

## **Berkshire Netball Development Officer's Report 2023/24**

- Berkshire Netball continued to run 2 x U13 and 2 x U15 PDPs for talented young athletes at St Neot's School, Eversley (U13) and Wellington Health & Fitness Centre, Crowthorne (U15). Following the change in the eligibility criteria by England Netball, this year we welcomed athletes not only from within Berkshire but also from Oxfordshire, Sussex and Surrey.
- We welcomed several new coaches to our PDP coaching team this year to work alongside our more experienced pathway coaches. The coaching team were- Kate Maxfield, Georgie Maxfield, Marina Bowles, Zoe O'Brien, Jacqui Cossar, Poppy Simpson, Katie Holmes and Sarah Feast.
- Berkshire hosted two Play Days and welcomed teams from Surrey and Hampshire. These Play Days provided an opportunity for athletes to put into practice the skills that they were learning in their PDP sessions.
- Berkshire welcomed squads from Surrey Storm Aspire on two occasions during the season for an evening of match play against our U15 athletes and we also took an U15 squad over to play them on one occasion.
- Berkshire sent 1 x U13 and 1 x U15 teams to the Bedfordshire Invitational PDP Tournament. This was an opportunity for the selected players to compete against teams from all over the country with 18 teams competing in each age group. The Berkshire squads performed well and finished 5<sup>th</sup> in both age groups.
- A number of Berkshire U15s were selected for franchise U15 Schools Games Academies for Surrey Storm and Mavericks and some have made it into the final competition squad.
- Some of the athletes who graduated from the Berkshire U15 PDP in May 2023 were successful at franchise trials in September and gained places in franchise U17 and PDPs.
- Berkshire's Player Pathway Lead (PPL), Sarah Feast, continued to sit on the Surrey Storm Pathway Management Group along with her counterparts from Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire along with Mikki Austin, Bev Bostock and Annette Allanson from Surrey Storm.
- Following the announcement of the restructuring of the NSL for 2024/25, there was a lot of concern raised about the lack of a Player Pathway within the area previously serviced by Surrey Storm. Berkshire's PPL worked together with the regional board to lobby England Netball to reconsider the decision not to offer a franchise Player Pathway Programme to replace the loss of the Storm. Together with many others affected by this decision, the Berkshire PPL also raised concerns directly with the CEO of England Netball, Fran Connolly. As a result of the lobbying by the regional board and the outcry from the netball community, England Netball have now appointed London Pulse to offer a parallel pathway programme to provide continued opportunities for athletes within our region.

**Sarah Feast**

**Player Pathway Lead**