

ENGLAND NETBALL – COMPETITION REVIEW

JUNIOR & YOUTH PROPOSALS – AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review

England Netball's competition review has been conducted by groups comprising executive officers and volunteers, players, coaches and administrators, from all sectors of the sport. The initial review proposals were produced by a Review Group which met between February and May 2004, and subsequently tested and augmented by a Project Group which met between September and November 2004. A further, expert group was subsequently convened in January and February 2005 to review the proposals made in respect of junior and youth netball; the results of their deliberations are summarised below.

Guiding principles

The proposals for junior and youth netball have been drafted against the following guiding principles:

- The National Schools Competition Framework, as agreed between the National Council for School Sport, the Youth Sport Trust and Sport England – within which netball has been included as a priority for delivery from September 2005
- A balance is required between the demands of school, club and representative netball – especially between the first two of these
- While talent pathways must be created which are specific to the circumstances and demands of junior players, provision must also be made for those mid-level players who are neither talented nor social/recreational
- Consideration must be given to:
 - The current capacity of the different regions, and of the present club system
 - Both independent and state school sectors
- Each of the key stakeholders involved in junior and youth netball must be aware of their roles and responsibilities, and open to culture change and the generation of different perceptions
- The provision of coaches and coaching systems to support any new proposals is paramount
- The available time/space within the playing season must be taken into account
- Quality provision will be the key to successful implementation

Primary educational sector

England Netball acknowledges that it does not directly control this sector. None the less, it has a responsibility to establish policy for recommendation to schools, local authorities, local education authorities, etc., for implementation. This policy is as follows.

Competition within the primary school sector should be developmental, participatory and fun-based, and delivered in harmony with other complementary sports. It is a priority for England Netball to ensure complete delivery of the draft national framework for school sport at Key Stages 1 and 2 throughout the state sector. Thus, between the ages of 5 and 7, children should be involved in multisport activities with a festival focus; between the ages of 7 and 9, they should be involved in multisport activities, also with a festival focus; and from 9 to 11 they should play High Five netball.

Responsibility for the delivery of High Five netball should lie within School Sport Partnerships, wherein all state-sector schools will be included by 2006. The minimum delivery required within each School Sport Partnership should be one High Five festival per annum.

While High Five netball is not currently recognised by the independent school sector, independent schools should be encouraged to participate in the competition formats which are organised within School Sport Partnerships. All possible routes should be explored to exert pressure on independent schools to adopt High Five – including through the formal regional and national groupings of such schools. For netball clubs, the delivery of High Five netball for players aged under 11 should be a compulsory criterion for the award of CAPS accreditation.

Secondary educational sector

Within secondary education, the principal objectives should be to ensure a high-quality and exciting experience of netball which leads to a lifelong love of and participation in the sport among players, coaches, umpires and leaders; and to deliver a competitive structure which is appropriate to the level and standard of the participants, and which allows for talent identification.

Generally, in respect of schools netball, the emphasis should be on ongoing local competition, interspersed by or culminating in festivals or tournaments. Intra-school netball should be emphasised for delivery in all school years from Year 7 upwards, organised internally by students, and played within lesson time wherever possible. Schools should also be encouraged to develop out-of-school-hours netball clubs in order to provide a basis for the expansion of the junior and youth club sector.

In each of Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, inter-school competition should be staged on a local basis. This should take place within such terms as schools play netball, and be organised within School Sport Partnerships in the state sector, but including such independent schools as wish to participate. Inter-school competition should culminate in a festival organised on a county-wide basis.

There should be two National Schools tournaments – one for Years 8 and 9 combined, and another for Years 10 and 11 combined. These tournaments should be staged over three/four rounds between January and April, beginning with a local or borough/district-wide round in areas where there are sufficient teams to justify it. Thereafter subsequent rounds will take place at county and regional level, with the regional winners going forward to contest national finals over the course of a weekend in April.

The National Schools tournament for Years 8 & 9 should fall under review in three years' time, when the impact of the reinforcement of Under-14 club netball is apparent. At this time consideration should be given to its replacement by a tournament which culminates at either county or regional level.

Schools netball in Years 12 and 13 should feature both intra-school competition and inter-school matches played on a local basis – as in Years 7 to 11 inclusive. There should be a single, combined National Under-18 competition for schools, college and club teams – which is to say Years 12 and 13, and players aged over 16 and under 18. As with the National Schools tournaments, this tournament should progress over three/four rounds, from local/borough/district to county to regional to national level.

Junior & youth club netball

Within the junior and youth club sector, the objective should be to provide an opportunity for every participant to access appropriate competition. Junior and youth club netball should be primarily league-based – by contrast with schools netball, which should be primarily tournament-based. It should offer three progressive stages for player development through to open-age level: these should be Under-14, Under-16 and Under-18 which, respectively, will accord with the three stages of the LTAD model for netball Learning to Train, Training to Train, and Training to Compete.

At Under-14 level, there should be a county- or area-based league competition run between September and March each year. These should be organised by County Netball Associations, who will have the licence to support an end-of-season festival on an area or regional basis, if they feel that a progression is appropriate. The menu of competitive options for the Under-14 age group should also include staging an Under-12 league, if there is sufficient local demand and a critical mass of players at this level.

At Under-16 level, between September and December each year there should be a county- or area-based league competition organised by County Netball Associations. The winners of this competition should progress to a regional tournament played between January and March and organised by Regional Netball Associations. Meanwhile, the teams which do not qualify for the regional stage should continue to play in county- or area-based competition between January and March, with a different format to that played prior to Christmas.

At Under-18 level, ideally, the competition format will be identical to that for Under-16 netball. It is acknowledged that, because of the current direct graduation of players from Under-16 to open-age netball, the implementation of an Under-18 league will need to be conducted through a process of evolution over a period of time. As stated above, there should also be a single, combined National Under-18 competition for schools, college and club teams.

To support these proposals for junior and youth club netball, the following devices will be necessary:

- The production of guidance notes and menus of competitive options, to assist competition organisers in understanding the objectives and working around logistical issues
- The encouragement of schools to operate out-of-school-hours netball clubs which are open to players other than those who attend the host school, in order to boost the numbers of clubs and provide opportunities for players to play out of school time
- The creation of “areas”, geographical units which are either smaller than a county (e.g., a subset of a large county) or larger (e.g., a combination of two or more small or sparsely populated counties) – created primarily to bring together sufficient clubs to form a league

Elite youth netball

Netball's elite youth competition should form part of the process of identification and preparation of players for the England Under-17 squad which will participate in Netball Europe international competition each spring. The objectives of such a competition should therefore be to afford an intense competitive experience which prepares the identified players for participation in that international competition; and to provide a competitive environment in which the progression and potential of talented players may be tested and assessed for final selection for that international competition.

By a thorough and proper process conducted up to and by Easter each year, players should be identified for selection to six elite youth teams which are based around regional Super League franchises. There should be a maximum of 15 players selected per team – that is, a maximum total of 90 players aged 15 years and above. Selection should be led by full-time coaches operating from within National Netball Centres, who have responsibility for talent identification and regional talent development programmes.

Following selection, over the course of the subsequent summer, players should have their training and competition schedules managed by their full-time coach. The majority of players selected for the competition will be of a calibre to play open-age club netball in either the Premier Divisions or a Regional League – and they should be encouraged to play for clubs which can offer them this level of play. Meanwhile, the practical difficulties of bringing the elite youth teams together for training over the months following selection will mean that this will happen infrequently: the emphasis will therefore be on the individual development of players within their home training environment.

Each team will then play against the others over five rounds, and in a round of play-offs, between September and March, i.e., one match every three to four weeks. Matches will be aligned with Super League matches where possible and desirable, and will take priority over all other netball being played by the selected players, either at school, in junior club netball, or in open-age club netball.

Having completed a season in the elite youth competition, and if they have not already done so, players should graduate into either a full Super League franchise squad, or a suitably high level of open-age club netball. Thus the England Under-19 side will be selected from within open-age club netball, specifically at Super League, Premier Division or Regional League level.

University and college netball

Within universities and degree-awarding institutes of higher education, the British Universities Sports Association should continue to deliver its competitions as currently. The format and implementation of these should be discussed and influenced through the medium of the BUSA Sports Management Group for netball. England Netball should take the lead in establishing this group, and in setting its agenda.

Within colleges of further education, England Netball should establish a similar dialogue with the British Colleges Sports Association, with a view to enhancing competition for open-age college teams and including such colleges' Under-18 teams within the National Under-18 competition referred to above.

Implementation

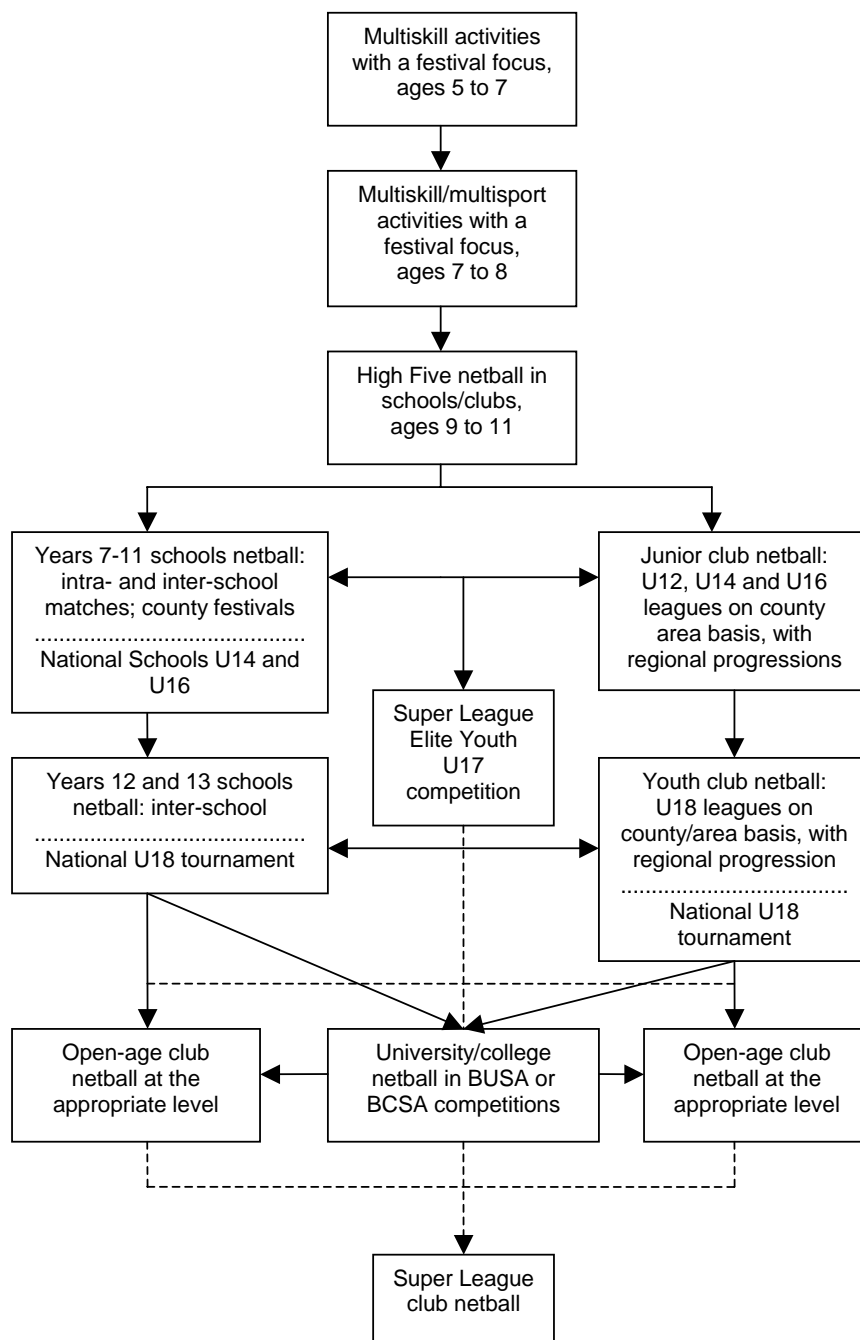
Year	Schools	Club	University	Elite
2005-06	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audit of High Five activity, and development planning• Pilot national competition structure in SSPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No change• Audit of Under-14 activity, and development planning• Publish guidelines for Under-14 leagues• Pilot leagues at U14 (priority) and U16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No change• Formulate BUSA Sports Management Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin process of identifying players, Oct 2005• Select players for elite youth teams, Easter 2006
2006-07	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement necessary changes• Introduce National U18 competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of U14 (priority) and U16 leagues• Introduce National U18 competition		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elite youth competition, Sept 2006 – Mar 2007
2007-08		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of U18 league structures		

School year	Competition format	Age group	Competition format	Elite youth proposals	LTAD stage
7	Intra-school matches, and local inter-school matches, leading to a county festival	Under-12	Possible Under-12 league competition, depending upon strength of local clubs		Learning to train
8 & 9	(a) Intra-school matches, and inter-school matches on a local basis, leading to a county festival (not including teams qualifying for the regional stage of the National Schools) (b) National Schools tournament across three/four rounds: borough, county, regional, national	Under-13			
		Under-14	(a) County or area*-based leagues, between September and March – with no progression to regional level (b) Blocks of fixtures interspersed with “talent weekends” for individuals during the two half-terms and at Christmas		
10 & 11	(a) Intra-school matches, and inter-school matches on a local basis, leading to a county festival (not including teams qualifying for the regional stage of the National Schools) (b) National Schools tournament across three/four rounds: borough, county, regional, national	Under-15			Training to train
		Under-16	(a) County or area*-based leagues, in an initial phase from September to December (b) Winners of those leagues progress to a regional league played between January and March (c) Remainder of club teams remain within their county/ area* league, playing a new competition between January and March Super League elite youth squad selection and training ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓	
12 & 13	(a) Intra-school matches, and inter-school matches on a local basis, leading to a county festival (b) Consolidated National Under-18 tournament for schools and clubs, across three/four rounds: borough, county, regional, national	Under-17		Super League elite youth competition, one match p.c.m., from September to March	Training to compete
		Under-18	(a) Aspiration to have the same competitive format as Under-16 (b) Requirement to evolve towards this format through progressions which build on the National Under-18 tournament over a period of years		

* An “area” is defined as a geographical unit which is either smaller than a county (e.g., a subset of a large county) or larger (e.g., a combination of two or more sparsely populated counties)

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ENVISAGED JUNIOR & YOUTH PLAYER PATHWAY POST-IMPLEMENTATION, 2009



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ENVISAGED JUNIOR – SENIOR PLAYER PATHWAY POST-IMPLEMENTATION, 2009

