

GUIDANCE FOR RECOGNISING, RESPONDING TO AND PREVENTING POOR PRACTICE

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01 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to raise awareness. It does not provide a comprehensive guide to all poor practice scenarios. The links shared within it are correct at the time of writing and are likely to give more in depth information. We hope to help you think about what you may be seeing, hearing or feeling, not to make you experts.

Poor practice may occur as a one-off incident or as a pattern of behaviour. One-off, low-level behaviours can be tackled at club or league level either by internal investigation and/or challenge, discussion, reflection, advice and/or re-training. Suspected abuse and repeated poor practice and any practice that harms others or involves a breach of the Code of Conduct and Discipline Regulations within a netball environment should always be reported to England Netball via the form on this page England Netball | Reporting a Safeguarding Concern or email address BeSafe@englandnetball.co.uk

Sport can provide opportunities for people to be abused and for trusted adults to abuse their position. For more specific guidance on safeguarding in Sport visit here: Child abuse in a sports setting | (thecpsu.org.uk)

The impact of abuse or poor practice can be far-reaching. For the victim or athlete/player, for the perpetrator, their club, league or organisation and Netball as a whole. Other sports have been rocked by scandal and negative publicity.

The first point of contact for any concern would usually be the Club Safeguarding Officer.

Reporting your concern will allow safeguarding officers or the England Netball safeguarding team to determine whether there is any further concern or action for them to take.

02 DEFINING POOR PRACTICE

Poor practice is defined as **'non-adherence to EN's safeguarding policies, procedures and/or guidance which does not result in abuse'**. England Netball | Code of Conduct

Poor practice is potentially damaging to a player and/or a club and can, if allowed to go unchallenged, lead to the creation of an environment conducive to abuse as well as concerns about an individual's motivation. It can also normalise behaviour which is unacceptable and should not be condoned.

Where individuals display poor practice and hold positions of trust, have elevated roles and act as role models, children and others may mirror this behaviour and create an unhealthy culture, contrary to that which is in the best interest of everyone involved in Netball.

This list is not exhaustive but could include:

Language and comments,

- using foul and abusive language, especially in the presence of children or other vulnerable people
- passing derogatory comments about particular groups or individuals that are racist, sexist, disablist, homophobic, ageist, anti-religious or against someone's belief.

Unprofessional behaviour

- instances of hazing (initiation ceremonies), or not reporting instances of hazing, which does not amount to abuse (as defined in EN's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy)
- sexualised language towards others, particularly in the presence of children.
- displaying offensive material such as pornography or racist literature
- allowing roughhousing, physical and dangerous play, bullying, the use of bad language or inappropriate behaviour from players.
- 'banter' can be harmless, but some people can go along with it even if they feel uncomfortable just to fit in. It is more likely to be harmful if it refers to someone's appearance or identity.
- showing a lack of respect for other individuals, such as umpires, opposition coaches, volunteers, players or spectators.
- providing one to one coaching without any supervision or the presence of another club official or member of staff.
- failure to challenge or report poor practice from other club staff.
- allowing confidential information to be shared inappropriately.
- failure to acknowledge or respect the opinions of others and consider their rights and responsibilities.
- failure to record incidents or accidents.

Undue pressure

- insufficient care taken to avoid injuries, e.g. from excessive training or ignoring existing injures (which does not amount to the defined 'abuse' of a child or adult at risk)
- prioritising performance over the safety of members
- using punishments that humiliate or cause unnecessary risk of harm towards others.

Social media use

- coach or other adults using social media to contact a player directly
- unprofessional or inappropriate use of an individual's or club's social media account.

Unequal treatment

- continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to certain individuals
- failing to address the additional needs of members with a disability or other groups with protected characteristics (such as age, gender-identity, sexuality, race, faith, or religion).

03 SPOTTING THE SIGNS

Again, this is not an exhaustive list but things to look for include:

Behaviour changes.

- Are there indicators that the coach, players or captains are stressed, applying pressure on themselves or the team?
- Is there increased pressure to win, to pursue fitness goals.
- Are some players treated more harshly than others because of perceived 'failings'.

Disclosure

- Someone at the club may say something. Remember coaches and committee members are in a position of trust and power.
- Remember, challenging harsh treatment, shouting, demeaning or harmful behaviour from coaches is more difficult because of their position but doing so is more important because they set the tone and culture of the club or team.

Relationships

- Are coaches, volunteers or staff becoming too close to players?
- Are people acting secretively?
- Are cliques forming and others being ostracised – particularly if this is encouraged by a coach or other adult with responsibility for organising netball?

Power dynamics

- Is one member of the club too powerful? Has someone in the club taken on a god-like role?
- Does everything that occurs in the club need to be run past them first?
- Do players or parents/carers seem reluctant to speak out? Do people seem fearful of challenging things?

The pressure to win.

- We have seen cases particularly in performance or pathway clubs where the pressure to succeed, or to progress through the leagues has put inappropriate pressure on players or teams to perform. The player becomes more important than the person.
- punishing exercise routines.
- daily contact from coach or intrusion from coaches into players' private lives.
- Weight/BMI targets or daily exercise diaries.

4 RESPONDING

The short version is simply **RECOGNISE, RESPOND, REFER, RECORD:**

RECOGNISE, - be alert to changes in behaviour from coaches, umpires or other netball volunteers/staff. Look for the signs listed above.

Be vigilant, trust your gut instinct.

LINK to '**Example Concerns and what to do' document**

RESPOND, do something. If it is abusive, unprofessional or bullying behaviour – challenge it – publicly if possible. This demonstrates that the behaviour isn't tolerated at your club, that it is not acceptable. Others see or hear you challenging it communicates the same message to them and that it will be dealt with.

If you are not sure what to do, seek advice or a second opinion from the club safeguarding officer or EN Safeguarding team - BeSafe@englandnetball.co.uk.

Asking questions:

When asking young people or adults with learning difficulties questions it is important not to ask leading questions. Ideally use, "Tell me," "Explain" or "Describe" or open 'Wh' questions – Who, Where, When, What (avoid Why as it can sound judgemental).

Responding to a Child's Disclosure of Abuse | NSPCC (youtube.com)

REFER, - report the issue or concern to your club safeguarding officer.

And report to England Netball BeSafe@englandnetball.co.uk if it relates to conduct within a netball environment – behaviour of a coach, volunteer or other trusted adult.

RECORD – it is important to keep a record of what you have noticed or been told. If a child or adult at risk makes a verbal disclosure try to write what they say verbatim.

Where possible obtain accounts from people affected by the poor practice and details of any witnesses. Alleged perpetrators of the poor practice should be encouraged to provide their explanation too.

IF IT RELATES TO A POTENTIAL CRIME AVOID QUESTIONING VICTIMS, WITNESSES OR PERPETRATORS – pass the information to the police instead.

Link to Codes of Conduct/Disciplinary Regulations: England Netball Codes of Conduct & Disciplinary Regulations

And Safeguarding Discipline Regulations on this page: England Netball | Safeguarding Policies and documents

06 CREATING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

Netball Clubs and organisations should ensure they create a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone is valued for their individuality and the contribution they make to the club, and where they can feel confident that their concerns will be listened to.

- Make it easier for people to share their views. Never forget what it's like to need help and support.
- Listen to your netballers – improve your club through feedback. Empower young people to find their own solutions. Involving children and young people in their sport | (thecpsu.org.uk)
- Help tackle myths about those speaking out. It is not a sign of weakness. Encourage parents/carers to promote this message.
- Involve parents/carers. Inform them of good practice, seek feedback, ensure they know who the safeguarding officer is. More info here: Parents' hub for keeping children safe in sport | CPSU (thecpsu.org.uk) or Keeping Your Child Safe in Sport campaign | CPSU which includes free training.
- See the whole person, not just the player. Engage with people in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Understand the harm that an unhealthy performance culture can have – for example; Mary Cain US sprinter: I Was the Fastest Girl in America, Until I Joined Nike | YouTube
- Remember happy people perform best.
- Adopt positive cultures and coaching practices. More info here:
  Duty to Care Hub | UK Coaching including a free Duty to Care Digital Badge .
  Play Their Way - Sports Coaching Resources for Coaching Children
  Creating a psychologically safe culture | (thecpsu.org.uk)
- Build trust. Treat everyone with respect.
- Be an upstander not a bystander – saying nothing can condone poor behaviour and enable it to continue.
- Challenge inappropriate language or behaviour directly and quickly. Banter *could* be hurtful and lead to more engrained bullying behaviour. Interesting webinar here: Banter vs bullying in sport – webinar | (thecpsu.org.uk)

07 MORE RESOURCES

ADVICE AND TRAINING

Sport safeguarding training | CPSU (thecpsu.org.uk) - Free and pay-for Training, free podcasts and webinars - Including parents in sport, online safety, body image and weight, safeguarding at events…..

NSPCC – Child Protection in Sport Unit – NSPCC/The CPSU - Offer advice and support around safeguarding children in sport

Ann Craft Trust (ACT) 0115 951 5400– Safeguarding Adults -Provides advice to anyone who has a query about the protection of vulnerable children and adults, including professionals, parents, carers and family members.

Anti-Bullying Alliance 0808 1000 143 – www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk - Offer help or advice about bullying or cyber-bullying

Relevant EN Policies

England Netball | Safeguarding Policies and documents