

Fergus D Cochrane
Clerk to the Committee
Public Petitions Committee, TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Date 30th July 2010
Your ref
Our ref S&CS/MR/Ry/3449

Dear Mr Cochrane

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1319

I refer to the letter of April 2010 regarding the petition being considered by the Public Petitions Committee and apologise for the delay in responding to this. My response on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council is as follows:-.

1. *Legal status and appropriateness of professional SFA clubs entering into contracts with children under 16 years*

Our understanding is this is not a contract – it is a registration form that is signed by both the player and parents. In best practice situations there is an additional form for parents to sign acknowledging they understand the terms and conditions.

We would wish to draw your attention to the new SFA Academy which is set to start at Broughton HS in Edinburgh and is based on the successful pilot at Graeme HS in Falkirk. We believe this is an alternative model that combines both talent development and education and one that can allay some of the fears that concern parents about signing registration forms with professional clubs at too early an age.

2. *Audit process and accountability of all public funds distributed by the Scottish Football Association to its member clubs*

We do not feel it is appropriate for us to comment on this. However, for the record as a Local Authority we highly value our excellent partnership with the SFA over many years that has enabled many thousands of children and young people in Edinburgh to benefit from football coaching programmes.

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3. *Social, educational and psychological affects and legality of SFA member clubs prohibiting such children from participating in extra curricular activity*

We know of no evidence that there are social or psychological affects resulting from this rule. However, this can be a contentious subject with many Headteachers and PE teachers. Whilst we understand the argument that the involvement of 'elite players' in schools football could lead to an over exposure to football and unnecessary injury, etc it can be a negative factor in the organisation of school sport if the best players cannot represent their school.

To date this is not an issue at Primary Schools but the possible move to lowering the registration age to ten could affect this and this would be a concern.

From our perspective it would helpful if the SFA and professional clubs could show a bit more flexibility on this issue and allow young people to play schools football up to Under 15 age group.

4. *Appropriateness of 'compensation' payments between SFA member clubs for the transfer of young players under the age of 16 years*

We think that while no compensation scheme can be entirely perfect in general it is a good rule that helps the smaller clubs. Not all Edinburgh school pupils sign for just Hearts and Hibs. They also play for the likes of Livingston, Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline, etc and if there was no compensation scheme it might adversely affect the development of youth football at smaller clubs.

5. *Increase the educational target from 2 hours curricular physical activity to four hours per week*

We are currently endeavouring to meet the two hour target but it is widely acknowledged that lack of indoor PE/Sports facilities (particularly in Primary Schools) currently make the two hour target difficult for some schools to attain. Whilst four hours might be a worthy target the constraints on facilities, staffing costs and other curricular pressures make this aspiration very improbable in the current financial climate.

6. *Develop a long-term plan to provide quality artificial surfaces for training and playing football at all ages across all regions*

Over the past five years we have made significant progress in improving sports facilities across the school estate in Edinburgh. This includes synthetic pitches and the examples of the new facilities at Broughton HS and the Forrester HS/St Augustine's joint campus have set a very high standard for the future.

It is a concern that this may prove to be a peak in this kind of development and we would welcome a Government fund that might allow for the further installation of 3G pitches in Edinburgh Secondary Schools so that more young people can benefit from these facilities. Given our climate this has to be the way forward.

Yours sincerely



Mike Rosendale
Head of Schools and Community Services