**SPECIAL UMPIRE REPORT**

**DECEMBER 2017**

The first half of the season is over and I am taking the unusual step of writing a separate report which I will be sending out to the Executive and Management team and all clubs.

The situation of the number of qualified umpires we have has come to a critical level. We are losing more umpires each year than we are gaining. I have been saying this for several years now but clubs are not taking the situation seriously enough. There are few clubs who can say they have the required number of umpires for the teams they have, for those who don’t know what that is, each team should have 1 qualified umpire and 1 unqualified (preferably one training to become an umpire). At the higher level, we have so few ‘B’ Award umpires that soon we will not be able to have each 1st Division game officiated by a ‘B’ umpire. The answer is not to scrap teams in your club but to encourage your players to take up the whistle. In some countries you can’t play unless you learn to umpire as well!

This leads me to my second point. We are trying to train umpires who have attended an umpire course and they need to start somewhere. Many help out at Back2Netball and club training but once they are deemed sufficiently proficient, they officiate on 3rd Division games as the Away umpire. We need to respect these umpires and **ALL** our umpires. Too often there are comments on the court from players and team officials on the sideline or even spectators who have probably never picked up a whistle! This is not good enough. It is up to all clubs to ensure that their players, team officials and spectators respect the umpires. Remember it is not only players who can be cautioned and as a last resort sent away from the court.

Lastly clubs are asked to ensure that when they allocate the umpires to matches that they ensure their umpires are the correct level for each division. It is not fair to put umpires in the position that they turn up to officiate on a match that they are not equipped to deal with. A list will be out soon with each club’s umpire contact details and qualification.

Ann Halliwell

County Umpire Secretary