

Age Banding Guidance and Support

In the interest of fair and enjoyable participation in netball, it is recognised that the development of players, may make it desirable for them to train and/or play above their age band. England Netball has developed this Guidance for use in considering the appropriateness of a young person taking part in activities above their age band, with the welfare of that young person being paramount in that decision. This Guidance applies to requests for any young person to be allowed to take part in activities with others above their age band as recommended by England Netball.

The following Age Banding restrictions for all competitions as follows:

- Any athlete competing in Adult competition must be over the age of 14
- Any athlete competing in U19 competition must be over the age of 14 and Under 19
- Any athlete competing in U16 competition must be over the age of 14 and Under 16
- Any athlete competing in U14 competition must be over the age of 11 and Under 14

(All ages are taken at 11.59pm on the 31st August immediately prior to the competition)

These restrictions are in place to ensure that all teams apply the same age limits and to ensure the protection of potentially vulnerable players. In some exceptional circumstances, a player may demonstrate a level of skill and maturity that suggests they may be more suited to taking part in an activity at a higher age band. In these circumstances, representatives from the club (Coach and Club Safeguarding Officer) along with the parent should complete an assessment that will assist them in making the decision about that young person's suitability to play outside of their Age Band.

The Process

A Level 2 Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer and the parent(s) or carer(s) of the player, must complete an Age Banding form, available from the SDNA website, and available from League Secretary. This form should be used by all of the above individuals and if agreed between all parties, the form should be signed by all parties and sent through to the relevant Registration and Results Secretary for the competition the player is being requested age banding permission to play in, alongside all other required registration forms or entry sheets. These must be received by Registration and Results Secretary by Thursday 1pm prior to the player's first match. Upon receipt of this form by the Registration and Results Secretary, the player is eligible to compete in the competition.

This process must be repeated for each season **and** individual competition.

Safeguarding Considerations

England Netball supports player development at every level and aims to ensure that through guidance and provision, opportunities for this can be made available for all. Young netballers develop at different rates and therefore the opportunities they require or request may not always be based on their chronological age. England Netball have therefore developed this Guidance to assist schools, clubs, parents and players in making informed decisions about the suitability of individuals to "play up" from their age band.

Those closest to a player are best placed to make judgements on their emotional, social and physical development and maturity and, their readiness to "play up". For this reason, England Netball has determined that the only meaningful way for decisions to be made on the appropriateness of a player playing above their age group, is by these people. The list below shows those that should work together to assess the suitability of a player to "play up";

- Parent
- Level 2 Coach
- Club/League Safeguarding Officer