Supporting New Migrant and Refugee Participants.



This factsheet provides practical guidance for Associations and Clubs to welcome and support people who are new to Australia, including migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants, into community netball.

For people who are new to Australia, netball can provide more than an opportunity to play sport. It can create friendships, build confidence, support wellbeing and help individuals and families develop connections within their local community.

CREATING CONNECTION THROUGH NETBALL

Moving to a new country can involve significant changes and challenges. People may be learning a new language, navigating unfamiliar systems, establishing new social networks, finding employment or education, and adapting to a different culture.

For some refugees and humanitarian entrants, these experiences may be further shaped by experiences of displacement, conflict or disrupted access to education, sport and community activities.

Netball organisations can play a positive role by providing a welcoming, social and supportive environment where people can connect with others and feel part of their local community.

Participation in netball can help people:

- Build friendships and social connections
- Develop confidence and a sense of belonging
- Practice English in a relaxed environment
- Learn about their local community
- Develop new skills and interests
- Establish connections beyond their immediate family or community
- Experience the enjoyment, teamwork and physical benefits of sport

Supporting New Migrant and Refugee Participants.



CREATING A WELCOMING FIRST EXPERIENCE

The first interaction with an Association or Club can influence whether someone feels comfortable returning.

Consider:

- Welcoming new participants and families personally
- Introducing them to coaches, teammates and key volunteers
- Showing them around the venue and explaining where facilities are located
- Clearly explaining how training, games and competitions work
- Avoiding assumptions about their previous experience with sport or netball
- Providing a clear contact person for questions
- Offering a buddy or support person for a participants first few sessions

Remember that someone may be new to Australia without being new to sport or may have limited experience with organised sport. Always ask rather than assuming.

EXPLAIN HOW NETBALL WORKS

Australian community sport may operate differently from sport in other countries.

Participants and families may be unfamiliar with:

- Registration processes
- Team selection and grading
- Training and gameday expectations
- Uniform requirements
- Competition structures and rules
- Volunteer roles
- Fees and payment arrangements
- Transport and getting to and from training
- Communication through apps, email or other platforms

Provide information in clear, simple language and take time to explain anything that may be unfamiliar.

Where possible, use demonstrations, pictures, diagrams and videos alongside written information.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

English may not be a participant's first language.
This should not be view as a barrier to involvement.

Associations and Clubs can support communication by:

- Using clear, plain language
- Avoiding unnecessary jargon, slang and acronyms
- Speaking at a normal pace and checking understanding
- Using demonstrations alongside verbal instructions
- Providing key information in writing
- Using translated information where appropriate
- Encouraging participants to ask questions
- Using interpreters or bilingual support when necessary and appropriate
- Providing important information to parents or carers in a format they can understand

Do not assume that someone who speaks limited English has limited understanding or sporting ability.

SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS TO CONNECT

Netball can provide an important opportunity to develop friendships and social networks.

Clubs can help participants connect by:

- Introducing new players to teammates
- Using buddy or mentoring approaches
- Encouraging inclusive team activities
- Creating opportunities for families to meet one another
- Hosting social activities alongside netball
- Encouraging new participants to become involved in club activities
- Connecting families with other community opportunities where appropriate

A strong connection can be just as important as the sporting experience.

Supporting New Migrant and Refugee Participants.



CONSIDER FINANCIAL AND PRACTICAL BARRIERS

The costs and logistics associated with participating in organised sport can be unfamiliar or difficult for some newly arrived families.

Consider whether your organisation can provide:

- Flexible payment options or payment plans
- Information about available fee assistance
- Uniform swaps or second-hand uniform programs
- Equipment loans
- Affordable or free introductory opportunities
- Flexible registration options
- Information about public transport and alternative travel options
- Opportunities to carpool where appropriate

Small changes can make the difference between someone being able to participate or missing out.

CONSIDER FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Family can play an important role in participation decisions, particularly for children and young people.

Consider:

- Welcoming parents, carers and siblings
- Providing clear information about the organisation and program
- Inviting families to attend games and social activities
- Creating opportunities for parents and carers to volunteer if they wish
- Offering activities that allow families to connect with other members
- Recognising that families may have work, study, caring or other commitment that influence participation

Building relationships with families can strengthen trust and long-term engagement.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND PARTICIPATE

Not everyone will be familiar with Australian community sport or netball.

Consider providing:

- Come and Try Sessions
- Introductory clinics
- Modified or social competitions
- Shorter seasons
- Casual participation opportunities
- Walking Netball or other accessible participation options
- Opportunities to learn the rules or skills before participating in competition
- Beginner-friendly coaching and training environments

Participation does not need to begin with a traditional competition structure.

BE SENSITIVE TO INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

People from migrant and refugee backgrounds are not a single group and may have very different experiences, cultures, languages, beliefs and needs.

Some people may have experienced:

- Displacement or migration
- Conflict or trauma
- Disruption to education or sport
- Discrimination or racism
- Separation from family or community
- Significant changes in social and economic circumstances

Do not make assumptions about someone's experiences or expect them to share personal information.

Instead:

- Treat each person as an individual
- Ask what support they need
- Respect privacy and confidentiality
- Allow people to choose what they share
- Focus on their strengths, interests and goals
- Create a safe environment where they can ask for assistance

Supporting New Migrant and Refugee Participants.



BUILD COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Associations and Clubs do not need to work alone.

Consider developing relationships with:

- Local multicultural organisations
- Migrant and refugee support services
- Settlement organisations
- Schools and education providers
- Local councils
- Community centres
- Cultural and community groups
- Local health and wellbeing organisations

These organisations may be able to help clubs understand local communities, promote opportunities and connect participants with appropriate support.

Effective partnerships should be based on mutual respect and genuine relationships rather than one-off promotional activities.

PRACTICAL ACTIONS FOR ASSOCIATIONS AND CLUBS

Use the following actions to strengthen your approach:

- Provide a friendly welcome and introduce new participants to others
- Explain how registration, training, games and uniforms work
- Use clear language and visual demonstrations
- Provide translated information where appropriate
- Offer a buddy or welcome system for new participants
- Provide flexible payment, registration or participation options where possible
- Consider uniform and equipment loan or swap programs
- Offer beginner-friendly and low-pressure participation opportunities
- Welcome parents, carers and families into the club environment
- Provide information about transport and access to the venue
- Connect with local multicultural and community organisations
- Ensure racism, discrimination and inappropriate behaviour are addressed promptly
- Seek feedback from participants and families about their experience

KEY TAKEAWAY

A welcoming netball organisation can provide an important sense of connection for people who are new to Australia. By making information easy to understand, reducing practical barriers, welcoming families and creating opportunities to build friendships, Associations and Clubs can help new migrant and refugee participants feel comfortable, connected and confident to make netball part of their community.