

Parents' /Carers' guide to Supporting your Child in Netball

As adapted from the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit's guidance.

For more information visit www.thecpsu.org.uk

England Netball aims to make netball a sport for all. A place where children and other vulnerable people are safe and feel safe, and where anyone feels able to raise concerns or challenge harmful or risky behaviour wherever it arises.

Everyone should be able to belong, flourish and soar.

Everyone should work together to nurture and unlock potential.

Parents/Carers are important to netball because they can:

- encourage their young people to take up, enjoy, and achieve in netball
 - support their children in practical ways – e.g. by providing transport or buying kit
 - help out with activities
 - become coaches, team managers and other volunteers within the club
 - provide positive role models for young people through their own behaviour
 - help out with things such as club websites and fundraising
 - support and motivate their child and/or the team
 - reinforce positive aspects of participation in netball
- "My mum's the best role model I could ask for. She's always on the sideline giving me great support and always encouraging me on – really good, really positive. She's just an inspiration for me."*

The behaviour of some parents/carers can be challenging when they:

- get carried away on the sidelines - leading to intimidating, aggressive, threatening or abusive behaviour towards their own or other young people, coaches, officials or other parents/spectators
- push their child to achieve in netball while neglecting other aspects of their lives
- have a 'win at all costs' approach to their child's participation in netball
- have aspirations for, or expectations of, their child that are not realistic or that differ from those of the club
- are verbally or physically abusive towards their own or other young people during or following competitions
- make negative comments about their child or other young people's efforts, or mock and humiliate them
- threaten or fight with coaches, officials or other spectators
- contradict or undermine the coach

"I've seen parents running onto the court and start fights with other parents,"

"I've been to matches where supporters for the other team have been verbally abusing my players and I've had to speak to that team's coach about getting those parents under control."

"Her dad was shouting 'you're a disgrace to the family'."

Young people tell us:

"Dad thinks he's helping – but he just puts me off my game"

"When mum starts yelling from the side, I feel so embarrassed"

"It doesn't matter if I played well - if we lose, they don't even talk to me"

"It's confusing when the coach says do this, but dad says do it different"

"When I don't do as well as I should I know mum feels I've let her down – even if she doesn't say it' - I just wanted to give it all up"

How does poor parental behaviour affect young participants?

- threatening words or behaviour, regardless of who this is directed at, are frightening, and upsetting for young people
- behaviour like this certainly contravenes the Parents/Spectators Code of Conduct that netball clubs should have in place
- in extreme cases it may also constitute criminal actions that result in the involvement of the police
- shouting from the side-lines may disrupt attention of players on the court
- parental 'advice' may distract players or athletes from what the coach is telling them, particularly if giving conflicting information
- young people can be embarrassed by parents who draw attention to themselves in negative ways
- young people may be worried that their parent's behaviour will annoy the coach or affect their selection for the team
- consistently bad parental behaviour can lead to the child's exclusion from the club
- focus on netball at the expense of other aspects of the child's life can put undue pressure upon the child, impact upon their social and educational development and potentially lead to disappointment if the child does not meet expectations
- negative feedback to a child can undermine their confidence with the possible result that the child underperforms or withdraws from netball

How can clubs:

1. Encourage positive parental participation?

- provide information about the club's ethos, rules and expectations
- let them know who to contact for information, feedback, offers of support
- communicate clear expectations of parents (including on-line behaviour) which they sign up to.e.g. Parents'/spectators' code of conduct
- inform them about expectations of coaches, and participants
develop relationships with parents to encourage their positive involvement and use of their skills to support the club
- inform them about processes to raise, discuss or report concerns or issues they are unhappy about
- use a range of means to inform parents and young people about expected standards of behaviour, e.g. induction information, meetings or leaflets, posters, or newsletters.

2. Manage challenging parental behaviour?

- promote the club code of conduct for parents so they know what behaviour is expected of them and the consequences of breaching this – getting this signed every season
- challenge inappropriate parental behaviour
- encourage parental encouragement as opposed to criticism
- model positive behaviour by coaches and officials within the club, e.g., encouraging fair play and applauding the other side/opponents
- increase the distance between spectators and the court
- provide information for young people and parents about who they can talk to if they have concerns
- have a designated safeguarding person other than the coach or umpire
- provide support for the officials through assistants (particularly important in the case of young officials)
- use the support from England Netball
- provide reminders to parents that they are role models for the young people
- communicate the message that sport is fun

3. Establish sanctions for parents and carers?

- Sanctions should be identified and agreed by the management committee in accordance with the club's constitution, and communicated to all parties. If poor behaviour persists sanctions may include:
 - monitoring behaviour by a club official or welfare/safeguarding officer
 - not allowing an individual to be court-side during a match or matches
barring an individual from attending at all – preferably by making alternative arrangements for their child to get to and from the club/venue.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the behaviour of a parent does not result in their child being unable to participate, although in some extreme cases this may be the final resort.

A coach - "My policy is that there's nothing wrong with shouting encouragement from the side-lines, but if there are any negative comments, that spectator is asked to leave."

How you can support your child?

Parents and carers play an essential part in encouraging and supporting their child's participation in netball. There are obvious parts to this, like providing lifts to and from training and matches, or buying netball kit and equipment.

Many of you also contribute by helping out as volunteers at the club, running fundraising events or helping out with websites or funding applications. You can provide a positive role model, encouraging fair play and a sporting approach to your child's involvement.

However, there are times when parental behaviour is much less positive and makes it difficult for young people to enjoy or even continue to take part in their netball. Sometimes parents may not initially recognise or realise that they are behaving in a negative or abusive way.

- Support your child enthusiastically
- Encourage your child without expecting perfection
- Be a good role model – to young people and other parents
- Promote fair play

- Acknowledge the efforts of all the young people
- Encourage your child to play by the rules
- Support the coaches and officials (particularly young officials)
- Allow the coaches to coach
- Support and respect your child's ambitions in netball
- Remember that this is your child's netball experience – not yours
- Celebrate and support your child as a whole person who needs a range of experiences both inside and outside netball

More information and advice including videos can be found here:

- [Working with Parents in Sport](#)
- [Parents' hub for keeping children safe in sport | CPSU \(thecpsu.org.uk\)](#)