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# Community Umpiring Strategy 2026–2029

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We live this game.



**NETBALL**  
NEW ZEALAND  
POITARAWHITI AOTEAROA

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*A confident, well-supported umpire improves the Netball experience for players, coaches and spectators alike.”*

# Why we're developing a Community Umpiring Strategy

*Umpires are part of the wider Netball whānau, and their involvement, often voluntary, plays a huge part in the success of our game and the overall enjoyment for everyone involved. A confident, well-supported umpire improves the Netball experience for players, coaches and spectators alike.*

The Sport NZ Voice of Participant (VOP) survey, which measures overall participant satisfaction in Netball, highlighted two key areas where officiating can grow and evolve:

1

## Not enough umpires

Centres are facing a significant shortage of qualified officials.

2

## More training needed

Umpires need better, more accessible education and development opportunities.

This strategy is being developed to respond to those challenges with practical, achievable solutions – building a sustainable, well-connected umpiring ecosystem. At the heart of this is Netball New Zealand's (NNZ) commitment to supporting umpires' well-being, enjoyment and growth. We want to create an environment where umpires feel valued, confident in their roles, and inspired to stay involved in the game for the long term.

**By strengthening recruitment, retention and development at all levels, we can ensure umpiring continues to flourish as a vital part of our sport's future.**



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# Philosophy of Community Umpiring

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*Netball thrives when umpires feel confident, valued and supported. A well-trained and empowered umpire not only enhances the game but also contributes to player retention and the overall enjoyment of the sport. When umpires feel part of a strong and connected Netball community, they are more likely to stay involved and grow in confidence.*

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## **Equitable Access for All –**

Umpires should not be disadvantaged because of where they live or which Centre they are affiliated with. Regardless of location, every umpire in Aotearoa New Zealand must have access to the same high-quality training, support and development opportunities.

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## **Driven by Friendship, Fun and Support –**

Community umpiring is built on relationships: friendships with fellow umpires, supportive mentors, and coaches who foster growth. Learning must be engaging and tailored to individual umpire needs, ensuring that training is both enjoyable and effective.

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## **Community Umpiring is for Everyone –**

Diversity strengthens our umpiring pool. A successful strategy will create a welcoming environment where umpires from all backgrounds, ages and levels of experience feel supported and valued. Support structures must reflect and respect this diversity to retain and grow the umpiring base.

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## **Upholding Integrity and Respect –**

Umpires are guided by World Netball's Official Rulebook and must uphold the game's integrity with fairness and consistency. Encouraging positive sideline behaviour and providing clear support channels are key to retaining umpires in the long term.

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# What this Strategy Aims to Achieve

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*This strategy is designed to be:*



## **Pragmatic and Actionable –**

Focused on real-world challenges faced by umpires and Centres.



## **Aligned with Poipoia (Netball in New Zealand Strategy) –**

Building stronger connections, supporting communities, and humanising umpires.



## **Scalable and Sustainable –**

Creating a replicable model for long-term umpire recruitment, development and retention.

## **Strategy's Purpose**

To provide accessible training, support and a positive umpiring environment that encourages retention, development, and enjoyment at all levels of the game. By fostering respect, integrity and continuous learning, we aim to equip umpires with the skills to officiate with confidence and consistency.

### *Strategy's Four Key Pillars:*

**1**

#### **Simplify and Digitalise Umpire Training –**

Make umpiring education accessible anytime, anywhere through engaging online modules and real-time learning tools.

**2**

#### **Additional Recruitment and Retention Models –**

Offer Centres a suite of models and methods to recruit, retain and upskill umpires.

**3**

#### **Strengthen Umpire Coaching Systems and Support –**

Continue to build our coaching networks and ensure ongoing professional development to support umpires at every level.

**4**

#### **Prioritise Umpire Well-being and Safety –**

Foster an environment free from abuse, where enjoyment and safety are paramount, and positive sideline behaviour is expected and actively upheld by all involved.

# PILLAR

# 1

## Pillar 1: Simplify and Digitalise Umpire Training

### Objective:

*Make training more accessible, consistent and available on demand, reducing the heavy reliance on in-person workshops.*

### Pre-Strategy Landscape and Rationale:

- **Inconsistent training opportunities** – Training depends heavily on the capacity and availability of Netball Centres and their facilitators, leading to variations in quality and access.
- **Time constraints** – Many umpires are school-aged or volunteers who find it challenging to attend in-person sessions.
- **Demand for real-time, flexible learning** – Umpires need training that can fit around their lives and build confidence on their terms.

### What we'll do:

- Develop **bite-sized, mobile-friendly online training** modules for all levels of umpiring.
- Offer **interactive video analysis and scenario-based learning** to help umpires apply their skills.
- **Digitalise umpire coach training**, building on existing coaching development frameworks.
- Launch an **NNZ Umpiring Hub** – a central platform for training, resources (including UmpireSmart), and opportunities to connect with field experts.
- Embrace a **blended learning** approach – combining flexible online offerings with in-person workshops, practical sessions, and resources to support face-to-face learning where it's most impactful.



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## Pillar 2: Additional Recruitment and Retention Models

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### Objective:

*Reduce reliance on player-driven umpiring duties and provide Centres with other recruitment and retention methods, including **club and school-led umpiring pathways**.*

### Pre-Strategy Landscape and Rationale:

- **Umpire shortages** – Teams often supply their own umpires, leading to inconsistent officiating and limited development.
- **Forced umpiring** – Players who only umpire occasionally lack training and motivation, leading to negative experiences.
- **Club- and school-driven engagement is underused** – Stronger club and school involvement could create a more sustainable and supportive umpire pipeline.

### What we'll do:

#### *Develop a Club Umpire Conveyor Model*

- Create resources to support the development of a volunteer umpire conveyor role within clubs and schools, linking to Centres for support.
- Use NNZ's Volunteer Management Plan and include the Umpire Co-ordinator job description template as part of a wider support package for Centres to share with clubs and schools.
- Pilot this model in two to three Centres and gather feedback to share with the wider Netball community.

#### *Alternative Incentives and Pathways*

- Explore opportunities for clubs and schools to partner with Centres in offering incentives (e.g. recognition, development opportunities, or club membership benefits), and develop general guidelines to support implementation.
- Create resources for Centres to establish a Beginner Umpire Programme or Squad that encourages long-term involvement.
- Embed umpiring opportunities within other NNZ player and coaching programmes to help normalise and promote umpiring as a positive, integrated experience.

## Pillar 3: Strengthen Umpire Coaching Systems and Support

### Objective:

*Enhance the development of umpire coaches and create a strong, sustainable support network.*

### Pre-Strategy Landscape and Rationale:

- Umpire coaches play a critical role in upskilling and nurturing umpires, but can lack the training and ongoing development needed to refine their craft.
- Many Centres struggle with coach retention, and umpire coaches often leave due to a lack of support and recognition.
- Limited networking opportunities for umpire coaches and developers reduce the sharing of best practices and innovative ideas.

### What we'll do:

- **Digitalise umpire coach development workshops** by integrating them into the NNZ Umpiring Hub, building on current NNZ coaching modules.
- **Implement an online annual umpire coach forum** featuring guest speakers and expert-led discussions, also serving as a networking opportunity.
- **Develop resources for Centres** to establish a mentorship programme connecting umpire coach developers with emerging coaches.
- **Support Centres to apply NNZ's Volunteer Management Plan** to boost coach retention and effectiveness.
- **Launch a national storytelling initiative** to recognise and celebrate the dedication of umpire coaches and highlight the impact they have on the umpiring experience – encouraging others to get involved.



# PILLAR

# 4

## Pillar 4: Prioritise Umpire Well-being and Safety

### Objective:

Ensure umpires **feel safe, respected and empowered**, mirroring player support initiatives.

### Pre-Strategy Landscape and Rationale:

- Sideline abuse is a growing concern. Untrained or less experienced umpires often face criticism, negatively impacting retention.
- Many umpires lack the protection of formal safety measures and protection policies.
- Poor sideline behaviour deters new umpires, as negative experiences discourage ongoing involvement.

### What we'll do:

- **Advocate for the adoption of the 'Good Sports' Programme across all Netball Zones to promote positive sideline behaviour.**
- **Establish a Green Wristband Initiative** to identify beginner umpires and promote patience and encouragement – develop resources and collateral for Centres to use.
- **Promote awareness and implementation of the Code of Conduct in NNZ regulations**, which applies to players, coaches and umpires, and provide supporting best-practice guides to help Centres proactively address and reduce abuse and negative behaviour.
- **Provide online mental resilience workshops** to help umpires build confidence and handle match-day pressures.



# Implementation and Roll-out Plans

PHASE	ACTIONS	ROLLOUT	KEY STAKEHOLDERS
<b>Q1/Q2 2026</b>	Finalise and launch the Community Umpiring Strategy (2026–2029). Conduct a national webinar to introduce and explain the strategy to the wider Netball whānau.	Online	NNZ
<b>Q2–Q4 2026</b>	Develop and launch digital umpiring content – including bite-sized modules and interactive resources within the NNZ Umpiring Hub.	Online	NNZ
<b>Q2–Q4 2026</b>	Roll out the Umpire Safety Initiatives, including the Green Wristband Initiative and Code of Conduct guidelines, supported by resources for Centres.	National	Zones, Centres, clubs
<b>Q1/Q2 2027</b>	Pilot the Club Umpire Conveyor Model in 2 to 3 selected Centres to gather feedback and refine the approach.	2–3 Centres	NNZ, Zones, Centres, clubs
<b>2027–2028</b>	Scale and embed successful models and best practices nationwide, ensuring they're adaptable and relevant to each Centre's context.	National	NNZ, Zones, Centres
<b>2028–2029</b>	Continuously evaluate and refine the strategy based on feedback, data collection, and evolving needs across the community umpiring network.	National	NNZ, Zones, stakeholders



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# How we will know this Strategy is Successful

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Success will be measured by tangible improvements in recruitment, retention, training engagement, and the overall experience of umpires. Progress will be tracked through clear data and ongoing feedback from the Netball community to ensure this strategy delivers real impact. **A key outcome will be an increase in the number of accredited umpires in our community (captured in NNZ's annual report):** a reflection of all four pillars working effectively to create a stronger, more connected and supported umpiring environment. Additional indicators of success include greater engagement with training and development opportunities, and qualitative feedback highlighting increased confidence, support and satisfaction throughout the umpiring space.



## Simplify and Digitalise Training

**Goal:** *Make education accessible anytime, anywhere.*

**Measured by:**

- Increased logins and completion rates on online learning platforms
- Feedback from participants on the relevance and usability of digital modules
- Usage data from new online tools and interactive resources
- Growth in the number of participants completing umpire training through blended or digital-first pathways



## Additional Recruitment and Retention Models

**Goal:** *Provide Centres with tools to bring in and keep umpires.*

**Measured by:**

- Umpire registration and retention data year-on-year, with focus on first-year to second-year retention
- Number of Centres implementing recruitment or retention models (e.g. beginner squads, club conveyor roles)
- Feedback from Centres, clubs and schools on the practicality and impact of resources
- Umpire survey results indicating whether they feel supported and motivated to stay involved.



## Strengthen Umpire Coaching Systems and Support

**Goal:** *Build capability and consistency in umpire coaching.*

**Measured by:**

- Increase in the number of active, trained umpire coaches across all Zones
- Completion rates of umpire coach training modules and attendance at development opportunities
- Coach survey feedback on support, confidence, and clarity of expectations
- Umpire feedback on the quality and impact of coaching received



## Prioritise Umpire Well-being and Safety

**Goal:** *Foster an environment free from abuse, where umpires feel safe, respected and valued.*

**Measured by:**

- Fewer formal or informal reports of sideline abuse (as captured via Centres)
- Adoption of initiatives such as the Green Wristband and Good Sports programme
- Survey feedback from umpires indicating a sense of safety, enjoyment and belonging
- Engagement with mental resilience workshops and well-being resources

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# Current Resources

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## NNZ Community Umpiring Guidelines –

Covers accreditation, expectations and standards.

[NNZ Community Umpiring Guidelines](#)

## Poipoia Plan –

Aligns umpiring with NNZ's broader vision.

[Poipoia Plan](#)





PO Box 99710, Newmarket, Auckland 1149 | Central Park Building 5, Level 4/666 Great South Road, Ellerslie, Auckland 1051  
Telephone: +64 9 623 3200 | Email: [info@Netballnz.co.nz](mailto:info@Netballnz.co.nz) | [NetballNZ.co.nz](http://NetballNZ.co.nz)