c) David Reid, Integrity Investigator;
- d) Angus Hetherington, Regulatory Lawyer;



e) Sara Niblock, Director, Director of Operations; and

f) Richard Watson, Head of Strategy, Performance and Operations

All the interviewees were open and happy to answer challenges and queries on process and ways of working and their co-operation greatly assisted the independent review process. Whilst 3 of the team had been interviewed for the report in 2024, there were 3 new interviewees for this 2025 report.

The interviews helped signpost further follow up research and background reading to ensure the report considers all the available information and that reliance is not placed exclusively on the reported cases.

There was a consistent set of themes that developed from the interviews and are noted below.

Expertise and Experience

The calibre of staff involved in the Cricket Regulator is exceptionally high.

The interviewees all had significant investigation experience and an acute awareness of the balance between proactive and reactive investigations.

There have been significant progressions in 2025 including in the field of investigation and casework where there has been the introduction of the CLUE case management system. This provides a joined-up investigation and intelligence platform. This new system enables a better quality of reporting. The investigation file has an indexed table that provides incident updates together with a visual chronology of the investigation. This enables the entire Cricket Regulator team to work collaboratively and to have comprehensive live updates on cases.

Extension of Powers and Growing Resources

The fact that the Managing Director of the Cricket Regulator is now a permanent appointment, rather than an interim appointment, provides a foundation for strategy changes that have been published and set out in the 2025-2028 Strategy Plan for the organisation.

In the last year, it is notable that there has been an expansion of powers within the Cricket Regulator and this reflects well on the independence of the body and is broadly indicative of the ECB supporting the evolution of the Cricket Regulator and providing the budget for developments.



That extension of powers in 2025 has included the following non-exhaustive list:

1. The introduction of a Caution Notice as a disciplinary option in the professional game. This came into force in April 2025 and provides for summary case management where a Participant admits a transgression. This approach is mirrored in other sports regulators and enables a focus on resource allocation to deal with the most serious cases.
2. There is a new power to investigate serious and complex discrimination cases within the recreational game, and this represents a broadening of the reach of the Cricket Regulator and is to be welcomed. This has led to the recruitment of 2 new investigation staff and an expansion of team resource.
3. In cases of serious misconduct, the Cricket Regulator now has the power to demand that a Participant surrender their mobile phone or other electronic device to enable investigations to be advanced. Previously that power was restricted to anti-corruption cases only.
4. The Cricket Regulator can now make an application to have a player suspended from the professional game if they pose a threat to the integrity of an investigation. Previously this was only possible at the point of charge.
5. There has been a rule change that means that office holders at Professional County Cricket Clubs and at the ECB may be held personally liable for their misconduct rather than only the organisation being held vicariously liable and this may act as a deterrent to individual misconduct.

All interviewees re-iterated that the ECB has not blocked or sought to overly restrict the expansion of powers and that there has been a collaborative dialogue on progressive developments within the Cricket Regulator.

The ECB has ownership of the cricket regulations, and any changes are managed on an annual basis only. There may be scope for greater agility in terms of regulation changes being considered more frequently but that is outside the scope of this report.



Hallmarks of Independence

Across all the sample cases and the interviews with the Cricket Regulator team, there was a strong sense of purpose and a clear intention to be progressive in developing an independent framework for disciplinary and regulatory decision-making in cricket. All the team were focused on the 'separation of powers' from the ECB and in promoting the Cricket Regulator brand.

The specific observations from the cases and interviews that aid that strong finding of independence are as follows:

- a) **Publication of Strategic Plan** - The publication of the Strategic Plan for 2025-2028 "*From Compliance to Culture*" reflects the development of the organisation from its inception in December 2023 and the vision for developing its position as a trusted regulator. As a public facing document, this sets out the intention to build trust and confidence in the Cricket Regulator and to develop Service Level Agreements for professional game investigations and recreational game reviews. The strategy clearly holds the Cricket Regulator out as an independent body from the ECB.
- b) **Robust Case Management** - The quality of the reporting was very transparent with good communication with the charged participants. The Cricket Regulator team work well together and each has a very clearly defined role which assists independent service delivery. The new CLUE case management system enables the team to have strong audit control and security over file access and there is no ability for ECB staff to access the independent systems. This provides an effective "firewall" and strong data control for the investigation team to perform their roles without interference or influence from the ECB.
- c) **Increased Case Volumes** - The volume of cases has increased year on year since the establishment of the Cricket Regulator, and this shows at a granular level that the Cricket Regulator is acting effectively and without any fetters or barriers applied by the ECB.
- d) **Reporting to independent Regulatory board** - There are quarterly formal meetings between the Cricket Regulator and the independent Board and there is an ongoing quality assurance of the Cricket Regulator's work which provides comfort that independence is a strong strategic focus and priority. In February 2026, a Code of Practice was entered into between the Cricket



Regulator and the Regulatory Board which sets out the operating principles and the relationship between the two bodies and how they will collaborate and engage to improve service delivery. This is a positive development and provides focus on structured terms of reference.

- e) **Extension of Powers** - The development of the powers and disciplinary reach of the Cricket Regulator are already noted in this report. At this early stage in the development of the Cricket Regulator, it is noteworthy that the ECB has been supportive of these developments and is facilitating the extension of the Cricket Regulator's powers across the game. At a macro level it is apparent that the Cricket Regulator is enabled to perform its stated objectives without interference from the ECB.

In summary, the hallmarks of independence are very clear both from the case papers and interviews with the Cricket Regulator staff. The team are professionally focussed on their unique governance and regulatory role and demonstrate strong behaviours in preserving that independence.

Optimising Independence for the Future

Given the Cricket Regulator was established in December 2023 and is a relatively new organisation there will always be areas that can be improved, as is recognised in the Strategic Plan. Whilst the macro-level analysis reflects good governance, there are key issues that ought to be reflected upon and discussed with the ECB.

1. The question of location of operations was discussed in the series of interviews, as the Cricket Regulator is based at Lords and there might be the perception of ECB influence based on physical proximity. This is a matter that was commented upon in the 2024 assurance report.

Whilst it is clear that the Cricket Regulator is alert to managing investigations confidentially and privately, there can still be an external perception that the Cricket Regulator sits within the ECB structure. It is understood that there was a trial of a remote co-working space, but this does not appear to have led to any change.

It is recommended that the issue of off-site premises be re-visited on the understanding that this might further enhance the standing of the Cricket Regulator as an independent body.

2. The Cricket Regulator relies upon the ECB communications team to manage communications on behalf of the Cricket Regulator. There is the prospect of conflict where the same communications team is used by both entities and whilst that has not occurred yet, it would seem advisable to address that risk. It is conceivable that there may be scenarios where the communication of case outcomes may be sensitive and the ECB and Cricket Regulator could have different views and so having separate communication channels can assist in avoiding that situation.

It is not envisaged that this would be a costly resource and there has obviously been recent expenditure on additional recruitment in the investigation and data analyst roles, so this appears easily achievable.

3. Within the Cricket Regulator Strategy Plan 2025-2028 there is a published key deliverable that *“Service Level Agreements be developed for professional game investigations and recreational game reviews/resolutions.”* This would provide greater clarity on how the ECB and Cricket Regulator will work together and help provide a focus for discussion between the two bodies should there be a contentious issue.

It is notable that the County Partnership Agreement sets out the obligations entered into between the ECB and the County Cricket network. Furthermore, the frameworks set out in the ECB publication on the State of Equity in Cricket Report 2025 and the Cricket Regulator Strategy Plan demonstrate strong governance.

The question arises as to whether a specific collaboration agreement or Memorandum of Understanding between the ECB and the Cricket Regulator might assist in solidifying the specific understanding of roles and provide comfort on which body has primacy for investigations as well as ensure consistency of approach. This would help avoid any suggestion that the ECB has inhibited reporting in any way and help provide a focus for discussion between the bodies should there be a contentious issue.

Given that there is also a Code of Practice between the Cricket Regulator and the Regulatory Board then it does appear that the overall governance framework would be enhanced by a specific written



agreement entered into between the ECB and the Cricket Regulator. This should set out the agreed roles and responsibilities which might otherwise develop through custom and practice.

The Memorandum of Understanding might be a codification of existing practice but will in any event provide clear terms of reference and help complete the governance framework.

Executive Summary (for Publication)

The Cricket Regulator team have been extremely helpful and co-operative in assisting this independent review and have provided comprehensive explanations of their evolving strategy. They have detailed many positive enhancements in their service delivery model.

There is no evidence that the ECB has sought to or actually positively exerted influence or interference with the Cricket Regulator's investigation, charging and/or disciplinary powers. The independent regulator is making strong progress in building a platform for robust governance and independent decision making. The publication of the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan reflects an evolution in the service offering and a strong compliance framework around independence.

To optimise progress, it is recommended that the ECB and the Cricket Regulator continue their proactive discussions on collaboration and look to regularise that in a more formal collaboration agreement or Memorandum of Understanding.

The Strategic Plan refers to "*Service Level Agreements*" and "*Strategy Delivery Plans*" and whilst there are County Partnership Agreements between the ECB and professional counties, it is an obvious gap in the regulatory framework that there is not an equivalent terms of reference framework between the ECB and the Cricket Regulator. The creation of that document through dialogue between the Cricket Regulator and the ECB will ensure the necessary guard-rails are in place to secure the Cricket Regulator's continuing independence.

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