ENGLAND NETBALL



Non-weighing of Netball Players Policy

Responsible Officer	Safeguarding & Welfare Manager
Group Owner	Executive Team
Date Created / Modified	February 24
Version	1.0
Review Date	January 2026
Applicable for	This policy is mandatory. It applies to Clubs, Regional Management Boards, County Netball Associations, staff, contractors and all volunteers acting in any capacity within netball where a separate policy does not exist.
Summary	This Policy sets out England Netball's approach to fulfilling its commitment to creating and maintaining a safe and enjoyable environment for the people who take part in the sport of netball. England Netball requires all members, connected participants and staff to abide by this Policy and all relating procedures and practice.

Version Control:

Person Responsible	Version and summary of changes	Date
Safeguarding & Welfare Manager	New policy	January 2024

CONTENTS

Purpose and Scope
Context and Background
Risks of Weighing athletes
Reasons to weigh an athlete
Best Practice Guidance for weighing athletes
Glossary of Terms
Links to support
Contact England Netball

Non-weighing of netball players policy

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document aims to:

- Set out the policy and reasons for it
- Give information about the potential risks of weighing athletes.
- Highlight key facts around weight and weighing athletes.
- Outline and provide best practice guidelines for weighing those over 18 or under 18 on a nationally supported talent pathway.
- Provide further information on reasons why an athlete may be weighed.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

England Netball's policy is that clubs, officials and volunteers will not weigh members under the age of 18 unless they are on a nationally supported talent pathway. Any skinfold or other systems of body composition assessment should not be performed on anyone under 18 unless they are part of the England Netball Pathway (Roses, Future Roses or Roses Academy).

Following the Whyte Review (2022) and British Gymnastics (2023) and Swim England (2021) introducing new policies on weighing athletes, England Netball want to continue their commitment to making netball a fun, fair and inclusive sport where the welfare of women and girls is paramount.

We have set out below the circumstances in which players may be weighed and the procedures and safeguards that should be in place.

England Netball has a primary duty of care to safeguard the physical and emotional health of our members, a responsibility heightened if the member is under 18 years of age.

We recognise that in some situations, where the appropriate policies and procedures are in place, weighing athletes can be a useful tool to contribute to tracking changes in health, growth, aiding performance and progression. However, the need for this policy is to prevent potential areas of concern due to some of the related psychological distress, which may come from weighing athletes such as disordered eating, anxiety and depression.

For clarity, a **nationally supported talent pathway** is one that is delivered by the national governing body and enables access to appropriate nutrition, medical and sports science support. This would include England Roses, Future Roses and the Roses Academy only. Clubs, even 'performance clubs' therefore must not weigh under 18 players under any circumstances. IF they out-source strength and conditioning training clubs must ensure that weight does not form part of a S&C regime.

We have reviewed the reasons for weighing an under 18 in a club environment and apart from monitoring growth (alongside height), we do not consider any significant advantages or information gained from weighing athletes of this age who are not on a national supported programme. As height is the main measurement to address growth rates, this should be the key measurement taken. For those participants who are over 18 or under 18 on a nationally supported talent programme, weighing should only take place if there is a valid reason for doing so (outlined later in this document).

England Netball will take Disciplinary Action against any Members, connected participants, Volunteers, Coaches and Staff where breach of this Policy, Safeguarding Disciplinary Regulations or the Codes of Conduct and Disciplinary Regulations is alleged.

RISKS OF WEIGHING ATHLETES

There are a number of significant risks related to the weighing of athletes. Whilst making training decisions, coaches should be fully aware of the risk/reward scale when contemplating if weighing athletes has a tangible performance or training benefit. The list below is not exhaustive but highlights areas needed for consideration.

- Adolescent development and puberty can be complex for the vast majority of young people.
- The risks of developing an eating disorder/disordered eating (along with other mental health concerns such as self-harm, anxiety and depression) can be exacerbated by negative experiences in sport, as are other notable events such as moving to university and changes in environment.
- Eating disorders and disordered eating can affect anyone, both male and female.
- Weight is not an indication that a psychological issue related to food psychopathology or body image is present.
- It is wrong to assume that a member needs to be 'underweight' to have an eating disorder or disordered eating.
- In sporting populations, weight monitoring could place undue emphasis on the importance of weight for performance, encourage comparison between peers/teammates, and encourage poor strategies for weight manipulation.
- Tracking weight may carry more risks than benefits during adolescence, particularly if comparisons are drawn with other members or fully developed senior athletes.
- Poor practices in capturing and reporting body weight also present a risk.

The best practice guidance, which has been set out below, can reduce the risks of athletes potentially developing an eating disorder/disordered eating, or other mental health concerns. The implementation of the best practice guidance is therefore one of the key strategies to minimise the likelihood of problems developing due to sport.

If you suspect an individual may have an eating disorder or other mental health concerns, seek support and guidance (e.g. via your Club Welfare Officer, England Netball Safeguarding Team, the member's GP or eating disorder charities) – don't assume someone else will notice or deal with it.

Key Facts

Body weight can change day to day

The body is made up of several components that contribute to the total body weight of the athlete. Body weight changes day to day and over the course of a training session. This could be due to a number of reasons such as changes in hydration, body water stores, muscle glycogen stores, food intake, gut weight and the menstrual cycle. Daily fluctuation can be as much as 3kg depending on the size of the athlete. If their body weight increases, this is not a confirmation of an increase in body fat. Weighing an athlete more than once a month to measure changes will not give an accurate reading due to the daily variation.

Body weight and body composition will change during adolescence

An athlete will have changes in their body composition as they grow. This is particularly important during the adolescent period when growth rate is at a maximum.

As we grow, we also increase in weight and this is a normal part of development. Our size and shape changes and this can affect performance during this period. We may become clumsier and our coordination not as good. Therefore, weighing during this period is not a good indicator of performance.

Weight is not an indicator of performance

Everyone's body is different. This is the same for athletes competing in differing events. A sprinter may have a higher body weight than a netballer. However, this is due to one of many factors such as muscle mass, type of training and height. People of all different weights win medals so it is not an indicator of performance on its own. Therefore, a non-elite athlete's weight should not be used as a performance indicator.

REASONS TO WEIGH AN ATHLETE

It is recognised that weighing athletes can be beneficial but in netball, unless absolutely necessary players should NOT be weighed. If genuinely required, the weighing of an athlete needs careful consideration and communication to ensure athletes and parent(s)/guardians(s) understand the process.

Below is a list of some of the reasons why weighing an athlete may be undertaken but **only if** over 18 **or** on a **nationally supported talent pathway if under 18**.

- Taking weight and height measurements can be a useful way of monitoring growth and development of an athlete, particularly to be able to determine when the athlete is going through a growth spurt. During a growth spurt, athletes will be more susceptible to injury so changes to training may be required. If used in this way, it should always be alongside height measurements and only done once per month as a maximum.

- It may be used for monitoring hydration status. Body weight is taken pre and post training and a measurement or estimation of fluid intake and loss (e.g. urine losses) is made. Fluid balance can then be calculated, and a plan is put in place to rehydrate their fluid loss. A nutritionist must undertake this testing as they are able to advise on fluid intake and produce a plan of action.

- Taking regular weight measurements alongside other nutrition information and medical markers may be useful if an athlete is suspected of /diagnosed with Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs) or an eating disorder. In the latter scenario, athletes would be referred for specialist support.

- For performance purposes, weight is taken alongside a measurement of power (e.g. counter-movement jump or jump height) to calculate the power-to-weight ratio. This should be done by a qualified Strength and Conditioning coach and should only be done for senior members (over 18s) or those under 18 on a nationally supported talent pathway.

- For senior members (over 18) or those on a senior performance pathway, the Performance Nutritionist may monitor weight in order to adjust nutritional plans. Using weighing for this purpose must only be done by a qualified Nutritionist as they can implement any changes to diet in order to achieve the desired effect. Any information should be completely confidential and must not be released to anyone without prior consent. The exception to this is those on the England Netball Pathway (Roses, Future Roses or Roses Academy only) where this may be done with under 18s with the full support of a Performance Nutritionist and after careful consideration of the benefits of doing so.

- Real-time heart rate monitoring systems and lactate testing often require height and weight to be input in order to get the most accurate results. This does not necessitate the athlete monitoring weight at the training venue, instead this can be done at home with the athlete inputting their measurements themselves without the need for the coach/staff to see or be involved in the weighing process.

- Skinfolds or other systems of body composition assessment should only be done on those members over 18 and with a qualified nutritionist's input. The person undertaking any skinfold measurements must be an ISAK Level 1 qualified anthropometrist.

- When weighing athletes, it must be established 'why' you are weighing in relation to the above bullet points, how this will be carried out and what will happen with the results. This must be discussed and agreed before any weighing takes place.

BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR WEIGHING UNDER 18 ATHLETES ONLY IF ON A NATIONAL TALENT PROGRAMME

If and when weighing is being considered, a full explanation should be given, and informed consent sought and recorded beforehand.
Weighing of over 18 athletes or those under 18 on a nationally supported talent pathway **should only be undertaken with clearly documented reasoning**, specific to that athlete, and with the athlete's optimal long-term development in mind (example reasons set out above). The following best practice guidelines should be followed:

1. For under 18s on a nationally supported talent pathway, this can be done in a club setting but only by a qualified practitioner such as an SENR Sports Nutritionist, Dietician or medical personnel.

2. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or the athlete are provided with a copy of this policy (bringing their attention to the risks and best practice guidelines).

3. Explain and document why, for each individual athlete, the weighing of that athlete is necessary and part of a number of test measures.

4. Consent from parent(s)/guardian(s) and athletes must be gained. In the consent form, a clear explanation of the process and why the weight is being recorded, what will be done with the data and who the information will be released to.

5. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or athletes have the right to refuse/withdraw consent at any time and must be aware that this can be done without any consequence or disadvantage in selection if they refuse consent.

6. Weight should be monitored alongside height, no more than once a month (ideally the same time and day each month), except for the following which should only be carried out by the specified, qualified practitioners:
    a) Hydration checks by nutritionists.
    b) Power to weight ratio by the Strength & Conditioning coach in relation to progression of the land training cycle.

7. If real time heart rate monitoring or run/jump test set performance requires an athlete's weight, the athlete should be asked to bring in their weight measurement to input directly into the equipment, with their parent(s)/guardian(s) consent if they are under 18.

8. The most appropriate method for obtaining the athlete's weight and height must be agreed between the coaches, parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or athlete. This may be weighing and measuring at the club or at home, or through self-reporting.

9. If weighing measurement takes place, it should be done in an area where no other individuals can see or hear the measurements except the person taking the measurements, with another appropriate adult present if the athlete is under 18.

10. No subjective comments concerning the weight or body composition of any member should be made by anyone, and those conducting/present should always be sensitive to the feeling of athletes and how they may respond to any comments concerning their body.

11. Measurements must not be publicly displayed and must only be shared with stakeholders agreed on the consent form such as members of the multidisciplinary team.

12. Data should be recorded and stored in accordance with Data Protection and UKGDPR. Athletes have the right to keep their data private and secure.

13. Prior to any weighing taking place, any athlete or group of athletes identified as being necessary to weigh should be educated on the subject in an age-appropriate fashion. This should include content designed to prevent negative peer to peer or coach ongoing comment or discussion, which may have an impact on any athlete 'over-focusing' on their weight, causing harmful effects as earlier described.

14. It is clear that weighing *can* cause discussion between athletes and their peers. It is strongly advised that should anyone involved in conducting weighing become aware of any discussions emerging around weight, body shape and image, then every effort must be taken to stop this taking place and educate those involved on this subject. Prior to any weighing taking place the athlete should be instructed not to discuss the results amongst the group and given the reasons why it is not appropriate to do.

15. Where there are health, injury or performance concerns regarding weight and/or body composition, it is recommended that clubs and coaches liaise with parent(s)/guardian(s) and seek advice from appropriately qualified practitioners, for example sports doctors, nutritionists, psychologists, physiotherapists etc. In cases of potential harm, then England Netball safeguarding procedures should be followed, and advice sought.

In all cases there should be an athlete-centred approach to monitoring – respecting the athlete's rights and decision making.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

UKGDPR – UK General Data Protection Regulations

Multi-disciplinary team – eg. nutritionist, strength and conditioning coach, coach

SENR – Sports and Exercise Nutrition Register

LINKS TO ADVICE AND SUPPORT

UK Sport "*Eating Disorders in Sport: A guideline framework for practitioners working with high performance athletes*", (link)

NETBALLHer nutrition pages (link)

NSPCC body image pages (link)

NSPC webinar on eating disorders in sport (link)

Beat Eating Disorders (link)

Young Minds – eating problems pages (link)

SEED (link)

CONTACT ENGLAND NETBALL

To report poor practice or safeguarding concerns please contact

BeSafe@englandnetball.co.uk or 01509 277911

For safeguarding information and guidance visit: England Netball | Safeguarding

Policy Review
The Lead Safeguarding Officer are responsible for reviewing and updating this policy in line with legislation or statutory changes. This policy document will remain in force until it is amended, replaced or withdrawn.

Policy links
This policy should be considered in conjunction with the following England Netball policies and guidance:
England Netball | Safeguarding Young People in Netball Policy
England Netball | Reporting a Safeguarding Concern
England Netball | Safeguarding Disciplinary Regulations
England Netball | Codes of Conduct
England Netball | GDPR Resources