

BPNL Chair's Report – 2025/2026 Season

The 2025/2026 season has been another successful year for the Berkshire Premier Netball League. Once again, we have enjoyed a high standard of competitive netball across both divisions, with closely fought matches and plenty still to play for towards the end of the season.

Overall, the season ran very smoothly. We did experience a small number of venue difficulties, including a flooded sports hall floor, but alternative arrangements were made quickly and the league programme was able to continue without disruption. My thanks go to everyone who helped resolve these issues at short notice and to the teams for their flexibility and understanding.

Congratulations go to Thunderbirds, who were crowned Division 1 champions, with Wokingham Reds finishing as runners-up. Royals and Thunderbirds 2 will move into Division 2 next season, where we are sure they will continue to contribute to the strong level of competition within the league.

In Division 2, Woodley were crowned champions, with both Woodley and Laurel Park securing promotion to Division 1. Congratulations to both teams. We look forward to seeing them take on the challenge of Division 1 next season.

On 4 July, we held our BPNL Entry Tournament to decide which teams would be offered the available places in Division 2. Congratulations to Henley Hawkes and Laurel Park Thunder, who were successful and will join the league next season.

This season was also the first time that we held a qualifying tournament to decide which team would represent Berkshire at the South Region Entry Tournament. Thunderbirds and Royals contested a fiercely fought match, with Thunderbirds earning the opportunity to progress. Unfortunately, they were not successful at the South Region tournament, but we congratulate them on representing Berkshire and hope the experience will prove valuable as I am sure they will have another opportunity in the future.

Following this year's process, and after consultation with Berkshire Netball, we have reviewed the way in which Berkshire's representative for the South Region Entry Tournament will be selected. In recent seasons, it has sometimes been difficult to identify an eligible team, either because potential teams were already competing within the regional structure or because teams did not wish to take up the opportunity.

The revised approach will create a clearer link between performance in Division 1 and the opportunity to represent Berkshire. The Division 1 champions will be offered the place first, followed by the teams finishing second, third and fourth. A play-off may then be held if required. The intention is to recognise achievement across the league season while helping to ensure that Berkshire is represented by an eligible team that is prepared for the commitment and competitive step up involved.

A number of other amendments have also been proposed to the BPNL Rules for next season. Most of these changes are intended to improve clarity, consistency and fairness. We have added a sanctions table as Appendix A so that teams can see more easily which penalties apply to particular breaches of the rules. Appendix B now sets out the eligibility requirements, registration process and following-season commitments for teams entering the BPNL Entry Tournament. We hope these additions will make the rules easier for teams to understand and apply.

I would also like to remind everyone of the standards of conduct expected within BPNL. Umpires must be treated with respect at all times. They have a difficult role and the league cannot operate without them. Players, coaches, team officials and spectators all have a responsibility to support a positive environment around the court.

We must also be particularly mindful of our conduct around young players, umpires and coaches. Adults involved in the league have a responsibility to set the right example and to ensure that younger participants feel safe, supported and respected. Concerns should always be reported through the appropriate safeguarding process.

BPNL is run entirely by volunteers, and a great deal of work takes place behind the scenes throughout the year. Organising venues, fixtures, registrations, results, finances, umpiring support, safeguarding and the many unexpected issues that arise during a season requires a considerable amount of time and commitment. I would like to thank every member of the committee for their continued hard work and support.

Most of the current officers have indicated that they are willing to stand again. However, Becca from Academy will be standing down after completing the maximum two-year term as a Division Representative. We also say goodbye to Claire Yeoman from Royals, who has served the league for a number of years, initially as a Division Representative and more recently as Safeguarding Officer.

On behalf of the league, I would like to thank both Becca and Claire for the time, effort and support they have given to BPNL. Their contribution has been greatly appreciated.

Once the reports are complete, we will need to fill the vacant roles on the committee before ending this meeting.

Finally, thank you to every player, coach, umpire, scorer, team official and supporter who has contributed to another successful season. We look forward to welcoming our new teams, seeing the promoted teams take on their next challenge and continuing to build a competitive, fair and enjoyable league for everyone involved.

Here's to another brilliant year of netball.

Tracey Carter

Chair, Berkshire Premier Netball League