

A group of young children are playing football on a grass field. In the center, a girl with braids and a blue bib is looking down at a white and blue football on the grass. To her right, a boy in a yellow bib is also looking down. On the left, two other girls in blue bibs are watching. In the background, a white banner with a large blue saltire (Scottish flag) is visible. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor setting.

SCOTTISH FA GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL



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The Scottish FA is dedicated to implementing the **Football For All 2022-2025 Scottish FA Grassroots Strategy**. One of four key Game Changers is:

Provide a person-centred, & inspiring football participation offering.

Every person in Scotland should feel confident and motivated to try, play and stay in football, regardless of the age or stage of their development – whether they are players, volunteers, officials or referees. Every individual is unique and requires a participation offering that meets their own individual needs. Working with clubs and key stakeholders (SYFA, SWF etc.) we will provide a person-centred participation offering that recognises the age, stage, and motivational needs of every community member.

Some of the key outcomes are:

- **Create more community club based recreational opportunities to complement existing traditional match play activity.**
- **Create and implement a ‘Let Them Play’ positive environment campaign.**
- **Support clubs to ensure all children’s rights are promoted and respected as detailed in the **UNCRC**.**

The Scottish FA is involved in dialogue with UEFA counterparts and child development/wellbeing experts, and the research underpins several recommendations which should help create a more player centred experience and is guided by Self Determination Theory.

Care has been taken to use language that promotes learning and development over competition and winning. Terms like Matches and leagues have been replaced by games and festivals.





RECOMMENDATIONS AND REMINDERS

5-7 YEARS

- Football activity for the youngest players, 5-7 years, should be as informal and flexible as possible. Club based, in-house, fun games (1v1, 2v2, 3v3, 4v4) with occasional local festivals is seen as the best practice. The attached grid shows MAXIMUM permitted playing formats and it is always acceptable to play smaller numbered versions of the game. Clubs should provide fun recreational football and avoid the focus being on match activity against rival clubs, and results. Fun and individual learning is paramount at this stage.
- Clubs should be reminded to register all of their players with SYFA/SWF whether they are involved in festival play or not.
- There is no requirement for weekly local Festivals, these tend to replicate the adult match fixture approach, and which can lead to an over emphasis on creating winning teams to the detriment of individual player development.
- Adult intervention should be limited to allow young players to make their own decisions; Let Them Play!
- At festival events, mixing players from different clubs, (ie 2 players from team A, play with 2 from team B, against the remaining 4 players) can be a great way to reduce the "them v us" ethos adopted by some competitive coaches.
- The summer season, March - November, should be adhered to for any festivals. This avoids playing in the worst of the weather and is best for young players. Club based, in-house fun games can continue indoors during Dec, Jan, Feb should clubs wish.
- All players should be treated fairly with equal game time.





8 - 12 YEARS

- Football activity for 8-12 years should again be as fun and flexible as possible. Clubs are encouraged to retain as many recreational players as possible, not only those who wish to play regularly in small sided games festivals. Regular in-house games activity sessions, where children come along and play, are an ideal vehicle to keep everyone involved.
- Streaming or setting of teams for games and at festivals can have both positives and negative outcomes. Local associations and clubs may use this approach to ensure that there are fewer mismatches if they wish. Difficulties arise when teams involved in matches have different philosophies and mixed ability teams play streamed teams. Care should be taken to ensure agreement before games.
- Clubs should never use ability or stage of development to discard players (Article 31, [UNCRC](#)). All children develop physically and mentally at different rates and all have a right to play. Not every child can play in every game but there should be an opportunity for all to play in some format at the club.
- It is again perfectly acceptable for clubs to play games with fewer players than the maximum numbers than are outlined on the attached games format grid. We believe that the smaller sided games can provide better learning conditions and fun for the players.
- All players should be treated fairly with equal game time.

13 - 18 YEARS

- Youth Players do not necessarily need to move to the 11 a side game. Where desired, clubs and local associations are encouraged to organise games at the 7v7 or 9v9 format. Latest research has encouraged other nations (eg Germany and Netherlands) to delay 11 a side football to 14 years.
- Clubs are encouraged to run regular recreational football games events in parallel with team activity to ensure no player feels they have to leave a club through lack of commitment or ability. These players may or may not engage in the more formal fixtures but will continue to enjoy the benefits of playing team sport and club membership.
- All players should be treated fairly with equal opportunities.

SET THE STANDARDS

BEHAVIOURS, EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS



Every member of staff and volunteer at the club will be asked to sign up to the following standards, outlining the behaviour, expectations and requirements of Club staff and volunteers working or volunteering with children and young people.

Creating an environment where children and young people are respected, their rights are promoted, and they are supported to have fun, learn, and develop in a safe environment is essential to inspire them to love the game.

To achieve this goal the Club expects its staff and volunteers to embody the Wellbeing and Protection Values – Inclusive, Empowering, Approachable and Accountable - to create a positive football environment, and by displaying exemplary behaviour and implementing practices that make football a safe, fun, and positive experience for all children and young people involved.

[Watch our Child Wellbeing video here](#)

WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, I WILL:

- Treat all children and young people equally with respect, dignity, honesty, sensitivity and fairness
- Promote the best interests of the young person and put their wellbeing before winning or achieving performance goals
- Promote and protect the rights of all children and ensure that children and young people are aware of their rights
- Never have favourites but praise children and young people that demonstrate commitment, positive attitude and good behaviour
- Consult with children and young people allowing them the chance to be heard by having an 'open door' approach
- Allow young people the right of being involved in decisions affecting them
- Always listen to and act upon any concerns raised by a child or young person

	YEAR OF BIRTH	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
	SWF	U7	U7	U8	U10	U10	U12	U12
	MAX PERMITTED FORMAT	4v4 Multi Game	4v4	5v5	7v7	7v7	7v7	9v9
	ADVISED MAXIMUM GAME-DAY SQUAD	6	6	7	10	10	10	14
	PLAYING SEASON	March to November	March to November	March to November	March to November	March to November	March to June Transition to 9s August 2023	August 2023 to June 2024
	BALL SIZE	3	3	3	4 Boys 3 Girls	4 Boys 3 Girls	4	4
	OFFSIDE	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	THROW INS	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
	KICK INS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
	DRIBBLE IN	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
	PASS BACK RULE APPLIED	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	FREE KICKS	Indirect	Indirect	Indirect	Indirect	Indirect	Indirect	Normal Rules Apply
	CORNERS	Short	Short	Short	Short	Short	Short	Short
	RETREATING LINE	✗ <i>But Halfway after a goal</i>	✗ <i>But Halfway after a goal</i>	✗ <i>But Halfway after a goal</i>	✓	✓	✓	✗
	SUBSTITUTES	Rolling	Rolling	Rolling	Rolling	Rolling	Rolling	Rolling
	MAX LENGTH OF GAME	10 mins <i>(Max 4 games)</i>	10 mins <i>(Max 4 games)</i>	2x 10mins x 2 or 3 x 15mins	2x 20mins or 3 x 15mins	2x 25mins or 3 x 15mins	2x 25mins or 3 x 15mins	2x 30mins
	REFEREE	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	Optional
	TROPHY / RESULTS	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
	MAX PITCH DIMENSIONS	20 x 30m	20 x 30m	30 x 40m	36 - 45m x 55 - 65m <i>13m retreating line</i>	36 - 45m x 55 - 65m	36 - 45m x 55 - 65m	42 - 47m x 65 - 75m
	MAX GOAL SIZE	2.5 x 1.2m <i>(8ft x 4ft)</i>	2.5 x 1.2m <i>(8ft x 4ft)</i>	4.9 x 1.8m <i>(16ft x 6ft)</i>	4.9 x 1.8m <i>(16ft x 6ft)</i>	4.9 x 1.8m <i>(16ft x 6ft)</i>	4.9 x 1.8m <i>(16ft x 6ft)</i>	4.9 x 1.8m <i>(16ft x 6ft)</i>



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