



20th March 2012

For the attention of:
Public Petitions Clerks
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Sir

Petition PE1319 Improving Youth Football

I am very grateful to the Committee to be given the opportunity to provide input to your considerations in relation to this matter.

Falkirk Football Club has invested heavily in providing the coaching, facilities, education and training for the next generation of professional footballers and has achieved a reputation for excellence throughout the professional football game. Our Academy has consistently achieved the SFA's highest status - "Performance Status".

Falkirk Football Club follows the procedures and regulations set out by the SFA and has no other contractual arrangements with either the boys or their parents. No under 17 boys are registered for a period of over 12 months.

Background

I think it important to put our replies to your specific questions in context. This is a very expensive commitment for an SFL club. We spend around £250,000 per year on age groups up to Under 17. There is no guarantee of financial return and historically there has been a significant negative return on our investment. Falkirk Football Club does this because we believe the future of Scottish football lies in the best preparation of young players and, that hopefully in the longer term this will benefit our Club.

The current structure within the game provides very little compensation for the investment made in young talent. Historically it was worse. Larger and richer clubs (predominantly clubs like Rangers and Celtic and other big city clubs) would allow clubs like Falkirk to develop young talent and then cherry pick the best of these at no cost to themselves. They had the money and the influence to persuade young players and their parents that the player should leave the smaller club and join the bigger club. Even today the compensation levels rarely compensate a club where a player has been

poached by a larger club. It must be noted that for every ten boys in which the club invests, likely only two or three will progress to professional levels. If one of these two or three is poached by a bigger club, providing direct compensation for coaching costs for that individual is not sufficient. The clubs also required compensation to cover those who don't make it to professional ranks.

The registration of young players and an adequate compensation structure is vital to ensure that we continue to invest in youth. If we had a situation where the players could join other clubs without compensation the current investment by clubs like Falkirk would no longer be viable. Why would we spend thousands of pounds in assisting young players if they could simply join another club without us receiving training compensation? The only clubs who would benefit from this type of approach would be the larger clubs with money and influence. **If there were no registration and compensation arrangements, Falkirk could not afford to invest in young players and would not run a football Academy.**

Falkirk Academy

Falkirk's Academy runs teams at under 11, under 12, under 13, under 14, under 15 and under 17. In total there are approximately 110 players across these categories. The Academy provides high quality football coaching, first class training facilities, medical support and educational support. At all times a boy's education is taken as his top priority.

- For SFA Performance level we are required to have two coaches at each age group. We provide more than this and also provide goalkeeping and other specialist coaches. We also provide education and welfare support. All coaches are qualified. They are also all fully disclosed checked and First Aid qualified.
- Our facilities are rented from Stirling University and comprise of our own pavilion, and access to 3G and grass pitches. We provide the ground staff and maintenance for the grass pitches. The Academy contracts with Stirling University for other facilities including gym facilities, strength and conditioning and sports science.
- The Academy provides homework facilities and educational support to the boys.
- The Academy provides physiotherapy and medical support.

Our Academy is annually audited by the SFA to ensure that we meet the highest quality standards, that our coaches and welfare staff are fully qualified and that our facilities meet all requirements.

Registration Process and relationship with parents

From the age of 11 years, all our Academy players are registered with the club through the standard SFA registration procedure. Each registration is for a maximum of 12 months. Each year, if the Academy wishes to retain the player, the process is repeated. This means that each year a player is free to leave if he so wishes.

We are mindful of our responsibilities and our obligations to the young players and their parents. No player is registered without there first being meetings between Academy staff, usually the Academy Director, the boy and his parents. They are invited to visit and see and understand how the Academy operates. After the parents are fully satisfied with all the arrangements, the player will be offered a registration. I attach a copy of the SFA Registration Form and a copy of the type of letter sent to the parents.

During the year of the registration, the parents will often meet Academy staff. There is also a "parents evening" where the Academy can discuss any issues arising.

At the end of the season a player is free to leave the Academy. If that player had been offered a registration and refused this, and then joins another football club, that football club is due to pay compensation at the rates set out by the SFA (copy attached).

At Falkirk, we are proud of what we have achieved in terms of boys playing at different age groups of national squads and in terms of the number graduating to first team football. We invest heavily in this part of our operations and plan to increase our investment to meet new criteria being set by the SFA. The greatest risk to this strategy remains the risk of larger clubs taking the registrations of our rising stars as the compensation rewarded is insignificant in comparison to the future value of the players.

Should you require any further information, I will be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely

Martin Ritchie OBE
Chairman
Falkirk Football Club

Sent to the Parent/Guardian of **insert players name**

Dear **Player**

Please find attached a copy of the registration form that you signed with Falkirk Football Club on **insert date**

The players charter, parents charter and all training and sports science schedules are attached with this letter and you should also be aware that based on the information that you supplied on your player information form I will now contact your school to inform them that you have signed with Falkirk Football Club. Should your school notice any decline either in behaviour or academic performance then they can contact me at any time. As discussed last week your academic performance at school is extremely important.

In line with Scottish Football Association procedures we shall notify you not later than 30th June by recorded delivery of any other further period of registration made to the player. A copy of the registration and compensation regulations in full is available upon request.

Should you have any questions regarding any aspect of **insert players name** obligations and commitments to Falkirk Football Club, or indeed our obligations to **insert players name** then please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. My contact details are attached with this letter or alternatively I am always available on a Monday evening between 530pm and 7pm in my office at the Falkirk Academy HQ at the University of Stirling.

Yours Sincerely

Head of Football Development & Football Administration

Falkirk Football Club

Player Registration

THE SCOTTISH
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



This form is to be used by clubs in membership of the SPL, SFL, EOSFA, SOSFA, SHFL and SJFA.

PART A Player Details

A1 Surname																								
A2 Forenames																								
A3 Common Name / Previously known as																								
A4 Player Status	Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amateur	<input type="checkbox"/>	A5 Player ID					A6 DOB														
A7 Place of Birth																								
A8 Country of Birth																								
A9 Nationality																								
A10 Address																								
A11 PostCode																								
A12 Position	GK	<input type="checkbox"/>	DF	<input type="checkbox"/>	MF	<input type="checkbox"/>	FWD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Squad No			Height	Ft	Ins	Weight	St	Lbs							
A13 Email Address																								

A player signing this form is subject to the Rules and Regulations laid down in the Registration Procedures and Articles of Association of the Scottish Football Association ('Association') and any recognised football body in so much as they may be applicable. The Association's decision in any dispute shall be final and binding subject to any relevant appeals or arbitration procedures available in terms of the Articles and subject to the relevant appeals procedures within the recognised football body rules, where applicable, having been exhausted.

A15 Player's Signature													A16 Signing Date:			20		
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PART B Registration Details - Refer to completion notes on reverse page.

B1 Registration Type (Complete one box only)	Contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amateur	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth 10-17	<input type="checkbox"/>																
B2 Club ID			B3 Contract Expiry Date (Always complete if Contract box is selected)			20																		
B4 Club																								
B5 Last Club Played for																								
B6 Last Club Registered for																								
B7 Country (If club named in either B4 or B5 is outside Scotland)																								
B8 Authorised Club Signatory																								
B9 Signature													B10 Signing Date:			20								

PART C Witness

C1 Full Name																								
C2 Address																								
C3 PostCode																								
C4 Signature													C5 Signing Date:			20								

PART D To be completed by Parent / Guardian if player is under 16 years of age

D1 Full Name																								
D2 Address																								
D3 PostCode																								
I hereby confirm that I am the Parent / Guardian of the player named in part A.																								
D4 Signature													D5 Signing Date:			20								

The primary purpose of this form is to register your details as a player on the Association's database and with other recognised football bodies, to make you eligible to play football in Scotland and related regulatory purposes. Please be advised that the information contained herein may also be made available to other areas of the Association, and to such third parties, for commercial purposes. Please cross this box if you do not consent to your information being used for these purposes.

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COMPENSATION

Formula for Reimbursement of Costs of Training and Development when a Youth player who has been offered a further period of Registration with his club signs a Youth Registration for another club. (Registration Procedure 11)
Also applicable between Performance clubs for player who had previously been with Performance club on Youth form signing professional forms for a Performance club providing the former club has retained a right to compensation.

Category 1 clubs – all clubs playing in Scottish FA Youth Initiative at “Performance” level.

Category 2 clubs – all clubs playing in Scottish FA Youth Initiative at “Initiative” level

Category 3 clubs – all clubs playing in Non-SFA Youth Initiative (Highland League, South of Scotland, East of Scotland etc.,)

Category 4 clubs – Any member club not participating in a Youth Initiative, which has Youth Players, attached to it.

<u>Value -</u>	<u>Category 1</u>	<u>Category 2</u>	<u>Category 3</u>	<u>Category 4</u>
Age 10	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Age 11	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Age 12	£3000	£200	£100	£50
Age 13	£3000	£300	£200	£100
Age 14	£3000	£500	£300	£200
Age 15	£6000	-	-	-
Age 16	£9000	-	-	-
Age 17	£9000	-	-	-

Method of Calculation (Player moving Youth Form to Youth Form)

For players moving within the same category that particular value applies (e.g. if a player was with the same club in Category I on a youth form age groups 12, 13, and 14 then reimbursement of costs would be - £9000. The values are per season and if a player joined a club half way through the season then the reimbursement costs would be on a pro-rata basis.

If the player moves from a lower to a higher category club, the calculation shall be based on the average of the training costs in each age group of the category of the two clubs.

If the player moves from a higher to a lower category, the calculation shall be based on the training costs of the lower category club.

If the player's former club has not offered the player a further period of youth registration (or professional contract if applicable) prior to the expiry of his existing youth registration then there will be no entitlement to reimbursement of training costs.

Youth Player signing Professional Forms for another club

Providing the player's former club has offered the player a professional contract prior to the expiry of his youth registration then compensation will be payable to his former club.

The amount of compensation between Youth Initiative "Performance" clubs will be based on the above table, calculated on an accumulative basis for the period of time the player was with the club on a Youth/ Form D registration in each age group.

When a youth player, for whom a club has retained a right to compensation, moves to a club upon a professional form and contract, other than moves between "Performance clubs" then should the clubs fail to agree a fee, compensation will be settled by a Tribunal subject to the terms of Registration Procedure 7.2.