



Making Connections: Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

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Background

- Participation in sport can have benefits for physical and mental health by encouraging regular exercise and increasing social connection and opportunities for social support.
- While sporting clubs are not mental health services, they can play a really important role in promoting wellbeing, protecting mental health and supporting people early if they experience concerns.
- To do this, however, they need to take a planned and proactive approach and build the skills of people across the association to play a role.
- In 2021 Newcastle Netball Association partnered with Everymind to support mental health messaging across the Association and to consult with members on the issues that they would like to see addressed in a Netball Mental Health Strategy.

Quick facts

- 75% of mental health conditions emerge by age 25
- 1 in 2 people experience anxiety
- 2 in 5 experience depression

“Netball should be a place where girls go to have fun, connect with friends, get fit, get away from the pressures of day to day life. Netball should not add to a child's stress level and contribute negatively to their mental health.” - Survey participant

The resources, information, training and support people at NNA indicated would be most helpful (results of 2021 survey):

Reinforcing behaviours that support wellbeing

- Effective and proactive communication across social media, meetings, and forums.
- Show what good behaviour looks like and reinforce it.
- Ensure there is a trusted place to go for reporting incidents or getting advice.

Education for coaches and managers

- Education on how to spot mental health challenges and what to do (esp. anxiety).
- Focus on rep coaches and supportive policies for players with injuries/ challenges.

Engage players

- Education or campaign about the impacts of bullying and/or excluding others.
- Programs about working as a team and supporting each other.
- Additional support structures for representative players and teams.

NNA and clubs to review policies

- Review of grading policies, uniforms and other decisions that impact on children.
- Review of umpiring across the association and the supports provided.
- Review the culture of netball and how inclusive it is for all members (not just elite players).

Our strategy on a page

CONNECT

NNA players and volunteers to positive mental health messages and information through proactive communication.

Coaches, club and NNA officials to the information and skills they need to support teams and individual players.

Players to the supports they need and empower them to take action for themselves and others.

The strategy to NNA and club policies to create a supportive and safe environment for all members.

“Developing a strategy is good as long as something actually happens.”

- Survey participant

1. Connect NNA players and volunteers to positive mental health messages and information through proactive communication.

Why is this important?

- All stakeholders need to be informed and engaged.
- Building awareness about how to promote and protect mental health and wellbeing through sport can be an important first step in delivering the strategy.

Key strategies for 2022-2024

- Develop a landing page for the mental health strategy on the NNA website with a link to additional resources and materials on a dedicated Everymind women's sport and mental health page.
- Develop a communications plan yearly, with key messages, milestones, tools and tactics – including use of the NNA Facebook and news channels.
- Develop simple resources and tools that explain mental health and wellbeing for different age groups and disseminate through communication channels.
- Securing Mental Health and Wellbeing Ambassadors for the project – drawing on current and past members and other leaders that NNA players and volunteers may connect with.

Participating in a dedicated Mental Health Round where additional focus can be placed on promoting key messages, resources and local supports.

2. Connect coaches, club and NNA officials to the information and skills they need to support players.

Why is this important?

- Coaches and other officials play an important role in building an environment that can protect and support mental health and wellbeing.
- Coaches and officials are uniquely placed to identify players who may need additional support.

Key strategies for 2022-2024

- Develop a 'coaches and officials' resource page on the NNA and/or Everymind website to ensure access to useful resources, tools, and online learning.
- Identify and offer free or low-cost professional development for coaches and officials with an initial focus on:
 - Building a positive team culture
 - Identifying and supporting players with anxiety and/or depression
 - Addressing bullying and other challenging behaviours
 - Identifying and responding to self-harm and suicide.

3. Connect players to the supports they need and empower them to take action for themselves and others.

Why is this important?

- Children, young people and adults playing netball should be empowered to take action for themselves and also support their teammates (in an age-appropriate way).
- Representative players, who can experience unique stressors, need additional supports to ensure they are health, well and can achieve their personal and team goals.

Key strategies for 2022-2024

- Provide opportunities for representative players and teams across NNA to participate in free or low-cost workshops and information sessions to build knowledge and skills.
- Develop or host tip sheets and practical resources for players of all ages about how they can support their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of teammates.
- Recruit a wellbeing officer to support representatives players in 2022, with an evaluation to refine the approach and resources required from 2023 onwards.

4. Connect the strategy to NNA and club policies and procedures to create a supportive and safe environment for all members.

Why is this important?

- An effective strategy is supported through policies and procedures that create safe and supportive environments for all players, officials, and supporters.
- A joint approach across NNA, Clubs and the local community will lead to greater impact.

Key strategies for 2022-2024

- Use the club forum and NNA council meetings to design and review activities under this strategy.
- Ensure effective diversity and inclusion and anti-bullying policies for NNA and member clubs and support implementation.
- NNA and clubs to work together to enhance supports for junior umpires and to improve player and spectator behaviour.
- Use an annual survey of NNA players and members to track progress and identify key issues for consideration.

Help-seeking information



SUPPORT SERVICES & INFORMATION

All ages

Mental Health Line (NSW): 1800 011 511

Lifeline: 13 11 14 | text 0477 13 11 14 | lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 | beyondblue.org.au

Young people

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800 | kidshelpline.com.au

headspace: 1800 650 890 | headspace.org.au

ReachOut: reachout.com

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OTHER RESOURCES

Head to Health: headtohealth.gov.au

Butterfly Foundation: Support for eating disorders
1800 33 4673 | butterfly.org.au

QLIFE: Support for LGBTIQ+ communities
1800 184 527 | qlife.org.au

Awabakal: Health services for Aboriginal communities
1300 174 908 | awabakal.org

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732

- Make an appointment with your local GP
- Find a psychologist through the Australian Psychological Society
- Visit your local headspace centre (12-25 year olds)