



EAST OF SCOTLAND SOCCER DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Guidelines for Small-Sided Games Formats

**TO BE IMPLEMENTED
AUGUST 2008**



A National Player Pathway For Scotland

Rationale

The game of football is a fast, skilful and complex game and is defined as an invasive game which allows players to move freely about the pitch. Therefore, by its very nature, football is played in a constantly changing environment which requires players to make numerous decisions whilst trying to deal with the ball, physical contact and cope with the many physical rigours of the game.

The parent game (11-a-side) is an adult game, designed by adults on an adult sized pitch with adult goals and ball. The complexity of the parent game has, for many years, been recognised throughout the world as being inappropriate for the young developing player and Scotland has led the way in the use of the small sided game over the last 20 years. Throughout this period a variety of formats have evolved which has led to confusion and duplication in the youth game.

With the launch of the Scottish FA's *Developing Talent Plan (2008)* it would seem appropriate that a national player pathway template is devised which gives a common delivery framework that all affiliated bodies and local authorities can work to. The Developing Talent Plan is a player centred approach that aligns technical and tactical development with the physical development of young players. The plan also includes the promotion of mental, social and lifestyle qualities which underpin the development of young players at every stage of their playing journey. This player centred approach emphasises the role of quality training programmes, together with the appropriate competitions structure which is correct for the age and stage of the player. The process is over a long term and is focussed on performance rather than the short term "peaking for the weekend" approach with its win at all costs mentality. Children and young players will always want to play a game and want to win in any game format and this needs to be fostered and encouraged. However, the role of practice and preparing to win needs to be addressed with varying emphasis at the different stages. Therefore, the proposed Player Pathway will:

- *Support player development*
- *Reflect the principles of the Scottish FA Developing Talent Plan*
- *Maximise the opportunity for playing but not to the detriment of practice*
- *Avoid duplication in a player's competitive schedule*
- *Define clearly the appropriate game format to match ages and stages of development*
- *Provide structured opportunities for both the identification and development of talented young players*
- *Provide a structured player pathway that will allow the gradual introduction of appropriate rules and complexity to the game*
- *Provide a structured player pathway that will allow the gradual introduction at appropriate levels of "need to win" competitions to all level of players*
- *Promote a development culture and long term approach for parents, coaches, players and administrators in the game*

Issues/Frequently Asked Questions

Any National Player Pathway will need to deal with current issues surrounding the development of young players and, in turn, overcome any obstacles that are in the way of a progressive developmental pathway. Some issues that have been highlighted by the Affiliate National Associations (SYFA, SSFA etc) and the volunteer workforce are:

Poor facilities and playing conditions

Many of the playing conditions relate to playing over the winter months and the damage done to the pitches during this time. A slight change in season would alleviate this problem and still allow local authorities time to repair the pitches in a shorter timeframe due to less damage occurring. Many local authorities could also zone pitches for adult amateur games in the traditional season. The Scottish FA, through Regional Managers, would continue to work with local authorities on their pitch strategies, facility provision, access policies and encourage funding bids through the SPF, Awards for All etc to improve facilities.

Different formats and approaches causes confusion

A number of leagues and associations across the Region will offer opportunities to take part in different formats of football for children and youths. In the South East Region, opportunities are available to play 4v4 for U9s, 7v7 up to U12, Developmental 11v11 at U13 and full 11v11 into adulthood. However, although these SFA/SYFA recommended formats are offered, some associations introduce 4v4 at U8, some at U9, one association offers full-blown 11v11 at U12 and associations offer different formats of the game with these age groups as well!

One National Player Pathway would give a very clear, precise pathway easing an obviously confusing environment that has been driven by volunteer choice and whim rather than a well researched professionally informed process.

Migration of teams from one league to another across areas

Following on from the point made above, at present a volunteer can move his team to another league if they fancy playing another format, for example, 11-a-side, and this can pose a serious problem for some leagues' future sustainability. Again, a National Player Pathway would alleviate this as all leagues would be playing the same format at the same age and stage, therefore, there is no requirement for migration.

Children are bored playing the small sided game for 4 years...they want to play 11-a-side

There is a worldwide body of evidence to show that the parent game is not the best learning environment for young players to master the game. The real issue is that the young players have been playing the same small sided game for 4 years without any progress or differences which take into consideration their development. The National Player Pathway should, therefore, build in additional rules and progressions to the games format which will allow the young players to remain motivated and challenged appropriately.

The young players find moving to the 11-a-side game too difficult

There are excellent examples of good practice in Scotland where a period of transition has been built in and the National Player Pathway would reflect this good practice. A short transition phase, leading to the parent game, makes good sense and can prepare a young player for the next challenge in their development.

Too many games

This relates particularly to May and June where many leagues have to catch up on all the postponed fixtures over the winter months (especially for 11v11 football competition). Again, a change of season (or extended winter break and extension of season into June) would alleviate this problem. There is also a case for rationalisation of the many cup competitions that leagues and associations have at present whereby clubs are only concentrating on completing fixtures (often 3 games per week) which obviously halts any practice or development work that could have occurred. Many cup competition trophies could be used for other purposes, for example, top goal scorer, team of the year, fair play, most improved etc, as many Association's are reluctant to give up on an old historical cup as it is important to that area.

There is a large disciplinary issue with players from 13 and over when they start to compete for trophies

A developmental culture would help this, with formal Scottish FA Coach Education and Positive Coaching Scotland workshops to influence the approach by the adults that surround youth football. Codes of conduct for clubs, leagues and associations will be beneficial as will a closer, more local, monitoring role for the leagues themselves. Again, there are good practices in Scotland that can be replicated throughout the country.

What support does the Scottish FA give to the youth game?

The Scottish FA Regions are working extremely hard with all volunteers and league associations across the country. As well as providing in-service and coach education, Regional Staff are working with leagues and associations and clubs to support the development of our game at grassroots level across various initiatives.

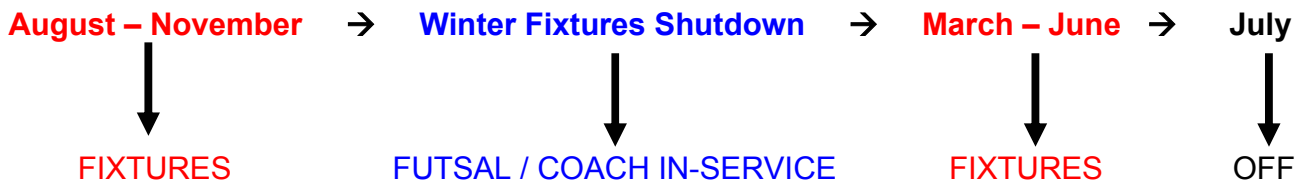
In particular, in the South East Region we are working with the various leagues and associations to ensure that there is consistency amongst the player pathway and within the playing formats at each different age group.

PROPOSED PATHWAY - ESSDA

Stage 1 – To continue with an August start of season which is in line with other associations in the Region and follow the extended winter break from December to end of February. The season would then run as indicated below.

Stage 2 - As the Association's activities already run in the SFA's recommendation for a change of season of March – June and August – November, if a National Roll-out for a change of season occurs over the next few years, the Association will be able to comfortably move in-line with all other associations on a National Scale.

SEASON

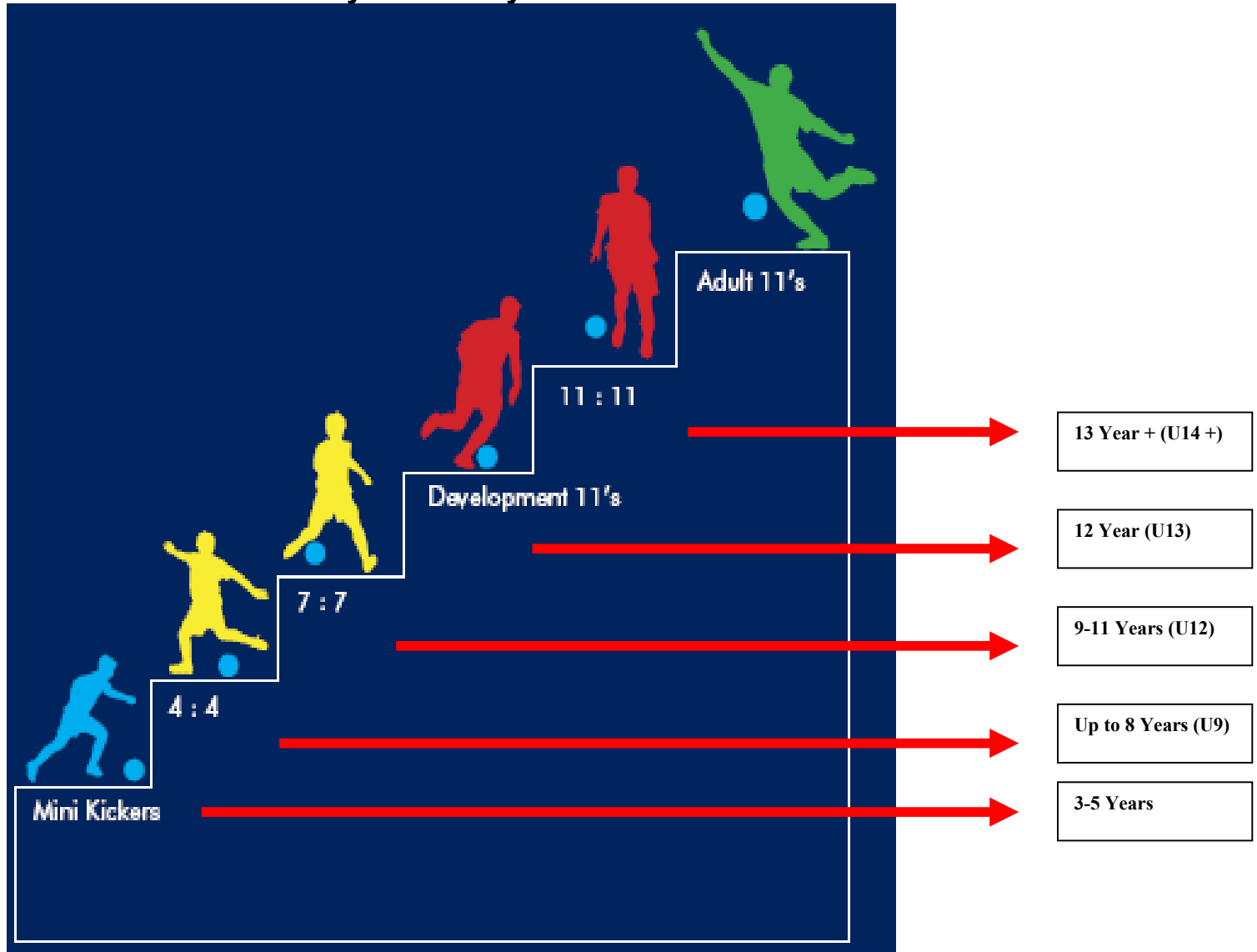


The season would run from August to June with July off and a season re-start in August 2009. December would be off with January and February used for Futsal and SFA / Association In-service training.

RECREATIONAL COMPETITION PATHWAY:

The pathway will consist of the 4 a side game up to 8 years old (Under 9s), leading to the 7 a side game up to 11 year old (U12s). The 12 year old (U13s) season will be used as a transition to the parent game of 11 a side. This season will be split into 2 parts. The first half will consist of Developmental 11 a side with a retreating line, use of Match Supervisors and 3, 25 minute periods. In the second half leagues would have the option to continue with the developmental format or move into the full 11v11 game.

SFA Recommended Player Pathway



7v7 Game Formats

As stated previously a major problem that children and coaches face when participating in 7v7 game formats is that they often become 'bored' of playing the same format for four years. It has been agreed that whilst the 4v4 and developmental 11v11 formats are important, it is just as important that we make the 7v7 formats interesting and appropriate to the age and stage of the players involved.

Therefore the formats in the table below will be implemented from August 2008.

Obviously, as well as the inclusion of a retreating line between U10 and U12, the significant difference is at the U12 age group where players will be introduced to the concepts of offside and the passback rule has been introduced.* There is also the introduction of a large U12 Festival supported by the Scottish FA staff in the second half of the season that would involve all clubs playing 7v7 at the U12 age group.

Proposed ESSDA Football Development Game Pathway for 2008/9

Age Group	Game Format	Recommended Game Duration	Pitch/Goal Requirements	Ball Size	Recommended Additional Rules	Competition Format	No. Games Max	Recommended Ratio Training: Games	Recommended Coach Education Award and Resources	Additional Coach Education Needs
6' & 7 s (U8s)	4 v 4	5 - 10 minutes round robin matches	25m x 35m; Multi Goal	3	No Offside/ Kick ins	Festival Basis - Trophy Free Multi Game Model	30 Festivals	2:1	Level 1/ 2 Childrens Development 4's	Principles, Rules and Game Structures for 4 v 4 Game Format
8 & 9's (U9 / U10s)	7 v 7 (with 4v4 at side)	2 x 20 minutes	36-45m x 55-65m; Goal Size - 4.9 m x 1.8 m; 13m Retreating Line	U9s size 3 / U10s size 4	Retreating Line; No Offside	Weekly Fixture - Trophy Free	30	2:1	Level 2/3 Childrens Small Sided Games	Principles & Rules of 7 v 7 Game Format
10's (U11s)	7 v 7 (with 4v4 at side)	2 x 25 minutes	36-45m x 55-65m; Goal Size - 4.9 m x 1.8 m; 13m Retreating Line	4	Retreating Line; No Offside	Weekly Fixture - Trophy Free	30	2:1	Level 4 Childrens Award/Physical Preparation (recommendation) Small Sided Games	
11's (U12s)	7 v 7 (offside, pass back, throw ins) All with 4v4 at the side	3 x 20 minutes	36-45m x 55-65m; Goal Size - 4.9 m x 1.8 m; 13m Offside/Retreating Line	4	Retreating Line/ Offside Line/Pass back/Throw ins	Weekly Fixture - Trophy Free	20	2:1	Level 4 Childrens Award/Physical Preparation/ Performance Player Award (recommendation)	In -service for offside, pass back etc
12's (U13s) (S.E.R Y.L)	11 v 11 (6months transitional 11's with offside line)	3 x 25 minutes	25m Offside line	4	Retreating Line	Weekly Fixture - 1/2 Season Trophy Free	20	2:1	Level 1/2 Youth	In-service for transitional 11's

Scottish Football Association – Developmental Rules

Match Rules

The rules for Development Football should be kept to a minimum. Except as provided within these rules, the laws of the game as stated by FIFA and the International FA Board shall apply subject to the following:

Four-a-side Football (up to 7/8 years)

1 The Field of Play

The field of play and its characteristics are determined according to the attached diagram.

2 Goalposts

Soccer Sevens goals or smaller will be used. Where possible clubs should use the smaller, recommended 4v4 goals.

3 Teams

Teams will comprise 4 outfield players with no goalkeepers. Team squads may consist of up to 6 players with rolling substitutions used throughout the match. All team members should receive equal playing time where possible.

4 The Ball

A size 3 ball should be used.

5 Offside

There is no offside rule.

6 Duration of the Game

Short games of varying 4v4 formats (each game 5-10 minutes).

7 Match Supervision

A match supervisor will officiate from the side of the field.

8 Kick-ins

In the event of the ball going out of play, a kick-in will be awarded.

9 Re-start

On scoring a goal, the team that scores will retreat halfway. The team conceding the goal will restart the game with a short pass from the goalkeeper.

10 Equipment

All players must wear shin-guards. Metal studs are suitable for grass fields only. Glasses may be worn provided they have safety frames and lenses.

NOTE: At the end of every game, team coaches should encourage both teams to shake hands.

Soccer Sevens (8 years to 10 years/U11) Formats

1 Field of Play

The field of play and its characteristics are determined according to the attached diagram.

2 Goalposts

The Scottish Football Association junior goalposts should be used (4.9 m x 1.8 m).

3 Teams

Teams will comprise up to 10 players with rolling substitutions used throughout the match. All team members should receive equal playing time. In the event of an obvious mismatch, the weaker team, as jointly agreed by the respective team leaders may field an extra player.

4 The Ball

Age groups 8, 9 and 10 should play with a size 3 football. Age group 11 should use a size 4.

5 Offside

There is no offside rule.

6 Kick-ins/Throw-ins

Age groups 8, 9 and 10 (U11) should use kick-ins. Age groups 11 (U12s) should take throw-ins.

7 Pass back

For age groups 8, 9 and 10 (U11), the pass back law does not apply. For ages 11 (U12) the pass back law does apply.

8 Retreating Line

ON ALL OCCASSIONS, when the goalkeeper gathers the ball by hand, the opposing players must retreat outside the safety zone (see pitch layout) which is marked by a retreating line (this can be a line, cones, markers etc). Opposing players must NOT enter the safety zone until a defender has taken his/her 'first touch' of the ball or when the ball comes to a complete halt. Defenders should be encouraged to take the first touch as quickly as possible before this happens. A return pass to the goalkeeper so that they can then 'thump' the ball up the field of play is not in the spirit of the game.

9 Penalty Kicks

Penalty kicks shall be taken 7 metres from the goal line.

10 Re-start

Play shall be re-centred after a goal has been scored with the opposing team at least 10 metres from the ball.

11 Duration of the Game

The duration of the game shall be 3 x 15 to 20 minutes each way with a 5 minute interval. Flexibility should prevail. The team leaders have joint discretion to alter this in the event of poor weather conditions, pitch conditions or an obvious mismatch.

12 Match Supervisor

A match supervisor will officiate from a designated area on the touchline or the field of play, no other adult will be allowed on the field of play. Match supervisors are not allowed to coach. Both clubs to supply a Match supervisor with each club expected to 'officiate' one half of the game.

13 Goalkeepers

Goalkeepers may kick or throw the ball out as preferred. However, in an effort to prevent long passes prevailing, they should be encouraged to restrict these to a minimum. Goalkeepers attempting to gather the ball by hand may not be challenged.

14 Behaviour

Team coaches should substitute players displaying unacceptable behaviour.

15 Equipment

All players must wear shin-guards. Metal studs are suitable for grass fields only. Glasses may be worn provided they have safety frames and lenses.

NOTE: At the end of every game, team coaches should encourage both teams to shake hands.

Soccer Sevens Transition Year (11 years (U12) and beyond)

1 The Field of play

The field of play and its characteristics are determined according to the attached diagram.

2 Goalposts

The Scottish Football Association junior goalposts should be used (4.9 m x 1.8 m).

3 The Ball

A size 4 Football should be used.

4 Teams

A team consists of 6 outfield players plus a goalkeeper. A maximum of 12 players may be listed for each team. Unlimited substitutions are permitted on a 'rolling' basis. Players who have been substituted may return to the field of play as often as necessary.

5 Match Supervisor

In an effort to prepare the young players for the 11-a-side game, a match supervisor will be appointed with authority to enforce the rules of play and, considering the educational importance for the participants, ensure fair play.

6 Duration of the Game

The duration of the game shall be 3 x 20 minutes each way with a 5 minute interval.

7 Throw In

The throw in should be used as normal

8 Kick-off and Goal Kicks

Kick-offs will be taken from the centre spot at the start of each half and after goal is scored. Opponents should be 6 metres from the ball.

9 Retreating Line

ON ALL OCCASSIONS, when the goalkeeper gathers the ball by hand, the opposing players must retreat outside the safety zone (see pitch layout) which is marked by a retreating line (this can be a line, cones, markers etc). Opposing players must NOT enter the safety zone until a defender has taken his/her 'first touch' of the ball or when the ball comes to a complete halt. Defenders should be encouraged to take the first touch as quickly as possible before this happens. A return pass to the goalkeeper so that they can then 'thump' the ball up the field of play is not in the spirit of the game.

10 Offside

A player is considered to be in an offside position if inside the 13m area of the opposing team and is nearer the goal line than the ball and two opponents.

11 Penalty Kicks

Normal rules apply with the kick taken from the penalty mark which is 9m from the goal line.

12 Pass back

The current pass-back rule will apply.

12 Equipment

All players must wear shin-guards. Metal studs are suitable for grass fields only. Glasses may be worn provided they have safety frames and lenses.

NOTE: At the end of every game, team coaches should encourage both teams to shake hands.

Developmental 11-a-side Football (U13s) – for your information only

1 Field of Play

The field of play and its characteristics are determined according to the attached diagram

2 Duration of the Game

Each game shall consist of 3 x 20-minute periods.

3 Teams

Teams will comprise up to 16 players with all players involved in the game for a minimum of two 20-minute periods.

4 Ball

A size 4 ball will be used.

5 Goalkeepers

Goalkeepers may throw or kick the ball out, although it is preferable that when kicking the ball it should be from the ground.

6 Pass back

The pass back law will apply.

7 Retreating Line

ON ALL OCCASSIONS, when the goalkeeper gathers the ball by hand, the opposing players must retreat outside the safety zone (see pitch layout) which is marked by a retreating line (this can be a line, cones, markers etc). Opposing players must NOT enter the safety zone until a defender has taken his/her 'first touch' of the ball or when the ball comes to a complete halt. Defenders should be encouraged to take the first touch as quickly as possible before this happens. A return pass to the goalkeeper so that they can then 'thump' the ball up the field of play is not in the spirit of the game.

8 Throw-ins

Throw-ins will be taken as normal.

9 Offside

The retreating line serves as an offside line.

10 Goalkeepers

Goalkeepers attempting to gather the ball by hand may not be challenged.

11 Behaviour

Team coaches will substitute players demonstrating unacceptable behaviour.

12 Coaches

Team coaches will stand on the same side of the field.

13 Equipment

All players must wear shin-guards. Metal studs are suitable for grass fields only. Glasses may be worn provided they have safety frames and lenses.

NOTE: At the end of every game, team coaches should encourage both teams to shake hands.

ESSDA Coach Education Support:

Developmental 4v4 In-Service Dates:

4v4 In-Service for Host Centre Clubs – Wednesday 25th June – 6 -7.30pm – Megettland

4v4 In-Service for all coaches participating in 4v4 Centres – Wednesday 13th August – 6.30 - 8pm – Megettland

Developmental 7v7 In-Service Dates:

7v7 In-service for age Groups (U9 – U11) - Date TBC

7v7 In-Service for U12 Age Group (same night as above) – Date TBC

11v11 In-Service Date:

11v11 In-Service for Teams moving to U13 – June / Date TBC

Additional Resource Support:

1. Developmental 4v4 DVD and Booklet
2. Creative Player DVD and Booklet
3. Small-Sided Games DVD
4. Football Central – Best Practice (www.footballcentral.org)
5. SFA Developing Talent Plan (2008)

** The following resources are available from the Regional Office; please contact Jennifer Malone (SFA Office & Events Coordinator) at SouthEast@scottishfa.co.uk or phone 0131 4421538.*

Recommended Pitch Sizes

