

FA Youth Development Proposals

More and Better Players Through Child-Friendly Football



The FA Group

The FA Group Strategic Plan

Delivering the goal of “Football for everyone” (better players and more people playing).

The FA National Game Strategy 2011 - 2015

Focus on development of young players through appropriate coaching and competition to maximise their enjoyment and development.

The FA Youth Development Review

Delivering Recommendation A and G – Format pathway and Relative age effect.



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Key Principles

- To implement a progressive, phased and developmental player pathway.
- The value of small-sided games and flexibility for stakeholders is key to meet today's societal demands.
- To provide scope for CFA's and other organisations to support transition points remains important for developing better players.
- To implement a modern and cutting edge approach to competition that puts the learner at the heart.
- Complement developments in coach education that offer a rich and authentic learning experience for players.
- Harmonised by The Future Game, outlining key approaches to delivery.



Consultation and Research

16 Regional 'Your Kids Your Say' Roadshows

All eight County FA regions, inc. CFA CEO's, CFA Football Development staff

Over 300 Youth Leagues

Over 1,000 Youth Club Administrators

Over 4,000 volunteers and coaches

50 groups of 8-12 year old Children

FA National and Regional coaches

Premier League and Football League Academy staff

Academic books and research articles

Football experts and child development experts

Other European countries





Formats of
the game



Flexible
Competition



Relative
Age Effect



Development
of Mini-
Soccer



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Key Outcomes

- Execute clear and structured guidelines on the maximum number of players per team for youth football.
- Implement a developmental process for 'playing up' at all age groups, supported by rules, to grow and retain participation.
- Defined role for CFA's to support transition to develop better players.
- Guidelines for competition structures for U7 – U11 age groups.
- Prohibit 8-month long seasons for U7-U11 children.
- New approach to competitive football; delivering an educational model to support learning and development.
- Increase participation by retaining more summer-born children.
- Deliver against two key National Game Strategy outcomes.



Formats of the Game

Age	Format (maximum format but can play smaller numbers)	Ball Size	Pitch Size (yards)	Maximum Goal Size (feet)
U7	5 v 5	3	30x20 to 40x30	12 x 6
U8	5 v 5	3	30x20 to 40x30	12 x 6
U9	7 v 7	3	50x30 to 60x40	12 x 6
U10	7 v 7	4	50x30 to 60x40	12 x 6
U11	9 v 9 (Primary Schools 7 v 7)	4 (4)	70x40 to 80x50 (50x30 to 60x40)	16 x 7 to 21 x 7 (12 x 6)
U12	9 v 9	4	70x40 to 80x50	16 x 7 to 21 x 7
U13	9 v 9 or 11 v 11	4	90x50 to 100x60	21 x 7 to 24 x 8
U14	9 v 9 or 11 v 11	4	90x50 to 100x60	21 x 7 to 24 x 8
U15	9 v 9 or 11 v 11	5	90x50 to 110x70	24 x 8
U16	9 v 9 or 11 v 11	5	90x50 to 110x70	24 x 8
U17	11 v 11	5	90x50 to 110x70	24 x 8
U18	11 v 11	5	90x50 to 110x70	24 x 8

Formats of the Game: evidence

- Academic research into value of small-sided games.
 - Technical development benefits
 - Skill acquisition benefits
- Less players = more touches, simplified tactical environment making game visually clearer for young people.
- Feedback from children.
 - “Why do I have to defend a goal the same size of Petr Cech?
(U11, West Riding)
- Feedback from coaches.
 - “Quality movements at higher intensity levels providing more physiological benefit as part of long-term player development”



Formats of the Game: phasing-in process

Season 2013/14 (maximum format but can play smaller numbers)	Season 2014/15 (maximum format but can play smaller numbers)	Season 2015/16 (maximum format but can play smaller numbers)
<i>Under 7's</i> <i>5 v 5</i>	<i>Under 7's</i> <i>5 v 5</i>	<i>Under 7's</i> <i>5 v 5</i>
Under 8's 7 v 7	<i>Under 8's</i> <i>5 v 5</i>	<i>Under 8's</i> <i>5 v 5</i>
Under 9's 7 v 7	Under 9's 7 v 7	Under 9's 7 v 7
Under 10's 7 v 7	Under 10's 7 v 7	Under 10's 7 v 7
<i>Under 11's</i> <i>9 v 9 Youth Clubs</i>	<i>Under 11's</i> <i>9 v 9 Youth Clubs</i>	<i>Under 11's</i> <i>9 v 9 Youth Clubs</i>
Under 12's Optional 9 v 9 or 11 v 11	<i>Under 12's</i> <i>9 v 9</i>	<i>Under 12's</i> <i>9 v 9</i>
Under 13's 11 v 11	Under 13's Optional 9 v 9 or 11 v 11	Under 13's Optional 9 v 9 or 11 v 11

Flexible Competition

From 2013/14, child-friendly competition only at U7, U8 and U9

From 2014/15, child-friendly competition only at U7, U8, U9 and U10

From 2015/16, child-friendly competition only at U7, U8, U9, U10 and U11

- Provides variety in the competition programme.
- Ownership and flexibility for Youth Leagues.
- Focus on learning the game, without pressure of win-at-all costs.
- Focus on periods of development matches, interspersed with competition.
- No focus on league tables and no three points every week.
- Learning to win still important but in an age-appropriate context.

New process will actually increase competition for more teams.



Flexible Competition: evidence

- Academic research indicates over-competitive focus leads to increased pressure and increased drop out from the game.
- The win-at-all-costs culture is stifling development, learning and enjoyment.
- Feedback from children.
 - “If we win, my dad lets me stay up late, if we lose he makes me go to bed early” (U11, Liverpool)
 - “I don't like it when we try something new and it doesn't go right first time and the adults shout at me” (U10, Worcestershire)
- Feedback from coaches.
 - “There is too much pressure on the children to have to win, the parents have changed attitude now we are U9 and are desperate to win which affects the boys” (U9 coach, Sussex)



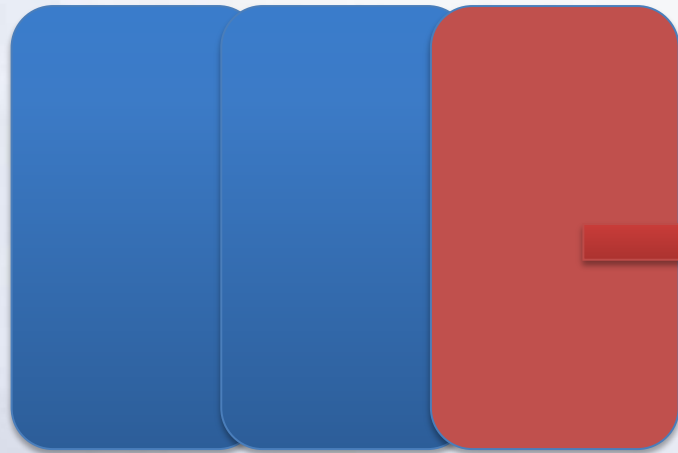
Flexible Competition

Current Model – One season from September to April

Three

Mini

Seasons



One division:

One-day knockout competition

Handicap system for the teams

Top half/Bottom half competition

Round Robin three-way competition

Futsal finals day



Development matches – learning the game



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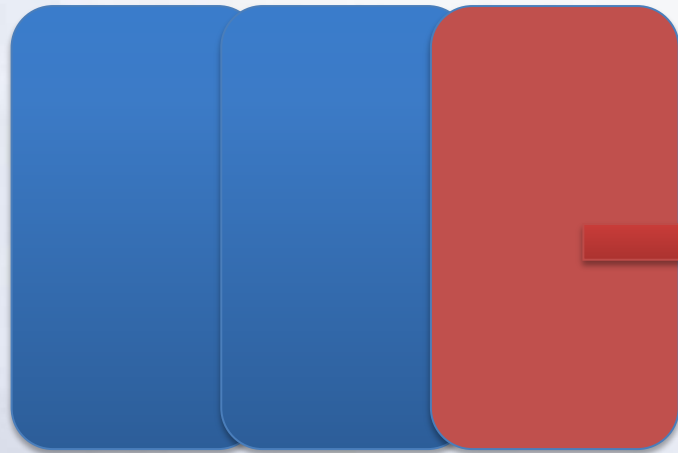
Flexible Competition

Current Model – One season from September to April

Three

Mini

Seasons



Multi divisions:

One-day knockout competition

World Cup / Champions League format

Cup / Vase / Shield events for all teams

Bottom three from A in with top 3 from B

Chance to see ability of teams in different divisions against each other



Development matches – learning the game



Flexible Competition: Phasing-in Process

Season 2013/14	Season 2014/15	Season 2015/16	Season 2016/17
<i>Under 7's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 7's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 7's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 7's Flexible Competition</i>
<i>Under 8's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 8's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 8's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 8's Flexible Competition</i>
<i>Under 9's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 9's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 9's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 9's Flexible Competition</i>
Under 10's Leagues Tables	<i>Under 10's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 10's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 10's Flexible Competition</i>
Under 11's Leagues Tables	Under 11's Leagues Tables	<i>Under 11's Flexible Competition</i>	<i>Under 11's Flexible Competition</i>
Under 12's Leagues Tables	Under 12's Leagues Tables	Under 12's Leagues Tables	Under 12's Leagues Tables



Relative Age Effect

Split the selection year to have two bias points:

School football – September to August (no change)

Youth football – January to December

Ensure the pitch guidelines are appropriate to age of the child playing the game.

Education - Make more people aware of the issue so the selection field doesn't have a bias from the start.



Relative Age Effect: evidence

- Academic research indicates:
 - Over-emphasis on September to December born-children in school, club and academy football teams.
 - Summer-born children not entering talented and gifted systems
 - Greater drop-out of children born in quarter 4 at every age group U8-U16
- Feedback from Scottish FA having made the change – “increased retention of summer-born children in club football” (SYFA National Secretary)
- Institute of Fiscal Studies state:
 - “the economic consequences facing summer babies will last throughout their working lives.”
 - “...with August-born teenagers 20% more likely to be in vocational rather than academic study after school.” (2011 Report)



Relative Age Effect: Phasing-in Process

Season 2013/14	Season 2014/15	Season 2015/16	Season 2016/17	Season 2017/18
<i>2007's</i>	<i>2008's</i>	<i>2009's</i>	<i>2010's</i>	<i>2011's</i>
Under 8's	<i>2007's</i>	<i>2008's</i>	<i>2009's</i>	<i>2010's</i>
Under 9's	Under 9's	<i>2007's</i>	<i>2008's</i>	<i>2009's</i>
Under 10's	Under 10's	Under 10's	<i>2007's</i>	<i>2008's</i>
Under 11's	Under 11's	Under 11's	Under 11's	<i>2007's</i>

Mini-Soccer

Use the half way line for the opposition to drop off to so teams can play out from the back through Mini-Soccer (U7-U10).

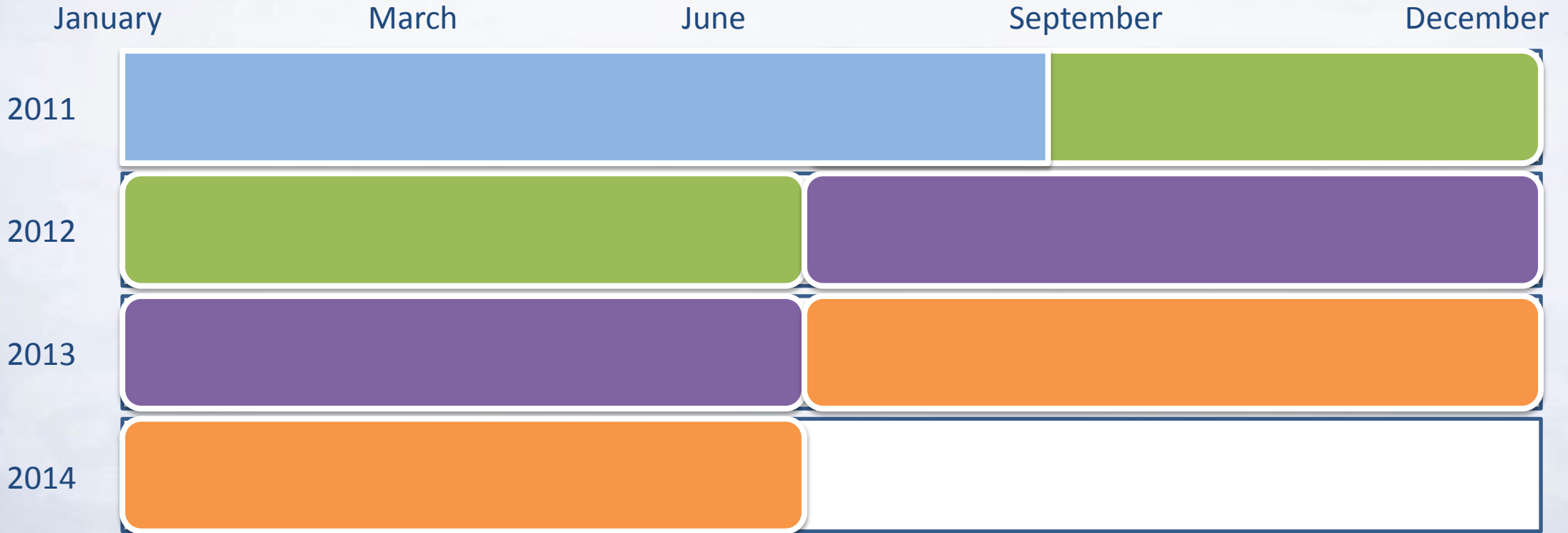
Introduce optional four $\frac{1}{4}$'s instead of mandatory 2 $\frac{1}{2}$'s.

Introduce optional roll-ins or throw-ins for U7 and U8 children.

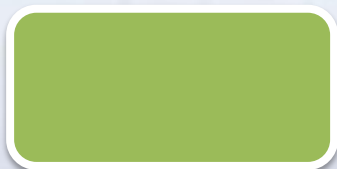
Best practice recommendation of a 'minimum 50% playing time' for every child.



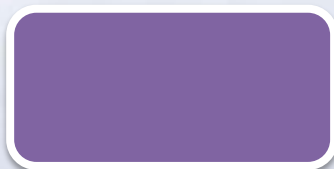
Timescales



Ongoing Consultation
Jan - September



2011/2012
Season
No Changes



2012/2013
Season
Optional



2013/2014
Season
Mandatory



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**“The difficulty lies not in the new ideas
but escaping from the old ones”
(John Maynard Keynes)**



Summary of Recommendations

1. To implement the revised player pathway.
 - 5 v 5, 7 v 7, 9 v 9, 11 v 11
2. To implement a child-centred competition programme
 - Focus on development and enjoyment
3. To implement an intervention programme for Relative Age Effect
 - Retention of players in the game

