



## Independent Performance Review Summary

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March 2023

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## **Context**

Review dates: 15th December 2022 to 10th March 2023.

Given the timing in the World Netball major events calendar, Netball NI investment position with Sport NI and changes within the performance staff team, alongside not securing qualification for the World Cup, this was an opportune time to review not only the international competitions but to assess where NI are across the wider performance programme and infrastructure, seeking support to develop practical actions in line with resource and capacity that will best prepare us for moving forward.

## **Appointed Independent**

Netball NI appointed Mel Mansfield –Former England player 1993-1998, Former Superleague HC, UKCC Level 3 coach, Director of Netball & Senior Lecturer at University of Hertfordshire, to complete the review on our behalf. Mel’s experience in pathway and performance netball programmes, coach mentoring and NSL technical specialist, made her an ideal candidate to provide a strategic and operational oversight of our position and make recommendations to enable progress.

## **Scope**

30 + individual consultations were carried out including coaches (u13 club, pathway u13/15/17/21 and EM / Warriors coaches) Netball NI employed staff, club coaches, selectors, board members, performance staff (TM, PA, S&C) Combination of face to face and online. Warriors Player group (17 players) plus individual senior players.

## **Warriors**

### **Observations**

- Large playing group, alongside coaches and support staff very open and honest about the experiences they’ve gone through, including both positive and challenging times.
- Disappointment within the group as to current position and commitment from many to strive for better and more, both for themselves and the next athletes coming through.
- Currently in “survival mode” post WCQ and while understanding review will take time, keen for progress to be made quickly and communicated openly.
- High standards are expected, culture, leadership is paramount in establishing, driving and achieving this.
- Training camps need focus, with more content (off court and on) and contact time on set weekends with a planned performance calendar.

- NSL/NPL opportunities are positive - more should be encouraged for athletes, coaches and support staff.
- Clarity of roles and remit within support staff required.
- While a varied group, based across multiple locations, desire to represent NI is strong.

### **Recommendations:**

- Review Job Description of HC and begin recruitment to gain momentum.
- Squad size should be reduced to a max of 16-18 (currently 26)
- Agree and set the performance calendar with trials, training weekends and competitions detailed.
- Support HUDL training as needed (and can be utilised) across athletes and coaches with appropriate PA sessions in/ahead of training sessions.
- Additional admin support is required outside of competition.
- Access the psychology support available to support individuals and team as a whole.

### **Actions underway:**

- English players now have accommodation provided.
- S&C coach, and a NI coach spending some time in the NSL environment.
- Commitment from SINI for ongoing culture and psychology support (3 sessions completed)
- Summer competition arranged.
- HC recruitment opened.
- Trial dates identified & communicated.
- Updated HUDL account opened.
- Appropriate Competition schedule with Europe Netball/Home Nations and identified target nations being created.
- Engaged with Commonwealth Games NI re Victoria requirements and beyond.
- Engaged with World Netball re World Cup qualification processes.

### **Emerging Warriors & U21**

#### **Observations**

- EW programme viewed as a positive and successful programme.
- U21 group performing well and is organised to October 2023
- Large U21 group currently that also includes some of Warrior long squad athletes.

### **Recommendations:**

- Re-establish EW group & where possible link with U21's.
- Clarity on role of EW group – it is not a squad, it is an opportunity for potential future Warriors (of any age, who are not yet on a national squad) to train and develop.
- Recruit EW HC
- Reduce the u21 group in May /June (max 16-18)
- Request access to NPL tournament in England end of July
- Invite BUCS teams to NI in September

### **Actions underway:**

- Trials date identified for U21 long squad reduction.
- NPL opportunity requested, not available this year but noted for 24 onwards as needed.
- Competition calendar to invite appropriate level teams ahead of Europeans.
- Coach development support

## **U15/U17**

### **Observations**

- Many players are multi-sport, netball not always a priority sport.
- Many schools do not play netball and some areas "untouched".
- Affiliating schools is a challenge (potential that players are being missed if not in a club)
- Academies programme is not performance.
- Coaches value additional support and team feeling

### **Recommendations**

- Remove u13 academies and invest in additional schools and clubs' participation opportunities.
- Season should run September 2023 for academic year- all pathway.
- Focus on National squads.
- Remove U17 development squad - limited human and financial resources must be used where best impact can be made
- U17 HC and AC to be appointed.
- U19 squad, coach and AC for specific competition only when available
- U15 Regional Academies- 5 / 6 regions. All report to Pathway Manager
- U15 squad HC/AC to be determined for a specific competition.

- All performance age group coaches go through a selection process & have a performance mindset. Roles should be advertised to membership & go through a fair & transparent recruitment process. Support & development of coaches at this level is crucial.
- School/club link needs a focus.
- U15 league competition- all regions- this becomes a selection opportunity.
- More opportunities for u15/u17/u19 meaningful competition where possible

### **Actions underway**

- U17/ U19 / U21 asked to be included in the English NPL Summer tournament – declined for 2023. Indications positives going forward.
- U15 academy ask to enter school games Sep 2023 – declined for 23 based on number of spaces available (12 - 10 England teams, 2 spaces between NI, Scotland and Wales) Opportunity given to Scotland and Wales based on Senior ranking and U17 European results.
- Pathway/ Academy squads exposed to NSL games.
- Academy coach kit identity
- School and junior club competition programme additions

### **U13/Schools/Clubs**

#### **Observations & Recommendations**

- Coach support needed (clubs and schools)
- Mentor scheme recommended (within NI)
- Coach education opportunities
- Continue to promote junior netball and link schools with clubs.
- Continue to promote participation in schools' affiliation to netball NI.
- Increase delivery of netball sessions in schools

### **Actions underway**

- Online Coach pathway being developed.
- Primary Schools Officer engaged with local competitions & creating resources/support opportunities.

### **Premier League**

#### **Observations**

- Coaches are not working together.
- Purpose of the league should be defined.

- Not enough competition "best v best" not always happening.
- Some umpire and coach issues
- There is a need to develop NI coaches and identify a pool of coaches for a coach development programme.

### **Recommendations**

- Premier league club coaches should consult/review/work together with new HC.
- League aim should be to produce the national team.
- Prem league games should be filmed and reviewed by selectors/HC.
- Appropriate Superclub/ super cup competition could be created.

### **Actions underway**

- Club forum held.
- Coaches & officials collaboration date arranged.
- Feedback re previous edition of Super cup being reviewed.

### **Staff Structure**

#### **Recommendations**

- Performance Pathway Manager / Head of Pathway (F/T)
- Performance Coordinator (F/T)- to include Warriors and pathway admin support, education, events.
- EDI and Netballher (needs attention)
- Increase visibility of back to netball, walking netball, social netball
- Consistent social media is needed.
- Website needs an overhaul and update.

### **Actions underway**

- Secured funding for performance staff (23/24)
- Website updates
- EDI research & policy review
- Media platform content increased.

### **Summary**

#### **Current positives**

- Some great people in Netball NI, working extremely hard across several roles.

- Visibility of National Senior Players is key (small country and many opportunities to access the players needs to be harnessed by NNI and value of committing to this realised by players as role models)
- S&C provision is a strength across the NI programme and will improve with appropriate support.
- Top 8 vision is still prevalent and can be realised.
- Strong desire to represent Netball NI
- Summer competition for Warriors is arranged.
- U21 group is functioning well and organised up until October 2023
- Selection workshop is planned for April – externally led to support review of selection processes/policy and standards required from athletes and selectors.
- Some coach education initiatives already identified.
- “Golden generation” of players who cannot commit to full coaching roles still need utilising in other ways.

## **Actions for the future**

### **Short term actions**

- Appointment of a Warriors HC
- Performance Coordinator
- Appoint Warriors Assistant coach(es) from NI (to prepare for next cycle)
- Leadership, culture, standards should be inspired by the Warriors HC and Pathway Manager/ all Pathway coaches.
- Grow the sport, the people, the coaches, and the umpires together.
- Trials date and selection process to be made available as soon as possible.
- Improved communication with club coaches (HC)
- Competition for Warriors (short term plans are in place)
- Set the annual calendar for Warriors camps, competitions and other events.
- Review the selection policy.
- The selection process needs to be reviewed and publicised and transparent. Feedback needs to improve.
- Scoping exercise across all athletes (all squads, who do we have, where age eligibility)

### **Medium term actions**

- To qualify for CWG (Victoria, 2026)
- WYC (Sep 2025, qualifiers Sep 2024)
- To qualify for WC (Sydney, 2027)



- Review needed after each competition (all ages)
- Pathway- players are being missed/lost within the pathway. Scoping exercise needed of all Warriors and age group athletes to ensure all are tracked Talent ID in clubs and schools.
- Pathway Manager recruited after decision is made.
- Mentoring 1:1 plan for identified / selected coaches.
- Club level coach education and group mentoring
- Strategic performance plan for the pathway
- more consistent use of social media
- Review the website to ensure easily identifiable opportunities to get involved and view programmes.
- EDI and Netballher

### **Long term actions**

- Review coaching handbook and develop a coaching language.
- Super club / cup competition
- Re-establish "Warriors Working" group.
- Any additional funding should be directed to the athlete performance maximise the impact on athletes, time on task, camps and competitions.
- Develop relationships with universities.