Body Image
Self-Harm

We are providing this guidance to help members, connected participants and staff understand the significance of issues relating to body image and self-harm.

A study published in the British Journal of Developmental Psychology (2009) showed that half of 3-6 year old girls worry about being fat; by age 9 half of them had already been on a diet; at 11-17 their number one aim is looking good. Since 2012 the NHS reports a 70% rise in hospital admissions for 10-14 year olds due to self-harm. The England Netball Case Management Group’s case monitoring evidence shows that concerns around bullying related to body image and incidents of self-harm are the highest proportion of matters referred to the Lead Child Protection Officer at England Netball. We feel that our duty to safeguard the young people in our sport means we have to respond to these issues.

Playing sport provides an environment in which potential issues about body image and self-harm can become evident and we consider it important that people with responsibility for the welfare of the young people in our sport, have the knowledge to recognise and respond in the best way possible.

Self-harm can be a long term issue which takes specialist help to address. We recognise that sport can have a positive and supportive role in helping with a young person’s well-being and are providing this guidance to assist in keeping that involvement going; ensuring that the young person’s involvement is providing a safe and supportive environment which can help them with their return to/maintenance of well-being.

Body image refers to how someone sees themselves, their physical appearance and attractiveness. An individual’s view of their body image may not fit with how others see that person, and it may be one which is distorted, but it is how they see themselves and how they feel about themselves. Body image is closely linked to a person’s sense of well-being and so plays a central role in an individual’s happiness. http://www.ndcs.org.uk/me2/are_you_an_organisation/sports/netball.html

Self-harm means a person harming themselves intentionally. It can be hitting themselves; burning; banging their head; throwing their body against things; sticking things in themselves; cutting; swallowing harmful objects; taking unnecessary medication or not taking proper care of an injury. In its broadest sense it includes misuse of alcohol or drugs and eating disorders.

There may be many causes for the behaviour and it may be a sign of other serious issues in their life.

Recognising possible signs of self-harm in addition to some of the potential signs of abuse, the following may be noticeable with a young person who is self-harming:-

- Unexplained wounds or scars
- Unexplained blood stains on clothes, bedding, carpets etc
- Wearing clothes which keep the body covered, even in hot weather
- Avoiding situations where they may be expected to undress eg swimming, sleeping over at a friends
- Withdrawn and uncommunicative
- Changed eating habits, unusual weight loss or gain
- Signs of low self-esteem, being highly self-critical or blaming themselves for things
Misuse of alcohol and/or drugs

**Responding to suspicions or evidence of self-harm**: although it is more likely that you will notice something of concern, a young person may disclose that they are self-harming. It is important to have a supportive response to the person and to avoid having a strong reaction or getting angry.

If any danger is posed to a young person the first response should be medical assistance.

As with other concerns about the welfare of a young person, the Reporting a Concern process should be used and England Netball will follow their procedures for referring any matters on if appropriate.

Most cases of self-harm are not going to meet the threshold for Children’s Services to become involved. The usual route for accessing help for the young person is through a referral to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service, either by a school or parent through their GP.

There are a number of independent support agencies which provide support to young people, parent/carers and professionals working with young people and these should be highlighted to the young person, with encouragement to access support for themselves.

Mind: [information and support](#)

Young Minds: [Child & Adolescent Mental Health - YoungMinds](#)

Kidscape: [Kidscape - Preventing bullying, protecting children](#)

Beat Bullying: [BeatBullying](#)

Get Connected: [Get Help - Find the help you need, whatever the issue](#).

Selfharm.co.uk: [Get Information about self harming](#)

b-eat: [beat eating disorders](#)

More information can be found on the Club Safeguarding Officer, Young People and Parent Carer Guidance pages.