Coaching and Safeguarding Officer's Report – 2026

Introduction

I took over the role of Coaching and Safeguarding Officer for Croquet South East in September this year, succeeding Richard Carline.

I would like to begin by thanking the Federation for the opportunity to take on this role and Richard for his support and the excellent foundations he has established over many years.

Having only recently taken up the position, much of this report reflects the work undertaken by Richard, the Croquet Academy and our dedicated coaches during 2026. My focus now is to build on those achievements, strengthen the support available to our member clubs and develop new coaching opportunities for 2027 and beyond.

Coaching in 2026

2026 has been another successful year for coaching across the Federation, with increased participation in Academy courses, renewed interest in Association Croquet and continued enthusiasm among clubs to develop their players.

The Croquet Academy has enjoyed a very encouraging season.



Particularly pleasing has been the growth in Association Croquet, with courses doubling from four to eight. The introduction of Short Croquet as a pathway into full-lawn AC has proved very successful, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Frances Low and the Academy coaches.

This success was highlighted when Sussex County Croquet Club won the Short Croquet Inter-Club Final, with all four players having attended Academy coaching sessions.

Golf Croquet continues to be well supported, while coach training, referee qualification courses and individual coaching have all contributed to improving standards across the Federation.

My thanks go to Jonathan Isaacs, the Academy's volunteer coaches and visiting coaches, whose time, enthusiasm and expertise make this programme possible.

Plans for 2027

Looking ahead, 2027 promises to be an exciting year.

A major initiative will be the launch of the new Croquet Academy website www.thecroquetacademy.com providing a central resource for course information, coaching opportunities and player development.

Alongside this, we are introducing Coaching Pathways for Golf Croquet, Short Croquet and Association Croquet, covering Beginner, Improver and Advanced levels. These will help players identify suitable courses and provide a clearer route for progressing their skills, whether they are new to the game or experienced competitors.

I am also keen to place greater emphasis on bringing coaching directly to Federation clubs. Working with clubs to identify their needs, we hope to offer tailored coaching sessions and support for developing club coaches. One of my priorities in the role will be to engage with clubs, understand their individual coaching needs and help ensure that the Federation and Academy provide practical support as required.

Our aim is to make coaching more accessible, strengthen coaching within individual clubs and encourage players of all abilities to continue developing and enjoying their croquet.

Safeguarding

I am pleased to report that I am not aware of any safeguarding issues arising within the Federation during 2026. My thanks go to our member clubs for their continued commitment to providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone participating in croquet.

As I settle into the safeguarding responsibilities of the role, I will continue to support clubs in maintaining appropriate safeguarding awareness and good practice.

Thank You to Richard Carline

Finally, I would like to pay a special tribute to Richard Carline, who stepped down as Federation Coaching Officer in September.

Richard has made an enormous contribution to coaching across our region over many years. His dedication to visiting clubs, supporting coaches, encouraging players and sharing his considerable knowledge and experience has been invaluable.

Richard's enthusiasm, innovative approach to coaching and willingness to help clubs and individuals have made a lasting difference to croquet across the Federation.

I am particularly grateful for his support during the handover and for the strong foundations he has left for me to build upon. We are also fortunate that his expertise will continue to benefit the Academy and its players.

On behalf of the Federation, I would like to offer Richard our sincere thanks for everything he has done.

Conclusion

2026 has provided a strong foundation for the future. With the new Academy website, structured coaching pathways and plans to extend coaching directly into clubs, we have an exciting opportunity to build on that success in 2027.

As I begin my time as Coaching and Safeguarding Officer, I look forward to working with our clubs, coaches and the Academy to ensure that every player who wishes to improve has access to enjoyable, effective and appropriate coaching.

Robert Harper

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