

Safe practice guidance for coaches

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01 INTRODUCTION

It is essential to create a culture and environment within your club that allows all members to feel included and safe; an environment that allows your members to flourish. Individuals may be at greater risk of additional vulnerability to harm or abuse for the following reasons:

- If they are (or feel) socially isolated (such as through family circumstances or neurodiversity)
- If they are dependent on others for practical assistance in daily living
- If English is a secondary language
- If they have affected/delayed speech and language
- If they have a previous history of trauma
- If they have learning or other emotional difficulties

Be aware, adaptable, promote inclusion and support individuals to be individuals. Sport is a great place for people to express themselves as they may not feel comfortable to do so in other environments

02 BEST PRACTICE

It is important to remember that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Key principles include:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Everyone, regardless of sex, gender, age, race, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientations, religion, ability or disability, have the right to enjoy netball in an environment that is safe from any kind of abuse.
- Safeguarding is not solely about preventing abuse, but also providing the best environment possible to allow people to enjoy the sport.
- Create an environment where sport is fun and enjoyable for all and encourages fair play.
- Strive to be a good role model to all.
- Encourage involvement of parents/carers backed up by good and consistent communication.
- Include people in decision-making processes – especially if that decision has the potential to impact people's future involvement in the sport.
- Set guidelines on what behaviour/language is and is not acceptable – create a culture where inappropriate language/behaviour can be challenged.
- Take all allegations, concerns and suspicions of harm seriously and respond to them in a way that is fair, swift and appropriate.
- Work in an open environment wherever possible; avoid situations where you could be alone with a young person.
- Avoid placing excessive amounts of pressure on people – whilst they may play in a competitive setting, there should be a greater emphasis on their development and having fun playing netball. This is particularly important for younger players.
- All clubs/associations must appoint a Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) to ensure compliance with England Netball's policy, procedures and best practice guidance. All concerns should be reported to the CSO in the first instance. If the concern involves the CSO, you should contact England Netball's Safeguarding team (besafe@englandnetball.co.uk). If a child is in immediate danger, contact the police.
- Remember – it is not your responsibility to decide if a situation is poor practice, abuse or bullying, but it is your responsibility to report your concerns.

Avoid

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people, away from others
- Taking young people alone on car journeys, no matter how short the distance (see guidance from the CPSU: Guidance on transporting a child or young person in your car)
- Taking young people to your home, or any place they will be alone with you
- Putting yourself in any situation with a young person that you/they are uncomfortable wit

Never

- Engage in personal relationships (including sexual relations) with any young person
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- Allow or engage in any inappropriate physical, verbal or online communication (e.g. social media/messaging) with young people
- Allow people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a someone, even in fun
- Allow allegations from a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for young people that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow young people to stay with you at your home unsupervised
- Allow any form of bullying or bad behaviour
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour or make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Either exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues
- Show favouritism to any individual

Key Top Tips

In the case of an emergency where the situations above may be unavoidable with a child, they should only occur with full knowledge and consent of a young person's parents/carers. These situations should always be reported to your Club Welfare Officer.
If you accidentally hurt a someone or they seem distressed in any manner, appear to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report it as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief note of it. Parents or guardians should be informed of the incident where appropriate.
It is strongly recommended that you do not work completely alone with groups of young people. Enlist the support of others – assistants, parents/carers etc.

03 BULLYING VS BANTER

Bullying is usually defined as behaviour that is: repeated, used with intent to hurt someone physically or emotionally and often aimed at certain groups such as race, religion, sex & gender or sexual orientation. Bullying can take place between adults, young people, or both.
Bullying can take many forms including:

- Emotional – persistently being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, using threatening gestures
- Physical – hitting, pushing, kicking or other physical assault
- Verbal abuse – offensive name-calling, insults or gossiping
- Non-verbal abuse – offensive hand signs or text messages
- Racial, sexist or homophobic – racist remarks, sexist jokes or comments, or homophobic, transphobic or gender-related jokes or comments
- Sexual – abusive sexualised name-calling, inappropriate and uninvited touching, or an inappropriate sexual proposition

- Indirect – spreading nasty stories or rumours about someone, intimidation, exclusion from social groups, manipulating or constantly undermining

Cyberbullying

Any form of bullying that is carried out through the use of electronic media devices, such as: computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones or gaming consoles. Cyber bullying can involve a victim or perpetrator of any age.

Bullying has become far wider spread due to online platforms. The nature of online activity means it is possible for the instigator to hide their identity, to harass the victim at any time and to reach a wider audience.

Sexting is another form of cyberbullying when it involves young people. This is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images/ videos of themselves and/or others or sends sexually explicit messages on any device that allows the sharing of media and messages.

There is no single sign that someone is being bullied, however if you notice changes in behaviour such as nervousness or loss of confidence, physical injuries such as unexplained bruises, you notice that their belongings are getting 'lost' or damaged, or they become afraid to attend school/training or make excuses to avoid attending, these signs could indicate that someone is being bullied.

Banter

Banter is "The playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks" - Oxford Dictionary

Whilst banter is commonly used in sport at all levels, it is imperative to understand when the line has been crossed. Excessive and repetitive teasing is a form of bullying.

- Banter involves people with equal power, where there is no intent to cause harm and no hurt involved.
- Banter becomes bullying when it is consistent, hurtful or when there is an imbalance of power, for example a coach and player, teacher and pupil or even peer on peer.
- Just because you think something is banter or a joke doesn't mean other people will.
- People won't always feel confident to speak up if they are offended by something. They might even go along with it so as not to draw attention to themselves.
- Banter should never be used as an excuse to bully another person and should be challenged.

False consensus – behaviour becomes socially acceptable.

Diffusion of responsibility - everyone's responsibility can mean no-one does it.

These two things can create a **Permissive Environment** – People are afraid to take a stand and the wrong-doer assumes everyone is ok with it. You need **moral courage** to take the first step and challenge things.



More information here: Banter (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

What to do?

Don't make assumptions that people can't deal with bullying, but equally don't ignore the problem. Ask the individual what they want you to do to take the matter forward rather than taking over so they don't feel excluded or more stressed/worried than they already are.

You will need to make a judgement call if a young person does not want you to do anything – is that young person at danger of further hurt and upset if you don't step in?

Reassure and encourage the person and work with them to find an outcome – they may simply want to talk to someone about their situation, or they may want your help.

You can tackle bullying behaviour (this may differ depending on age) by talking to the individual displaying bullying behaviour and explain the situation, trying to get them to develop an understanding of the consequences of their behaviour.

This may be achieved by:

- Developing and maintaining positive relationships
- Helping young people learn and develop the skills to make good choices
- Enabling young people to recognise when they have harmed another person and how to put it right
- Encouraging everyone to consider their feelings and the feelings of others
- Encouraging everyone to consider the impact their behaviour has on others
- Parent involvement

Other considerations:

- Try to seek an apology from the person displaying bullying behaviour to the recipient
- If it involves a child, inform the parents of the person(s) displaying bullying behaviour so that they might talk to their child about the behaviour too
- Impose sanctions that are relevant and proportionate as necessary
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress
- Keep written record of action taken
- Review any learning from having to respond to bullying behaviour
- Read England Netball's Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy.

04 CHANGING ROOMS – YOUNG PEOPLE

Whilst changing rooms may appear to be the ideal place for team debriefs or pre-match discussion, they can also be an intimidating place for young people, especially those playing-up in senior teams.

The following are examples of good practice when using changing rooms:

- Players aged 10 and under must always be supervised in changing rooms by two adults of the same gender as the players, who hold DBS checks
- When young people are playing in senior teams with adults, it may be the case that they will use changing rooms at the same time. In this event, young people should have access to separate showers/changing space within that room for privacy. Young people and their parents must be informed of the club's policy on changing arrangements.
- Young people can become intimidated or uncomfortable in certain situations and are often self-conscious and anxious about changing in front of others. If young people are uncomfortable changing or showering in public, no pressure should be placed on them to do so encourage them to do this at home.
- If you are using a changing room for debriefs following a game, make sure that all parties have been informed and are suitably dressed.
- If you have young coaches (under 18) involved in running sessions for other young people, it is not appropriate for them to change together as they are in a Position of Trust. Alternative arrangements should be provided for changing (i.e. before/after other young people or change at home).
- Any adult working with young people, including volunteers, coaches, umpires or staff, must not change or shower at the same time when using the same facility as young people.

- If your club has disabled players, involve them and their parents/carers in deciding if and how they wish to be assisted and ensure they provide full consent to any support or assistance required.
- There is a potential that mobile phones may be used inappropriately in changing rooms, resulting in inappropriate photography or filming, therefore clubs are advised to consider banning the use or misuse of mobile phones in changing rooms.
- If no changing facilities are available, all players should be informed in advance and advised to make alternative arrangements/ bring appropriate additional clothing.
- It is the responsibility of all members to report any unacceptable behaviour and to challenge any action that contravenes EN's Codes of Conduct. Codes-of-conduct.

05 COMMUNICATION

Positive communication is essential in sport; whether the method of communication used is for messages detailing training, selection of match day teams or the celebration of members and their successes, clear and effective communication is key for all involved in netball – including young people.

Communicating when you are in a Position of Trust

In line with legislation on 'Position of Trust', certain considerations arise when individuals who are in a Position of Trust communicate. Individuals in a Position of Trust in netball have a duty of care to protect the welfare of players. This is not exclusive to coaches. Positions of Trust in netball will include young leaders, coaches at all levels, team managers, medical professionals, umpires, coaches and other volunteers. This list is not exhaustive.

Basic do's and don'ts.

Do:

- Promote positive communication
- Contact players only when necessary
- Make sure the method of communication is right for your environment
- Copy a parent/guardian into any communication with young people
- Check that young people are receiving important information if your route of communication is through a parent/guardian
- Agree good practice on how to communicate with people in your club (e.g. club policy on communication)
- Make sure there is a mechanism for two-way communication, allowing people to express their views
- Use social media channels in a positive way to promote and celebrate the successes of your clubs

Don't:

- Contact people unnecessarily
- Rely on apps/text/email to get your messages to young people except in online groups which include parents or other club volunteers
- Communicate directly with U18s without gaining consent from parent/guardian
- Give the wrong impression
- Communicate with young people on matters not related to netball
- Accept 'friend requests' from young people (except when creating authorized groups)
- Use inappropriate language or share unsuitable content with others
- Compromise the safety of others people by making or receiving phone calls when your full attention should be directed to the others (e.g. when coaching)

Personal vs 'professional' profiles

It is advised that you keep your private and professional accounts separate on social media. Ensure that professional accounts do not contain or promote inappropriate content. It is important to set and maintain boundaries with young people that you are coaching as you are in a Position of Trust.

Things to be aware of

It is important to acknowledge technology and the speed at which it moves - many young people may not use or have access to an email account, or age limits for apps such as WhatsApp may restrict the ways in which you can contact young people – ensure you find a method that works for your club and you agree it with parents/guardians. Bullying does not only occur verbally, 'cyberbullying' can occur online from devices such as phones or tablets. Bullying generally occurs between peers. For more information on bullying, see England Netball's Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy.

Technology –There are several apps that can be used as communication tools. Some of these, such as WhatsApp, have legal restrictions and minimum age limits. Therefore, it is essential to check the method of communication before using it with young people.

Systems – Club membership systems are widely used in netball. They provide tools for easy administration, communication, websites etc. When using systems such as these in clubs, make sure you inform parents and young people what you intend to use the information for and how it will be stored. If you are using these systems for the purpose of communication, ensure you follow the guidance outlined in this document.

1-on-1 communication – there may be times when you need to communicate with an individual away from their peers or team-mates. If they are a young person, in this situation, make sure they are supported by another individual such as a peer, parent or guardian and you have another adult present. If you need to communicate with a young person individually via text, email etc, make sure a parent/guardian is included in the conversation.

Grooming–1-on-1 communication can be used to groom young people or adults at risk for sexual abuse or radicalisation. If you are concerned that someone is being groomed or radicalised and is at risk of immediate harm you must call the police. If it isn't an emergency, consult your safeguarding officer or England Netball's Safeguarding Team in the first instance. See here: England Netball | Safeguarding or email besafe@englandnetball.co.uk

Social networks – Social media sites such as Facebook, X, Instagram, Snapchat etc. are widely used. It is essential that individuals such as coaches are not linked with young people on social media. Individuals in a Position of Trust are advised to set their privacy settings so that young people cannot access their information.

Giving people a voice

In addition to considering how you communicate with others in your club/association, it is also important to consider how people can express their thoughts and opinions.

You could run forums on a regular basis to allow people to share their views or perhaps have youth representatives on your committee. Whatever you choose to do, it is important to make sure people feel confident to express concerns, share their thoughts and aid development of the club, themselves and their peers.

Access free online training about giving young people a voice here. Involving children and young people in their sport | CPSU (thecpsu.org.uk) and adults, here: Listen - Ann Craft Trust

Parent/carer expectations and engagement

Parents and guardians play a huge role in the development of young people. They are often the people responsible for driving players to training and matches and can invest large amounts of time, effort and financial resources into ensuring they support their child/ children in the sport.

It is important to ensure that clubs/associations work with parents and/or guardians, outlining expected behaviours of both parents and/or guardians and the club/association. Clubs/associations should not assume the knowledge level or commitment to the sport of parents and/or guardians. Outlining expected behaviours and values at the start of each season and offering regular meetings to parents can go a long way in supporting parents and/or guardians within netball – perhaps with reference to Codes of Conduct Codes-of-conduct

Not all parents and/or guardians will engage with the sport their child/ children have chosen, therefore it is essential to consider how you will communicate with young people and their parents and/or guardians to make sure important messages get through to young people. Positive parental engagement is important; parents can be a brilliant resource to their own child(ren) and potentially to the club or organisation as they may bring skills, knowledge and expertise.
Poor parental behaviour also has an impact on young people. The 'Magic Sports Kit' is a very powerful video that highlights the impact from a child's perspective My Magic Sports Kit (youtube.com).
• CPSU Parents' hub for keeping children safe in sport | CPSU (thecpsu.org.uk)
• EN Codes of Conduct include rules for Spectators and Parents

06 MOTIVATING PLAYERS

It is important to consider how you can encourage and motivate people in netball to ensure they feel supported. A coach is a leader, a role model and a teacher. They should inspire others.

Punishments and 'Forfeits' will often discourage people and can have many negative impacts, such as loss of confidence. It is essential to create an environment where people feel support and that allows them to develop. If you are considering how to increase player motivation, consider the following:

Give players a sense of control
While guidance from a coach is important to keeping players on task and motivated, allowing players to have some choice and control over what happens in the activity is one of the best ways to keep them engaged. For example, allowing players to choose the type of activity they do or which problems to work on can give them a sense of control that may just motivate them to do more.

Define the objectives
It can be very frustrating for players to complete a task or even to behave in a session if there aren't clearly defined objectives. Players want and need to know what is expected of them in order to stay motivated to work. At the beginning of the season (session), lay out clear objectives, rules, and expectations of players so that there is no confusion and players have goals to work towards.

Create a threat-free environment
While players do need to understand that there are consequences to their actions, far more motivating for players than threats are positive reinforcements. When coaches create a safe, supportive environment for players, affirming their belief in a player's abilities rather than laying out the consequences of not doing things, players are much more likely to get and stay motivated to do their work. At the end of the day, players will fulfil the expectations that the adults around them communicate, so focus on can, not can't.

Use positive competition
Competition in the coaching environment isn't always a bad thing, and in some cases can motivate players to try harder and work to excel. Work to foster a friendly spirit of competition in your sessions, perhaps through group games related to the tasks and create opportunities for players to show off their skills.

Offer rewards
Everyone likes getting rewards and offering your players the chance to earn them is an excellent source of motivation. Consider the personalities and needs of your players to determine appropriate rewards for your group.

Give players responsibility

Assigning players roles and responsibilities to build a community connection will give players a sense of motivation. Players can see roles as a privilege rather than a burden and will work hard to ensure that they, and other players, are meeting expectations. It can also be useful to allow players to take turns leading activities or helping so that each feels important and valued.

Allow players to work together
While not all players will jump at the chance to work in groups, many will find it fun to try to solve problems, and work on skills with other players. Social interaction can get them excited about things in the session and players can motivate one another to reach a goal. Coaches need to ensure that groups are balanced and fair so that some players aren't doing more work than others.

Give praise when earned
There is no other form of motivation that works quite as well as encouragement. Even as adults we crave recognition and praise, and players of any age are no exception. Coaches can give players motivation by rewarding success publicly, giving praise for a job well done, and sharing exemplary work.

Be excited
One of the best ways to get your players motivated is to share your enthusiasm. When you're excited about coaching, they'll be much more excited about learning. It's that simple.

Know your players
Getting to know your players is about more than just memorising their names. Players need to know that their coach has a genuine interest in them and cares about them and their success. When players feel appreciated it creates a safe learning environment and motivates them to work harder, as they want to get praise and good feedback from someone they know and respect.

Help players find intrinsic motivation
It can be great to help players get motivated, but at the end of the day they need to be able to generate their own motivation. Helping players find their own personal reasons for working hard is one of the most powerful gifts you can give them.

Manage player anxiety
Some players find the prospect of not doing well so anxiety-inducing that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. For these players, coaches may find that they are most motivated by learning that struggling with a task isn't the end of the world. Offer support no matter what the result is and ensure that players don't feel so overwhelmed by expectations that they just give up.

Make goals high but attainable
If you're not stretching and challenging your players to do more than the bare minimum, most won't seek to push themselves on their own. Players need and like to be challenged and will work to achieve high expectations so long as they believe those goals to be within their reach, so don't be afraid to push players to get more out of them.

Give feedback and offer chances to improve
Players who struggle with skill acquisition can sometimes feel frustrated and get down on themselves, draining motivation. In these situations, it's critical that coaches help players to learn exactly where they went wrong and how they can improve next time. Figuring out a method to get where players want to be can also help them to stay motivated to work hard.

Track progress
It can be hard for a player to see just how far they've come, especially with skills that are difficult for them. Tracking can come in handy in the club or performance environment, not only for coaches but also for players. Coaches can use this to motivate players, allowing them to see visually just how much they are learning and improving as the year goes on.

Make things fun
Not all coaching needs to be a game or a good time, but players who see the coaching session as a place where they can have fun will be more motivated to pay attention and do the work that's required of them than those who regard it as a chore. Adding fun activities into your session can help players who struggle to stay engaged and make the session a much more friendly place for all players.

Provide opportunities for success
Players, even the best ones, can become frustrated and demotivated when they feel like they're struggling or not getting the recognition that other players are. Make sure that all players get a chance to play to their strengths and feel included and valued. It can make a world of difference in their motivation.

Alternative options
Rather than performing 'forfeits' players could be given tasks to complete such as acts of kindness, such as:

- Filling a water bottle
- Collecting balls
- Carrying a bag
- Giving praise to another player

There is also an opportunity to flip the task so that the 'winners' receive a bonus – this could be double points for nets scored etc. This provides a learning focus for individuals and removes the 'punishment' element.

Sometimes, a group simply needs to know the learning focus and can be happy to self-review it based on simple targets. No need to add false motivation with consequences, the self-fulfilling drive of sensing and gaining progress should be enough.

07 MORE RESOURCES

- CIMSPA 'Professional Standard- Working with Children' cimspa-ps-working-with-children-ps-v1.0.pdf
- Ann Craft Trust - Safeguarding Resources & Guides - ACT
- Play Their Way https://www.playtheirway.org
- Details of a workshop for 10-25 people Learning Disability and Sport Workshop | Mencap
- Safeguarding talented and elite athletes | CPSU (thecpsu.org.uk)
- Paul Stewart Podcast – Creating safer cultures in sport | CPSU (thecpsu.org.uk)
- Or the wrong culture? Mary Cain's story - Alberto Salazar You Tube - I Was the Fastest Girl in America,