



SELECTION POLICY 2026/27

VERSION	REVIEWED BY	DATE	NEXT REVIEW DATE
03	Franchise Director, Head of Pathways + Pathway Head Coach	June 2026	June 2028

PURPOSE & SCOPE OF POLICY	This Selection Policy sets out how netball athletes (Athletes) are selected by AO Manchester Thunder (MT) into MT's NSL and Pathway squads. This Selection Policy applies to Athletes being selected by MT to the following: a. MT's NSL programme b. MT's Pathway Programme (all ages) c. MT's Competition squads for all competitions including, NSL, U19, U17, NPL Tournament and School Games/U15 Competition. No Athlete has the right to expect that they will be selected for any MT Competition Squad simply due to their previous inclusion in any of MT's programmes.
PERFORMANCE MISSION & OBJECTIVES	MT aspires to reach the final four of the 2026 NSL. To achieve that goal MT must develop more athletes that are capable of performing at the highest level. This aspiration provides the beacon to guide all performance activity and decision making, including the management of the selection to, and development of Athletes within all Pathway age group squads. To win all pathway age group and EN competitions. In line with MT's performance mission set out above, MT's primary objectives are, therefore, to select Competition Squads capable of winning all matches, especially those which impact on MT's league status. Selection for non-league competitions may be made on the basis of providing development for future championship success to Athletes within our NSL and Pathway squads.

ELIGIBILITY	To be eligible for selection into MT's NSL, Pathway and MT's Competition Squads, an Athlete must: - Meet visa criteria - Apply via official application routes, selected into programme by Head of Pathways (Laura Malcolm) selected via routes at appropriate trials Head of Pathways (HOP), Franchise Pathway Coach (FPC) + named scouts, nominated via County head scout to final trials (U15 School Games squad ONLY) - Not be currently serving any sanction for any violation of any relevant anti-doping laws and/or regulations. As long as the Athlete meets all of the eligibility criteria set out in this Eligibility section and meets all of the commitments for MT's NSL, Pathway or MT's relevant Competition Squad (as applicable) as set out by the relevant Head Coach they will be considered.
SELECTION PRINCIPLES	A selection panel will be established by MT for selecting Athletes into: - MT's NSL squad - All pathway, NXT Gen to U11. - Athletes into MT's Competition Squads The Membership of Selection Panels is set out in the section below. Each Selection Panel will apply the following principles in the course of carrying out any Selection Process - This Selection Policy employs an open, transparent, and equitable process that gives all Athletes a fair chance to challenge for selection. - Selection will be based on merit and the need to achieve the objectives of MT set out in the Performance Mission and Objectives section above. - No Athlete has the right or expectation to on-going selection for MT's NSL, Pathway or any of MT's Competition Squads, at any time. - Each Selection Panel has the right to determine, at its sole discretion, when it will reselect Athletes into any of MT's squads both training and competition. - Athletes will be subject to de-selection if they breach the MT code of conduct and expectations outlined in workshops upon selection. - The relevant Head Coach under the Membership of Selection Panels section below has the right to invite Athletes from outside any of MT's programmes to be observed and considered by the Selection Panel for inclusion in Competition Squads. - In selecting for a team sport, regard will be made to the combinations of Athletes in MT's NSL, MT's Pathway Programme or MT's Competition Squads, the balance of any Competition Squad and the ability of Athletes to play in more than one position, alongside each Athlete's individual skill level.
SELECTION PROCESS	- Athlete performance at Designated Selection Events - HOP / PHC / RPL – selection at events IE County / regional leagues – have to be seen by at least 2 of the 4 above.

	c. Following completion of all the Designated Selection Events, the relevant Head Coach will consult with the HOP, and consider any relevant information regarding athlete's capabilities, i.e.; - age, training age, S+C capabilities, injury worries. d. The HOP (NSL, NXT GEN / U19 / U17 / U15 selections), PHC (U14, U13, U12, U11) will consult with the relevant designated Selectors and prepare evidence and discuss selection for relevant squads. e. The Selected Athletes will be those that, in the expert opinion of the HOP / PHC and selectors are most able to achieve the objectives of MT set out in the Performance Mission and Objectives section above. f. The relevant Head Coach and HOP will meet with the relevant Selection Panel to discuss the Nominated Athletes and provide the opportunity for the members of the relevant Selection Panel to check and challenge and ensure Athlete selection decisions are evidence based taking into account the selection criteria g. Any individual Athlete's inclusion in MT's NSL, Pathway programme or any of MT's Competition Squads is decided on a majority vote by all members of the relevant Selection Panel, with HOP having final say (NSL, NXT GEN, U19, U17, U15) PHC (U14 , U13, U12, U11) h. Injuries :- if athlete is injured and unable to take part in trial if they have previously been in the Thunder Pathway they must produce a physio / doctor report and will be trialled at a later date within an appropriate timescale. If athlete hasn't been a part of previous year pathway we advise to attend county trials / programme where there may be opportunities to be observed by a Thunder Selector at a later date.
U15 SCHOOL GAMES SELECTION	The U15 School Games selection process will operate separately from our main selection process, in collaboration with the North West Region and County Netball Associations. Athletes eligible for the School Games competition will be considered if they are: • Part of a County U15 programme, • Involved in MT pathway programme, or • Identified by an MT selector. Selection Process: a) April 2026 – Trials for the U15 School Games Long Squad (Open to County U15 athletes and eligible MT PDP athletes) b) Weekly training with the selected long squad from June 2026. c) June 2026 – Final Trials (Counties may nominate late developers; MT may also include any newly identified athletes)

	Final selection will include both competition squad athletes and training partners Selection Panel: • Head of Pathway (HOP) • Pathway Head Coach (PHC) • Regional Performance Lead • U15 Head Coach (HC) • U15 Assistant Coach (AC)
	Eligibility Criteria: U15 School Games Selection Policy The U15 School Games selection process will operate separately from our main selection process, in collaboration with the North West Region and County Netball Associations. Athletes eligible for the School Games competition will be considered if they are: • Part of a County U15 programme, • Involved in a Manchester Thunder (MT) pathway programme, or • Identified by an MT selector. Selection Process: 1. Attend MT Performance Positional Sessions (Athletes may be nominated from either County or MT programmes) 2. April 2026 – Trials for the U15 School Games Long Squad (Open to County U15 athletes and eligible MT PDP athletes) 3. Monthly training with the selected long squad 4. June 2026 – Final Trials (Counties may nominate late developers; MT may also include any newly identified athletes) Final selection will include both competition squad athletes and training partners Selection Panel: • Head of Pathway (HOP) • Pathway Head Coach (PHC) • Regional Performance Lead • U15 Head Coach (HC) • U15 Assistant Coach (AC)

	Eligibility Criteria: Athletes that are eligible by age for Under 15 programmes can only be selected by the Pathway Club that has been assigned to the County within which they live or go to school. <i>The only exception to this will be where an athlete is able to show that the regular training venue of alternative Pathway Club is closer to their home or school address than that of their assigned Pathway Club.</i>
THE SELECTORS	- All Selectors, will be appointed by HOP, based upon competency for the role of the designated selection event. - The heads of selection are as follows: - - NSL / NXT GEN / U19 / U17 / U15 – HOP - U14 / U13 / U12 / U11 – HOP + PHC - All Selection Panel members, are accountable to MT's HOP and ultimately MT's directors for ensuring that this Selection Policy and all associated procedures are applied in a fair and appropriate manner.
APPEALS	Appeals can only be submitted by a non-selected (or de-selected) Athlete on the grounds that: - The selection process outlined in the Selection Process section above (or de-selection process outlined in the Injury & Replacement section below) has not been adhered to; or - The selection (or de-selection) process adopted for that Athlete failed to take into account relevant information which was available at the time, which the relevant Selection Panel under the Membership of Selection Panels section below did not consider. An Athlete may request an appeal on either of the grounds listed in this section above by submitting a written request to the MT HOP. Any appeal shall be made within 72hrs of the announcement of MT's Pathway Programme. At the time of lodging an appeal request you will be informed of the time scale expected for a response. Appeals should be made in full writing with all supporting evidence to :- laura.malcolm@manchesterthunder.co.uk
ANNOUNCEMENT & NOTICE	MT NSL and Pathway Programme: - Provisional invitations will be made 2 working days after the relevant Selection Panel meeting including all information and expectations of being a MT athlete. - Athletes invited are required to sign and return their MT Player Code of Conduct within 7 working days of issue

	c. Announcements of the Athletes on the MT website will take place after Codes of Conduct have been received. Competition Squads for NSL matches, Pathway Competition and NPFL/School games. a. Notification to Athletes will ordinarily be announced and posted on the MT Private SM pages within 24 hours of the relevant Selection Panel meeting b. Where a competition squad is named in conjunction with support from Regional Performance a letter will be issued via email within 2 working days of selection event. Athletes selected to MT's NSL , Pathway Programme and MT's competition squads agree not to make any announcement to the media or public in any form (including personal websites or social media sites) regarding their selection until after MT have announced selection decisions on the MT website www.manchesterthunder.co.uk
INJURY & REPLACEMENT	An Athlete may be removed from MT's NSL, Pathway Programme or any of MT's Competition Squads in the event of: a. non-compliance in training, b. a breach of responsibility c. a violation of the codes of behaviour (in the players code of conduct) At any stage following the selection announcement to MT's Competition Squads and prior to the relevant competition an athlete may be recommended for de-selection by MT's HOP and/or the relevant Head Coach (under the Membership of Selection Panels section) due to: a. failure to reach MT's performance expectations in training or competition b. an inability to compete to the best of her ability due to an injury and/or illness Prior to removal, the Athlete in question or her appointed representative will be presented with the opportunity to attend a removal interview with MT's HOP and/or relevant Head Coach and, where possible, one other independent person. Written justification must be provided for all removals. Decisions on these matters are open to appeal and you must submit to HOP within 72hrs as per appeals process. Once Athlete selections have been confirmed, all selected Athletes (including the reserve(s)) must agree not to withhold any information on training fitness, injury status or illness that could affect training or competition at any time until the point of the relevant competition. Assessment of inability to compete to best of ability

	At any stage following the selection announcement and prior to the relevant competition, should there be any doubt over ability of a selected Athlete to compete to the best of her ability due to an injury and/or illness, the following procedure will be adhered to: - The athlete will seek advice from a Medical Officer to undergo a medical examination to determine her fitness to participate, which at this stage will be determined based on an assessment of whether or not the injury and/or illness is such that the Athlete is physically unable to compete or is a risk of causing medical harm to herself, or endangering other competitors, officials or spectators. - If the Athlete passes the medical examination carried out by the Medical Officer and/or MT has concerns over whether or not the Athlete is able to compete to the best of her ability due to an underlying injury and/or illness the Athlete maybe be required to follow MT's protocol in assessing fitness – during a warm up at relevant selection event. - In the event that an Athlete fails to complete the assessment to the required standard, MT's HOP , PHC and/or relevant Head Coach may recommend that the selected Athlete be de-selected and replaced with the reserve.
SELECTION CRITERIA	Whenever selecting Athletes for MT's NSL, Pathway programme or any of MT's Competition Squads, the relevant Selection Panel will follow MT's criteria of the 'Thunder Way'. A selection of yes / no will be applied and additional support / evidence and information of reasons per positions for these selection decisions, this evidence will be applied when selecting against all such selection criteria, the panel will also consider 'other factors' listed below within their final selection decisions.
OTHER FACTORS CONSIDERED	Other factors considered will include: - Coachability: understands expectations and can apply learning and make changes - Demonstrates 'team' qualities and 'fit' within the team - State of fitness, health, and wellbeing - Positional balance within team - Succession planning - Number of fixtures on the annual MT calendar - Focus of the current year in terms of key events

	h. Current form or performance of existing team members i. Balance of experience and youth j. Nature of the competition the squad is being selected for k. Whether an Athlete's performance and/or contribution has been affected by extenuating circumstances such as illness, injury, bereavement, parental leave, work/study commitments or similar which have temporarily compromised their form and/or recent contribution. Consideration may also be given to any other such factors that the Selection Panel considers in its sole discretion to be relevant and appropriate to the overall assessment of a particular player.
MEMBERSHIP OF SELECTION PANELS	NXT GEN • HOP (one vote) – And overall • PHC • Head Coach • Assistant Coach Pathway – U19 • HOP – (One Vote) and overall • PHC • Head Coach • Assistant coach Pathway – U17 OPEN Trials • PHC • Head Coach • Assistant Coaches • U16 HC Pathway – U17 FINAL Trials • HOP (one vote) and overall • PHC • Head Coach • U16 HC Pathway – U15 Trials • PHC • Head Coach • Assistant Coach • Regional Performance Lead • HOP – FINAL TRIAL ONLY Pathway – U14 – AS PER U15 TRIALS (exception HOP) HOP MAY BE IN ATTENDANCE TO OVERSEE AND MANAGE U11 – U14 FINAL TRIALS WHERE APPLICABLE

	Thunder U13 • PHC (one vote) – and overall • Head Coach • Regional Performance Lead • U13 Head Coach • County Head scouts Thunder U12 • PHC (one vote – and overall • Head Coach • Regional Performance Lead • U12 Head Coach • County Head Scouts Thunder U11 • PHC (one vote – and overall • Head Coach • Regional Performance Lead • U11 Head Coach • County Head Scouts Competition Squads • Identified Head Coach (one vote) • Programme Head Coach and/or additional member of the Senior Coaching Team (SCT) (if both represented only one is identified to have a voting role) (one vote) • HOP (one vote)
FEEDBACK	Feedback will only be provided to athletes that have previously been in a MT programme and unsuccessful in selection the following season .
REVIEW PROCESS	MT's HOP will review this Selection Policy on an annual basis in consultation with MT's Directors and MT's PHC. Proposed changes to this Selection Policy must be approved by MT's Directors. Any amendments to this Selection Policy must be given in writing to the Athletes, Head Coaches and other Selection Panel members and other key stakeholders. This Selection Policy (including any final variations or amendments) will be made available on the MT website and made available to all Athletes on request.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All those involved in the nomination and selection process must keep confidential and not disclose any information regarding any aspect of the process and/or any nominated or selected Athlete, unless authorised by MT.

NB :- adapted due to COVID + England Netball regulations and may be subject to change.