

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

Public petition PE1319 on Improving Youth Football in Scotland

Scoping paper: Reviewing the current registration process from a rights perspective and seeking the views of young people in respect of petition PE1319

Introduction

This paper considers the invitation from the Public Petitions Committee in June 2014 to review the current registration process from a rights perspective and to include the views of young people. This paper sets out how this can be achieved.

Background to Petition PE1319

The petition raises a number of concerns with regard to young people involved in youth football and registration with professional football clubs. The petition has been the subject of written evidence (47 items of correspondence) and two oral evidence sessions (April 2010 and May 2014). The Committee has heard from many adults associated with the youth football system, providing views on the impact on the young people affected. The Committee has heard that some progress has been made during the process of considering the petition, for instance in respect of the Scottish Football Association scheme for the reimbursement of training costs. It has also heard conflicting evidence about possible transfer payments and the status of the 'contracts' which the young people sign. The Committee has also heard of other outstanding issues such as where players aged 15 years can be held by the professional clubs until their 18th birthday, without the agreement of the young person.

The Committee has continued the petition on the basis that it is seeking a review of the current registration process by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The Commissioner proposes to undertake this through the following:

- an analysis of the current registration process from a rights perspective, and
- seeking the views of young people who have been involved

Review of current process from a rights perspective

As matters have moved on during the Committee process, it is timely to consider the current position from the perspective of the rights of children and young people. This can be done by conducting a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA). A CRIA is a tool developed by the Commissioner's Office which allows an issue or proposal to be examined from a children's rights perspective. The approach here will be to examine evidence which is already in the public domain. As such, it will not be able to resolve matters on which there is no agreement, or where the evidence is conflicting.

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People has the capacity and expertise to conduct a Child Rights Impact Assessment.

Views of young people involved

The Committee has had to rely so far on an adult perspective of the issues facing children and young people involved. The Commissioner has therefore explored the possibility of engaging directly with young people about their experiences. This will provide an insight to the Committee on how the registration system is operating by speaking directly to those affected.

It is proposed to conduct a short term project which will consist of two main approaches:

1. *Individual interviews* with a small number of young people who are already known to have been affected by the registration process.
2. *Focus groups with young people* (3-4 groups).

We anticipate contacting young people involved with youth football through youth football clubs or in school settings. The challenge will be to facilitate access to young people affected, including those who have had both positive and negative experiences. Some preliminary work has already been carried out to establish the feasibility of this work with some youth football organisations and some parents/carers of the young people involved. The indications are that necessary permissions will be forthcoming.

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People has allocated funds to commission a researcher to conduct the focus groups and individual interviews with young people.

Timescale

It is proposed that that the work is commissioned in September 2014 and will be concluded by December 2014.

Tam Baillie
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