HITCHIN
NETBALL CLUB

County & Regional Pathway

Trial Nominations Guidance

Issue: 2
Issue Date: November 2026
Review Date: November 2027
Responsible: Hitchin Netball Club Committee

The Committee is collectively responsible for ensuring this document is implemented, reviewed and updated as required.

Approval

This document was approved by the Hitchin Netball Club Committee at its meeting on 7 November 2026 and the approval is recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

Purpose

At Hitchin Netball Club, we believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to develop, enjoy their netball and fulfil their own potential regardless of their starting point.

Whilst we are incredibly proud when players progress into county or regional performance pathways, we recognise that these opportunities are only one part of a much bigger journey. Our aim is to develop confident, resilient and well-rounded young athletes who develop a lifelong love of the game, regardless of the level at which they play.

Scope

Every season, organisations responsible for delivering county and regional performance pathways invite clubs to nominate players for upcoming trials.

Policy Statement

Our approach

These pathways are designed to identify athletes who currently demonstrate the qualities required for a high-performance environment. They are not intended to identify every player with future potential, nor are they a measure of a young person's overall ability or worth as a player.

In line with England Netball's player development philosophy, we recognise that children develop at different rates. Physical maturity, technical ability, tactical understanding, emotional resilience and confidence all develop at different times. Some athletes develop early, whilst others reach their potential later. For this reason, selection at one point in time should never be viewed as a prediction of a player's future in the sport.

Procedures / Implementation

How nominations are made

Clubs can nominate only a limited number of players.

The pathway organisers allocate each club a maximum number of nominations for each playing area. For example, a club may only be permitted to nominate a set number of shooters, centre court players and defenders. Players who are already part of the existing pathway programme may not count towards these allocations, but the remaining places are strictly limited.Some players who would benefit may miss out because of these limits.

When we receive a nomination request, our coaching team carefully considers every eligible player against the published pathway criteria and the number of places available within each court area.

These discussions are collaborative and are based on observations over an extended period rather than individual performances.

In reaching our decisions, we consider a wide range of factors, including:

- Technical and tactical ability
- Physical development and readiness for the demands of the pathway
- Coachability and willingness to learn
- Commitment, attendance and work ethic
- Emotional resilience and ability to cope positively with challenge
- Teamwork, attitude and sportsmanship
- Readiness to thrive within a high-performance environment

Every nomination is discussed carefully to help ensure decisions are fair, consistent and evidence-based.

Why we no longer publish pathway trial dates to everyone

Historically, we shared pathway trial information with our entire membership.

Although our coaches always offered honest advice regarding a player's readiness, some families understandably chose to enter the trials regardless.

Due to their very nature, pathway trials are highly competitive. Players compete against athletes from specialist performance clubs that often exist specifically to prepare players for these opportunities, whilst only a small number of places are available.

Whilst disappointment is an inevitable part of sport, we found that attending trials before a player was genuinely ready could significantly affect confidence, enjoyment and self-belief.

As a club, we believe we have a responsibility not only to develop talented athletes but also to safeguard the wellbeing of every young person in our care.

For that reason, our coaches now review every eligible player and contact those we believe are currently ready and who best meet the pathway criteria within the limited nominations available to the club.

This approach is not about limiting ambition or closing doors. It is about giving players the greatest chance of having a positive experience and protecting those who would currently find the process discouraging rather than developmental.

Every player's journey is unique

Children do not all develop at the same rate.

Some players are selected for county programmes at a young age. Others continue to develop throughout their teenage years before reaching the same level. Many outstanding adult players were never selected for a county pathway at all.

A decision not to nominate a player this season should never be interpreted as "not good enough" or "never". It simply reflects where that player is in their development at this moment in time and the difficult decisions that must be made when nomination places are limited.

Our coaches continually review player development throughout the season, and future opportunities are considered whenever they arise.

Working in partnership with parents

We appreciate that conversations naturally happen on the sidelines and that news of pathway trials often spreads quickly around the club.

We kindly ask families to trust the judgement of our coaching team and understand that every nomination, and every decision not to nominate, has been made thoughtfully, consistently and with genuine care.

Our coaches invest hundreds of volunteer hours each season getting to know every player, observing their development and supporting them both on and off the court. These decisions are never based on favourites or isolated performances. They are based on the published pathway criteria, the limited number of nominations available to the club and, most importantly, what we believe is in each player's best interests.

Our commitment

Hitchin Netball Club is committed to balancing opportunity with responsibility.

We will always encourage and support players who are ready for performance pathway opportunities to pursue opportunities that challenge them and help them reach their potential.

Equally, we have an important responsibility to protect the confidence, wellbeing and enjoyment of every player who walks through our doors.

Our success is not measured simply by the number of county or regional players we produce. It is measured by creating an environment where every young person feels valued, supported and inspired to continue their netball journey.

Everything we do is guided by one simple principle:

Every decision we make is made in the best interests of our players.

Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed annually, or earlier if there are changes to legislation, England Netball guidance, Club operations or other circumstances that affect its content.

The Committee is responsible for ensuring that the document remains appropriate, effective and up to date. Any amendments will be approved by the Committee and recorded as a new issue.

References and Supporting Documents

Hitchin Netball Club documents

- Player Welfare & Support Policy
- Code of Conduct Coaches & Volunteers

External guidance and documents

- Published county pathway trial eligibility criteria and nomination guidance
- Published regional pathway trial eligibility criteria and nomination guidance