



A REVIEW OF YOUNG PLAYER DEVELOPMENT IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL



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A REVIEW OF YOUNG PLAYER DEVELOPMENT IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

STATEMENT BY RICHARD LEWIS

This report provides an overview of the principles and philosophies required for a Young Player Development Programme to succeed in professional football in England. It also addresses some of the issues that have arisen in recent years in this arm of the game and which need attention.

Although my report, together with recommendations, is of some length it does not go into great detail on every aspect of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence which operate in professional football. This will disappoint some people who are under the impression that this Review will pronounce judgement on the minutiae of the programme.

However, I do not believe it is for me to decide on, for example, whether or not a changing room needs to be slightly bigger or if a coaching course needs slight modification. These tasks can best be done by the technical experts in the sport. Some of that technical review has been undertaken in parallel with this report being written, for example regarding the Games Programme or Coach Education.

Since the publication of the Charter for Quality in 1997, a great deal has been achieved in Young Player Development in professional football. However, work needs to be done to build on progress already achieved and to ensure the continued competitiveness of professional football in England in a global market.

It is for this reason that I believe the programme needs to be executive led and to be driven by executives who can be accountable to the responsible bodies. The programme needs to be less rigid, more dynamic and flexible in dealing with exceptional young talent and should be structured in the best interests of the player.

I urge the Football Association, the Football League and the Premier League to work together to ensure rapid progress. It has been clear to me during the Review that they have a great deal of common ground. My report is a call for further improvement, to raise the bar even higher, and to leave no stone unturned in the search for excellence. All three organisations are well placed to deliver just that.

Richard Lewis
Chairman of Review Group
Executive Chairman, RFL
June 2007

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 It was with great pleasure in October 2006 that I accepted the invitation of the Football Association (FA), the Football League and the Premier League to undertake this Review. It was agreed that I would produce an interim report by the end of December 2006 and the final report by the end of May 2007.
- 1.2 Each of the three authorities nominated an official to assist my consideration of the issues by forming a Review Group. I am indebted to them for the contributions they have made. However, I must stress that, although we have striven to achieve unanimity of purpose and outcome in the Review Group, the following report sets out my independent recommendations on the way forward.
- 1.3 I am also indebted to everyone in the professional game who responded to the consultations which were arranged. I was able to discuss views with a number of respondents and I read carefully the many written submissions received, together with reports from the two Leagues on the meetings held with Club staff most directly involved in Young Player Development (Appendix A).
- 1.4 The issues addressed by the Review were all the subject of comment by the people I consulted. When the report refers to “Young Player” it means age 8 – 18 unless otherwise stated.
- 1.5 At the outset, I stress that much has been achieved. Yet if all was totally rosy you would not be reading this report which would have had no need to have been commissioned.



2. YOUNG PLAYER DEVELOPMENT – THE STATE OF PLAY

- 2.1 In 1997, the then Technical Director of the FA, Howard Wilkinson, published 'A Charter for Quality' an overarching policy document affecting all levels of football and including specific proposals for the FA's Programme for Excellence, the Young Player Development programme in the professional game. The Charter has stood the test of time and many developments have evolved from it over the last 10 years.
- 2.2 There are now 40 Football Academies and 48 Centres of Excellence. There is a greater number of Football Academies in place than envisaged when the Charter for Quality was written.
- 2.3 However, by 2006 there was widespread agreement throughout professional football that a review of the Programme of Excellence was timely, and that issues including the quality of coaching, the standards of young English players compared to the world's best, the role and funding of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence, and the impact of the influx of overseas young players, all allied to extensive media exposure, needed to be considered.
- 2.4 Accordingly, in late 2006 the FA, the Football League and the Premier League commissioned this independent Review of Young Player Development in the professional game.

3. VALUES

- 3.1 It is important to state the key values that have underpinned my approach and that of the Review Group.
- 3.2 First of all I believe in a **player-focused** approach. The Charter stated that "the central figure in the recommendations for the 'Charter for Quality' is the player and his ... best interests". I fully endorse that standpoint. Understanding the changing needs of the young player at each stage of his development is crucial towards helping produce a talented and successful player, over the long term, at senior level. It is important to understand that the **development of the individual** is paramount in this regard. It is all too easy in football, and indeed so many other sports, to be trapped in the "culture of the team" at even the earliest of ages. A young player must be schooled in all the necessary skills in his formative years to have the right set of tools – both physical and technical. Young players must be able to pass, control, kick and shoot correctly, as well as learning how to improve speed, stamina, flexibility, agility and balance. Their mental tool kit must also be built up in their formative years if their decision taking and ability to sustain the psychological demands of the professional game are to be secured.
- 3.3. Second, I believe that **quality coaching is critical**. The coach is crucial to the development of the young player, and providing the very best coach education and coach development must be at the top of the list of priorities for action. The role of The FA is central in this respect, as the UEFA accredited body to deliver coach education & training. It is vital to have the right coaches working with the right young players in the right environment. Good coaches will develop good players.
- 3.4 Staff training needs to be provided for all the disciplines which are brought to bear on the young player. The Football Academies (and some Centres of Excellence) engage a variety of professionals including sports scientists, fitness Specialists, and Physiotherapists. Together with support staff such as administrators, education/welfare and residential providers, all these personnel are important contributors to the young player's development.

- 3.5 Third, I consider that the **right environment** is vital. The balance between competition and training, between games and skill development, between football and non-football education are all part of creating the optimum environment to give the young player the best possible chance of succeeding. The attributes learnt in the “street football” of old need updating in our modern setting.
- 3.6 Fourth, I believe there should be a **stability and consistency** to the system of young player development. Players, parents, coaches, staff and the clubs need the confidence of a stable system in which to operate with ethos, rules, regulations and procedures applied consistently and clearly.
- 3.7 Fifth, I believe that the individual club, as part of a long-term player development model (LTPD), is ideally suited to provide a career path for local players from their early years through to the first team. Thus, I endorse a development system that encourages professional clubs to engage in young player development activities.
- 3.8 Sixth and finally, I make no apology for promoting a **culture of excellence**. If football in England wishes to be the very best in the world, it must be the best at young player development. Indeed, it must be the very best at every aspect of young player development – there can be no room for compromise.

4. FOOTBALL ACADEMIES AND CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

- 4.1 The Charter led to the establishment of the new Football Academies and the development of some aspects of the pre-existing Centres of Excellence. Since 1997, there has been considerable investment in, and by, football in the building of facilities and human stock in Football Academies and Centres of Excellence. Standards of preparation and support for young players have improved. The dividends are there to be seen.
- 4.2 At senior level, the England World Cup team of 2006 had an average age of 26, almost 3 years younger than their Italian and French counterparts. Some of its members were the products of Football Academies, at least as far as their development in their late teens was concerned.
- 4.3 The England Under 21 team that has qualified for the UEFA Under 21 Championships have spent almost the entirety of their formative years in the Football Academies.
- 4.4 There is a great deal of information on the numbers of young players coming through the system and taking part in the professional game. However statistical analysis of the information is difficult because the picture is in part confused by the use of different definitions. Appendix B refers to recent statistics produced by the three authorities.
- 4.5 The dual system of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence recognises that some Clubs may wish to invest considerably more heavily than others in staff, facilities and accommodation for young players. I consider that this dual system reflects the realities of the professional football industry in England and the financial circumstances of Clubs and that it should be continued, subject to the specific recommendations I set out below.
- 4.6 However, whether Young Player Development in professional football should continue to be operated under the labels “Football Academy” and “Centre of Excellence”, is a matter that the three authorities might wish to consider. Since 1997 the term “Football Academy” has been adopted by a number of commercial and college organisations that offer football coaching to young people. The term

“Academy” is currently used by the Government to describe the replacements of failing secondary schools. Equally, it is not readily understood that Football Academies offer a higher standard of provision than Centres of Excellence.

Recommendations

- 1) The dual system of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence should be retained to defined and approved licensing standards as the basis for Young Player Development in professional football.
- 2) An appropriate re-branding of the titles “Football Academy” and “Centre of Excellence” should be considered.



STRATEGIC ISSUES

5. LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

- 5.1 In my consultations the question of the leadership and coordination of Young Player Development arose on a number of occasions. The present structure is, at best, cumbersome and unclear. It is not my intention to stray into areas of broader governance and control, yet in the specific area of young player development, it is evident that clearer lines of responsibility and accountability would serve to improve quality.
- 5.2 It is revealing, in itself, that there has been no formal or understood process for the review of Young Player Development since the Charter was published in 1997. That is not to underestimate the good work of all the stakeholders during that period, but it underlines the need for periodic review and change that is the staple of all improvement in sport and management alike.
- 5.3 The Technical Control Board, established as an FA Standing Committee, has not been able to fulfil its original purpose as the ratifying Body on matters such as licensing and making rulings on actions to be taken on matters of non-compliance.
- 5.4 I have been encouraged by the re-activation, during the course of my review, of the Technical Liaison Group. This group consists of specialist officers from the FA and the two Leagues and liaises over a range of operational matters relating to Young Player Development.

- 5.5 In my experience, small executive-led groups can make speedy operational decisions where larger bodies with representatives from a wide range of constituencies often find it more difficult to do so.
- 5.6 I conclude that to provide effective leadership of Young Player Development, a body (which I shall call the Youth Management Group) should be established. I recognise that it is important that this body should have the confidence of the FA and that they do not feel their views can be ignored by it.

Recommendations

- 3) A Youth Management Group (YMG) should be set up to implement the findings of this Review, to act as the leadership forum for Young Player Development, and to be given the remit of decision-making, action and review.
- 4) Areas of responsibility for the YMG should include, receiving quality assurance (ISO) reports on Football Academies and Centres of Excellence, deciding fines, sanctions, suspensions, or revoking of licences subject to an appropriate appeals process; and proposing Rule changes.
- 5) The YMG should be independently chaired by someone with a strong football background and have one representative from each of the FA, Football League and Premier League each of whom should be responsible for representing the views of, and reporting back to, their respective organisation.
- 6) The process for appointing the independent Chair should be open and transparent including advertising the role. The FA should have the right to confirm the proposed appointee. For the avoidance of doubt the appointment should not be made without the support of the FA.
- 7) Members of the YMG including the Chair should each have one vote, decisions to be taken by majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Chairman's vote should determine the matter.
- 8) The YMG should also oversee the year-on-year review of progress of the Young Player Development Programme generally and have the authority to instigate further review if required. A process of continual review and 'learning' is to be encouraged.
- 9) The YMG to receive reports from the Technical Liaison Group (TLG) and Elite Coaching Group (ECG) whose remit would be specific technical matters.
- 10) The YMG should consider opportunities to showcase Young Player Development through appropriate communications and media channels.



6. CLUB AND COUNTRY

- 6.1 The tensions between the young player development agendas of Club and Country are evident in all professional sports throughout the world. In some cases it appears that the needs of Club and Country are irreconcilable.
- 6.2 In professional football in England the Charter established the Football Academy/Centre of Excellence system as Club based. As such the system is committed in the first instance to improving the pool of talented young players available for first team selection at each Club.
- 6.3 However, implicit in this commitment is the improvement of players qualified to represent England in the country's national football teams and the FA is to be commended for its work in establishing a long-term player development model (LTPD).
- 6.4 Much has been written and reported on the influx of "foreign" players on football in England. For over a century, English Clubs recruited players qualified to represent Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland and boys from these jurisdictions were signed regularly by the Clubs' youth development operations. However, the modern issue concerns the number of "overseas" players, recruited not only to first team football in the two Leagues, but more significantly, to Football Academies and Centres of Excellence.
- 6.5 It must be recognised that there is much value in the player who has been developed by the club – a "local" player. Club supporters readily identify with "local" players; such players can be brought up within the culture of the club, and can increase the standing of the club in the local community. They can be introduced into the first team during closed transfer periods. Significantly bringing a "local" player through the club's Football Academy or Centre of Excellence into the first team can be a most cost effective way of recruitment.
- 6.6 It has been suggested that a quota system could reduce the recruitment of non – England qualified players but the free movement of labour legislation makes the imposition of a quota a particularly thorny issue and I prefer to react to this situation in a positive rather than negative fashion.

- 6.7 Instead of trying to seek to impose restrictive practices with, in all likelihood, limited chances of successful implementation, I prefer to advocate **a raising of standards across the game in this country**.
- 6.8 The system of coaching and player development should be so enhanced that there is an increasing stream of better young players qualified to play for England – players who have been better coached from a very young age, and who have the technical, physical and mental skills to succeed at the very highest international level.
- 6.9 For the avoidance of any doubt, I am not, with my recommendations, advocating restrictions on the recruitment of “foreign” players. Nor am I saying that such players are negative to our system of development.

Recommendations

- 11) In the best interests of talented English players, The FA and Clubs should continue to work together to support the production of talented English players for England teams.
- 12) Allow greater opportunity for talented English players to experience international get-togethers.
- 13) Full support and investment to be given in the drive to improve the quality of coaching available at the very youngest age groups
- 14) The FA to cement the long-term player development strategy, and make available a core national coaching syllabus to assist Clubs.
- 15) A change in ethos in age groups 5 – 11 so that much more emphasis is given to skill development and acquisition rather than an emphasis on results in matches. This should include consideration for the enhancement of development centres and their possible future licensing.

7. GRANT AID

- 7.1 Because grant aid for Football Academies and Centres of Excellence at Football League Clubs was regarded as a crucial concern, it was the subject of my first recommendations in my Interim Report.
- 7.2 It has been suggested that 3.3% (estimated at £66M in 2005/06) of the total expenditure of professional football is allocated by the “industry” to young player development. This figure has been likened to a “Research and Development” (R&D) component which, across all industries, runs at an average R&D to turnover ratio of 3.06% in the UK and 3.33% in the US.
- 7.3 There is no agreed or common accounting methodology imposed on all Clubs in respect of their expenditure on Young Player Development. For instance, one Club might charge all premises related costs (including the financing of capital building work) in respect of young player development activities to its “youth” budget whilst the next might not.

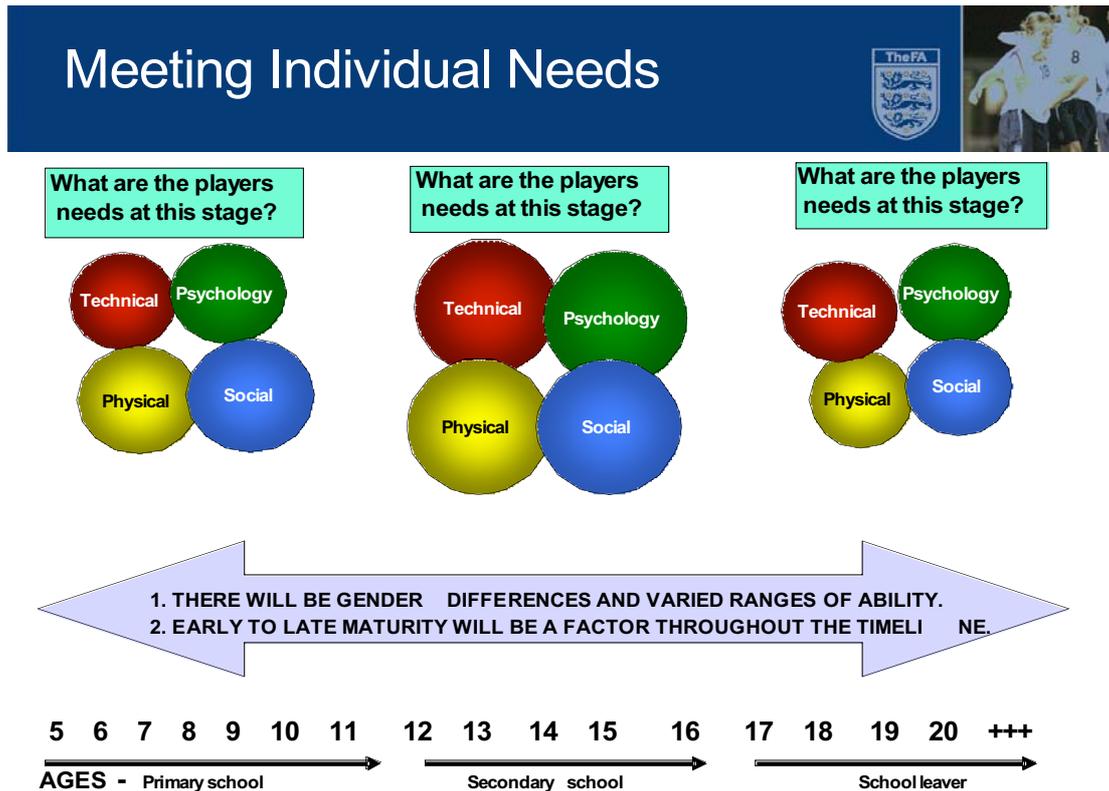
- 7.4 However, it is evident that Young Player Development activities at many Football League Clubs rely very considerably on the annual grant aid that has recently been provided by the FA, the Premier League and the Football Foundation.
- 7.5 Almost 75% of Football League Clubs felt that grant aid was the most important factor in securing progress. Clubs need stability and consistency of funding, notwithstanding issues of non-compliance and sanction, to allay very legitimate concerns over long-term planning and jobs. Uncertainty of grant aid does not allow future plans to be made with any confidence. This would be partly resolved if grant aid was agreed on a four year **reviewable** basis. However, factors impacting on ability or willingness to invest such as potential downturn in TV revenues need to be taken into account.
- 7.6 Levels of grant aid have not increased since 1998. If RPI had been applied since 1998 the figure would have risen from £138k to £180k annually.
- 7.7 It is my understanding that, since my Interim Report, the Premier League has recently made an offer to increase its contribution of grant aid to the Football League for Young Player Development.
- 7.8 Clearly, as will be referred to in the section on licences and sanctions (section 15), maintaining the standards required for a licence is a fundamental for the payment of grant aid.
- 7.9 Hitherto the grant aid paid to clubs has been at a flat rate. I consider, however, that there would be merit in making an element of any increase in grant aid to be payable in recognition of best practice. Examples of best practice rewards could include support for the employment of skills coaches, fostering better links with local schools, the employment of specialist support personnel and the arranging and hosting of festivals to name but a few.

Recommendations

- 16) I reiterate the recommendations with regard to funding and grant aid as set out in my Interim Report. They were stated exactly as follows:
- Funding should remain as a minimum at the same levels as 2006/07 for season 2007/08
 - The framework and funding levels should be put in place and agreed for a minimum of four years. Academies and Centres of Excellence should be able to plan against that background.
 - Parachute payments to clubs relegated to the Football Conference should be for two years.
- 17) Increase levels of grant aid to £180K per club per year for the 2008/09 season.
- 18) Grant aid should not be paid unless the required standards are met for a licence
- 19) Increased levels of grant aid should be used to permit funding for specific activities at individual clubs based on, and rewarding, best practice.

8. COACH EDUCATION AND COACH DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1 I believe that a system of quality coaching is fundamental to the development of our young footballers. I am delighted to see the renewed focus of attention being placed on this area by the FA. It is no coincidence that sports achieving success on the international stage place great store on quality coaching – not just at the highest level but right throughout the athlete and player development pathway.
- 8.2 I referred at paragraph 6.3 above to the publication by the FA of its LTPD model and set out below a simple diagram describing the model.



- 8.3 The right coach - and coaching environment - for the right player at the right time must be a mantra that everyone in the game should subscribe to. My consultations consistently revealed calls for coach education and qualifications to be right at the top of the "to do" list. Clubs in both the Leagues were consistent in their demands for improved qualifications and coach continuing professional development (CPD).
- 8.4 It is clear that there is demand for more and better coaches, for age-specific coaching, for appropriate and high quality CPD opportunities for coaches, and more localised (regional) delivery of coaching courses and qualifications.

- 8.5 Equally, research by the FA has demonstrated the overwhelming need to develop quality coaches at the youngest age groups (5-11 year olds) at all levels of football, be it in the National Game or the Professional Game. My remit is confined to the Professional Game, but it is clear from the comments of Football Academy and Centre of Excellence Managers and leading coaches, that there is increasing overlap of the National and Professional Games in the area of coaching very young children. This reinforces my strong belief that **coach education is a “golden thread” that runs throughout the game** no matter when or where a young player is taking part in the sport. Coach Education programmes that overlap The National and Professional Game should help to ensure seamless player progression and development
- 8.6 The FA is to be commended for making a new and senior Coaching appointment focussed on Young Player Development. The need for syllabus review – content and delivery – is paramount. Again, I am encouraged by proposals to introduce **“skills coaches”** and age-specific coaches. The coaching regime required for young players aged 5-11 years old is a highly specialist area, and coaches of these children in any game must be rewarded appropriately; a point borne out consistently by the staff at clubs. We cannot underestimate how important the formative years are to the establishment of correct technique, basic skill acquisition, the understanding of the principles of training, and the learning of the game in a fun but challenging environment. To this end, coach education programmes will, inevitably, overlap the National Game and the Professional game.
- 8.7 The issue of coaching qualifications is a particularly thorny one in football with an accepted practice of an 18 month dispensation for former players and unqualified coaches to seek the necessary qualifications to work at a particular level. However this was introduced initially as a transitional mechanism to phase in the Charter for Quality and it was never intended to be permanent.
- 8.8 A clear deadline for staff already in the system to gain prescribed qualifications is vital along with the removal of the 18 month dispensation Rule.
- 8.9 To be serious about driving up standards there is a need to recognise the paramount importance of the right qualifications for coaches and for those qualifications to be built on by a vigorous programme of CPD.
- 8.10 FA courses are key training & education components that underpin a strong coaching culture and should be promoted.
- 8.11 One respondent to the consultation stated, “people developing young players need to meet, compare notes, discuss and constantly be extending their networks”...“coaches like nothing better than sharing knowledge”.
- 8.12 Completion by the FA of the National Football Centre (NFC) is one way of establishing a coach development focal point from where regional programmes emanate and where research and development takes place to define new improved standards.
- 8.13 I was struck by the number of excellent and experienced former managers that I met during the consultation. I question whether or not their valuable experience is being fully utilised in the development of young players.

Recommendations

- 20) The FA should continue with the development of a national strategy for a LTPD model in conjunction with the Leagues.
- 21) The FA should produce a clear strategy and business plan for the development of coach education.
- 22) The “automatic” dispensation period for the acquisition of coaching qualifications should be removed. Coaches must be qualified to do the job from day one. I would, reluctantly, allow for application for dispensation to be granted for very short periods but only very rarely should such dispensation be given and only because of a unique combination of circumstances e.g. not just because someone is an ex-player.
- 23) Specific age group qualifications and modules to be introduced into the FA Coach Development curriculum.
- 24) More coaching courses and modules to be made available on a regional basis that would also serve as CPD.
- 25) FA approved CPD modules should be developed for all Young Player Development staff, covering a wide range of expertise, attendance not to be overly restrictive, to allow the widest possible learning experiences and interaction.
- 26) Consideration should be given to the introduction of a mentoring scheme to support coaches.
- 27) The NFC project should be reviewed as a possible base for national courses & re-establish an identity for training & development.



FOOTBALL MATTERS

9. THE FOOTBALL ACADEMY GAMES PROGRAMME

- 9.1 From the major strategic issues that need to be addressed, I have deliberately gone on to the Football Academy Games Programme. It is so often seen as the pivotal component of the provision made by the Football Academies, yet I would contend that there should be some rethinking as to its place. I heard repeated calls for greater flexibility in the programme; an outcome that I wholeheartedly endorse. Indeed I found it very surprising that in a sport that has been so successful following free market principles the rules for player development appear particularly rigid. Surely allowing coaches at clubs to make as many of their own decisions as possible would make them more accountable. New ideas and innovation by all clubs should be encouraged and supported with the endorsement of the Leagues. The pursuit of new ways and better ways of achieving effective player development through research and creative thinking can only serve to stimulate interest & enjoyment for young players.
- 9.2 There has been a tendency to see the Football Academy Games Programme as the culmination or purpose of youth development; to place an over-emphasis on results at all age groups, to focus on winning matches at weekends rather than developing talented young professional players. An over emphasis on results leads to a climate of fear, something remarked on by many in the system.
- 9.3 I must stress that I am not advocating the removal of the “winning ethos”, nor the downplaying of the very successful FA Youth Cup, or the desire to produce winning England Under 21 teams. However, match results, especially at the youngest levels are not all important. It was said by a leading European coach that in many European countries that have an outstanding record of producing players “winning is not the ethos – but they still win”.
- 9.4 I conclude that flexibility is the key. Flexibility of format, flexibility around travelling, flexible scheduling and structure of matches, the opportunities to agree “conditioned” games, and hold festivals. These will all extend the culture of training and improvement and this is paramount. All of this is particularly applicable at the 8 -11 age group.
- 9.5 Furthermore a flexible approach should also lessen the occasions where teams have numerous substitutes lining the side of the pitch that is of limited value to their development and not an example of best practice.

Recommendations

- 28) The three Football authorities should initiate a promotional campaign targeted at key decision makers in Clubs to demonstrate why the winning of matches at a young age is not vital and does not reflect best practise in countries that consistently produce top international senior players.
- 29) Football Academies should be allowed more flexibility to determine elements of their games programme, by reducing the number of mandatory matches and allowing “free” weekends, whilst ensuring all Clubs are able to provide a meaningful Category A games programme (as defined in the Charter for Quality).
- 30) Football Academies should be permitted to play some matches against Centres of Excellence, whilst preserving the exclusive nature of the Football Academy games programme for Clubs who have invested heavily in the system.
- 31) Clubs should be encouraged to participate in, and organise, more festivals.

10 THE TRANSITION FROM YOUTH FOOTBALL TO FIRST TEAM FOOTBALL

- 10.1 It has been widely recognised that the transition from promising young player to regular first team football is not an easy one. This was frequently commented upon by respondents to the consultation. Every player does not follow the same path or rate of progression. A gradual and progressive climb through the ranks is idealised and rare. Often young players can improve in fits and starts, and often need to consolidate at a given level before progressing to the next stage. The football long-term player development model recognises the barriers and hurdles to smooth progression.
- 10.2 At youth level a careful balance needs to be achieved between the number of mid-week Reserve team matches and weekend youth team matches played by any one individual. Combined with time spent on education, there are players in the system not receiving adequate coaching, development and rest periods. This is contrary to good practice and young player development.
- 10.3 Yet the system must accommodate both the precocious talent that leaps to first team and beyond and also the late developer. Both can make a significant impact at the highest echelons of the game.
- 10.4 For the 18-21 years age group, this can be a particularly challenging time. Often players are not yet ready to make the jump to first team football on a regular basis, yet they are not challenged by reserve team football which is not perceived as a vehicle for the continuation of progress. I am concerned at the “gap” that can so often occur between Football Academies (in particular), Centres of Excellence and first team football.
- 10.5 I would pay tribute to the growing success of the loan system. Increasingly, Clubs are sending out young players to continue their football education at a more meaningful level, playing competitive first team football at a club at a lower level. The system should be encouraged but closely monitored.

10.6 In 2006/07, some 310 players under age 23 have been loaned out either between Football League clubs or between Premier League and Football League clubs.

Half or full season loans	Premier League to Football League	42
	Football League to Football League	28
“Emergency” loans	Premier League to Football League	103
	Football League to Football League	137
Total		310

10.7 The “emergency loans” system has proved particularly useful as it has provided an opportunity for many young players to experience first team football in the Football League each season.

10.8 However, the loan system cannot be seen as a **replacement** for a Club’s own youth programme. The possible negative impact this may have on morale and local player production could bring into question the value of operating programmes in smaller Clubs. The loan system should be designed, at all times, to benefit the development needs of the player.

10.9 The consultations revealed almost unanimous criticism of Reserve team games and the Reserve team environment. They are not perceived as being appropriate for helping youth players’ transition into first team football. Much criticism focused on the Reserves not being linked to the Football Academy or Centre of Excellence but being aligned totally to the first team. It is also evident that players frequently double up across teams leading to overplaying. To quote one club “very few senior players play in reserve football and therefore the scholars are elevated to a level that inflates their actual ability in many cases and devalues the competition and achievement. This midweek fixture impacts on coaching time and therefore interrupts development programmes”. It must be noted that entry into reserve team leagues remains optional.

10.10 It is clear there is no solution that is unanimously agreed upon.

10.11 It is interesting to note that the structure (and importance) of international football at Under 21 level is not mirrored by a similar domestic structure for players in this age group. Comparisons with Italy, for example, show that Under 21 football has an important part to play in development. The Italian sporting structure, run by the Olympic Committee (CONI), places great stock in developing an Under 21 team for Olympic competition.

10.12 It would seem logical that if a match programme for the Under 21 age group was introduced, it should naturally form part of the Young Player Development programme, an extension of the age group system. I appreciate that Clubs will see such a programme as an increased cost in the short term, but it could be a commercial opportunity for Clubs and the sport in the long term.

10.13 To facilitate opportunity for First Team managers to use the Under 21 matches for instances such as players recovering from injury or loss of form, some overage players should be allowed to compete. The number frequently suggested during the consultation was three.

10.14 Much comment was made by consultees about the difficulty of having a consistent ethos and development policy throughout the Club when first team Managers may frequently come and go at very short notice, often bringing (and taking) with them close colleagues they feel they can trust. Balancing the short and long term needs of a Club is a real issue for club owners and Boards.

Recommendations

- 32) Consult with Clubs on the feasibility of the possible introduction of an Under 21 match programme and development programme as part of the Young Player Development structure.
- 33) Due consideration should be given to including in an Under 21 match programme options such as overage players and potential commercial opportunities.
- 34) Hold seminars and conferences with Club boards to discuss the importance of a consistent development policy that delivers stability in youth development and overcomes the instability associated with short term hiring and removal of first team coaches and support staff.
- 35) Promote the advantages of best practice and stability of staff appointments in Young Player Development posts to Club directors.
- 36) Clubs should have a Director or Senior Executive who has the responsibility to oversee Young Player Development including the appointment of Youth Coaches.

STRUCTURAL MATTERS

11 REGULATIONS AND RULES

- 11.1 I examined the Programme for Excellence Regulations of the FA and the corresponding Young Player Development Regulations and Rules of the two Leagues. A detailed analysis of the three documents revealed not only similarities and common statements but also very many differences for no apparent reasons.
- 11.2 As a matter of principle, I believe that the three rulebooks should be simplified and harmonised. To this end, the FA's Programme for Excellence Regulations should be redrafted to set out a framework of guiding principles. The two Leagues' Rules should be set in accordance with these principles and should differ from one another only where there is good cause.
- 11.3 I can see no justification for the Leagues having different Rules for Young Player Development. Irrespective of the League of their parent Club, all Football Academies must follow the same Rules and regulatory process. Similarly, all Centres of Excellence must operate on a level playing field.
- 11.4 Also as a matter of principle I believe the rules should be followed and adhered to. If they are wrong they should be changed. If not they should be enforced. If this does not happen those Clubs following the rules are at a clear disadvantage to those that do not. And this is a recipe for a breakdown in the structure. One Club commented that "it is becoming harder and harder for an 'honest' club to operate. This trend must be reversed or all is lost".
- 11.5 The Vulnerable Young Persons Act legislation will come into force in September 2008 that will hold clubs responsible for any health and safety or child welfare incidents that may occur. This fact must be addressed in clubs now through appropriate risk assessment and certification.

- 11.6 It is important that young players and their parents have a good understanding of the rules and the system in Football Academies and Centres of Excellence. I appreciate that it is a requirement for them to be given a copy of the rule on the registration of the young player but these rules are (sometimes by necessity) complicated and not easy to fully understand.



Recommendations

- 37) The FA Programme for Excellence Regulations should be revised to set out the framework under which the Football Academies and Centres of Excellence operate.
- 38) The two Leagues' Young Player Development Rules and Regulations should be harmonised. This should take place urgently. Those (harmonisation) changes that can be enacted straight away should be. It is reasonable that others may require transitional arrangements and the Leagues should identify these.
- 39) Rules and Regulations should be rigorously and consistently enforced to create a culture of compliance.
- 40) A very clear and simple step by step guide to the main Rules should be produced so that parents and young players know what procedures are available to them and understand what they need to do. This must be given to parents and young players when they first join the system.

12. SCOUTING

- 12.1 I was surprised to learn that it is not obligatory for scouts to be allowed to watch other Academies and Centres of Excellence matches following consultations with Heads of Youth and Academy Managers. Indeed I understand that it is increasingly common for permission to be refused carte blanche. This would seem to lead to less than satisfactory assessment opportunities which cannot be in the player's best interests.
- 12.2 The FA is developing a Talent Identification course. It would seem logical for this to lead to a strong system of training, registering and regulating scouts who should have a code of conduct by which they should abide.

Recommendations

- 41) Consult with all Clubs regarding possible mandatory requirements that registered scouts from other clubs can be allowed to watch Football Academy and Centres of Excellence matches after firstly informing the host club of their intention to attend.

13. COMPENSATION PAYMENTS

- 13.1 I consider the current provisions for the compensation payments to be made when a young player moves between clubs to be unsatisfactory.
- 13.2 The system may not be understood by all parents and could lead to disappointment when they discover their son's signing for a club whilst very young can effectively tie him to that club and militate against his moving elsewhere.
- 13.3 Because they do not know the likely outcome of a compensation award, the system can serve to discourage Clubs offering talented boys, who have signed at another Football Academy or Centre of Excellence, the opportunity to enjoy what may be considered to be enhanced staffing, facilities or opportunity.
- 13.4. I conclude that it would be in the interests of the young players, their parents and the clubs for a transparent tariff system for compensation payments to be determined.
- 13.5 The tariff should trigger payments on a sliding scale if the young player goes on to success in the professional game. This would have a number of benefits. It would give greater reward to clubs that find and first recruit young talent. It would alleviate the genuine concern of those clubs that their best talent could leave without them being rewarded for their development work. For the clubs acquiring players, the cost would be known to them.
- 13.6 In the event of a dispute over the application of the tariff, the appeals system which already exists in the form of the Professional Game Compensation Committee (PGCC) could adjudicate. However the remit of PGCC is not understood by many staff at the clubs and its appeal decisions are not at present fully explained. The appeal process can sometimes take a long time.

Recommendations

- 42) A transparent tariff for compensation payments should be determined by the Youth Management Group, and should be published to parents and to Clubs and implemented as a matter of urgency. The tariff should be on a sliding scale rewarding future success.
- 43) The terms of reference of PGCC should be published and there should be a strict timetable in the appeals process with cut-off dates for responses from clubs. The reasons for PGCC decisions should be given.

14 MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 14.1 At present each League operates its own internal monitoring system in respect of compliance by member Clubs with its Young Player Development Rules. The Rules themselves are not common and perceptions exist that the standards applied by the two systems of monitoring are not common.
- 14.2 Funding eligibility criteria is established by the FA for the funding of Football League Academies and Centres of Excellence. Consequently the compliance monitoring of the expenditure of grant aid awarded to Football League Clubs is carried out by the FA.
- 14.3 In addition the Football Scholarship education programme is subjected to internal and external verification and audit by the Learning and Skills Council; and, in the case of the Premier League, child protection (“Safeguarding”) arrangements are inspected by independent expert assessors.



- 14.4 A culture of excellence demands that high standards are set, that measurement is against these standards and progress and achievement is recorded. Where progress is stagnant or in reverse, action must be taken. At the heart of this drive for improvement and progression is the use of quality assurance.

- 14.5 Thus I believe that compliance monitoring should be enhanced by a system of quality assurance based on ISO standards. This already happens with other aspects of FA activity through the British Standards Institute (BSI). Frequent comment was made during the consultation about the lack of qualifications of staff in the young player development system. This was succinctly expressed by one club who said "The support staff in place at XXX FC all have the required qualifications, with ratios of staff to player being met. In-service training is carried out regularly and is documented. It could be suggested that not all Clubs adhere to this." The introduction of ISO standard quality assurance would ensure that such examples of lack of confidence in the system are minimised.
- 14.6 The quality assurance system should be operated independently. Equally in the case of audit of grant aid expenditure, I consider it essential that an independent body carries out this function and does so with the least bureaucracy required to do the job effectively. Furthermore, the findings of independent audit reporting should be incorporated into future grant award conditions and considered in best practice development opportunities.
- 14.7 I conclude that best practise would be to establish Key Performance Indicator's (KPI's) and to monitor them. KPI's would cover technical issues such as appropriately qualified coaches in situ or facility provision maintained at the level specified by the Football Academy or Centre of Excellence rules. Where possible and appropriate the KPI should mirror the relevant rule. In the case of clubs receiving grant aid the KPI would also cover the audit of grant aid expenditure. Clubs should also report on the retention, progress and achievements of their young players each year.

Recommendations

- 44) A system of quality assurance to mutually agreed (including the FA) industry standards (as in the case of industries' ISO) to underpin the monitoring of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence by the Football League and the Premier League. This should be developed and delivered by a single and external ISO body.
- 45) The FA to prepare a best practice guide and template that stipulates financial audit and accounting arrangements for all eligible expenditure costs relating to the provision of grant-aid.
- 46) The audit of grant aid expenditure should be carried out by an independent body with a financial background and should involve the financial officers of the Club.
- 47) KPI's should be established for both technical and grant aid aspects of the Young Player Development programme.
- 48) Clubs should report their own verifiable data for players produced at the end of each season and these should be benchmarked appropriately. This should be an important KPI for Clubs.
- 49) All support staff in Football Academies and Centres of Excellence must have the appropriate qualifications.
- 50) Introduce a membership identification system to ensure players' personal details are correct and to aid a statistical tracking system throughout their football careers.

15 LICENCES AND SANCTIONS

- 15.1 The Club's parent League licenses its Football Academy or Centre of Excellence.
- 15.2 Sanctions for non-compliance with the Leagues' respective Rules are available and can be enforced with the possibility of withdrawal of the Club's licence.
- 15.3 The Football League currently adopts a two-stage process. Firstly, the League identifies and seeks to rectify a problem or issue through collaboration and joint working. Only if this is unsuccessful does stage two apply. At this point the League threatens suspension or revocation of licence if action is not taken by a prescribed time.
- 15.4 The Premier League works similarly but in three stages, the second of which is to impose a fixed penalty fine as specified by the Rules of the Premier League.
- 15.5 I consider that the process and criteria for sanctions must be consistent across all Football Academies and Centres of Excellence as the case may be. The system of sanctions should be more formal, transparent and understood by all parties. Establishing agreed KPI's will aid this transparency. Suspension, downgrading or the complete removal of licenses should be a very powerful mechanism to ensure compliance.
- 15.6 Establishing agreed KPI's (as set out above in my recommendations on quality assurance) will aid the development of the new sanctions process.
- 15.7 Central to any discipline and sanction protocol is the will and empowerment of the sanctioning Body to observe due process without prejudice. The greater the independence of such Body, the better placed it will be to make objective decisions.

Recommendations

- 51) Football Academy and Centres of Excellence Licences should be reviewed annually against agreed KPI's.
- 52) Sanctions must ensure that the criteria for the operation of a Football Academy or Centre of Excellence are met by the club and should include the suspension, downgrading or withdrawal of the licence.
- 53) A sliding scale of transparent sanctions for minor and administrative infringements of licence requirements should be introduced.
- 54) An appeals system in respect of sanctions with clear timescales and guidelines on actions to be taken should be put in place.

16 EDUCATION OF YOUNG PLAYERS

- 16.1 I applaud the Football Scholarship, the programme undertaken by the outstanding boys who are selected to become full time to their clubs on the completion of their compulsory education. The Football Scholarship combines the boys' football development and match programmes with provision for the young players to continue their academic education. The qualifications they achieve in this can stand them in good stead for later life. It also helps them develop as young adults. Designed as it is around, and complementary to, their football experiences, the education component of the Football Scholarship should also lead to improvement in their football performance and their development as young professional footballers.
- 16.2 The educational framework to achieve a Work Based Learning NVQ at level 3 is a matter for the Leagues and their respective contracting bodies, Skills Active and the Learning and Skills Council. These are subject to external inspection. The education contracts and contracting arrangements appear to work well.
- 16.3 In the past young players, in the Football Scholarship system, were required to attend a coaching qualification course. I am pleased to see that the scheme is continuing. In the case of the Premier League it is continuing on a voluntary basis and the volunteers are getting much better results than were achieved formerly.
- 16.4 I welcome the inclusion of a new module in the Football Scholarship focused on the Laws of the Game and the business of officiating in matches. Understanding the referee's perspective, let alone being qualified, can benefit players in future years and may generate over time more match officials who are former players.
- 16.5 Clubs in both the Premier League and the Football League raised the question of contact time with school-age players with me as a significant issue. In a recurring theme, respondents indicated a desire to increase the contact time spent with school age children. There needs to be more time and, particularly, more **quality** time wherever possible. Whilst schools in England have an afternoon session (unlike some European countries) most schools in England now finish at about 3.30 p.m. and Clubs could start coaching by 4.00 p.m. if the will is there
- 16.6 A Club which works closely with schools can secure more quality contact time between the Club and its young players. In a number of cases Football Academies and Centres of Excellence have made arrangements for boys (particularly in the Under 15 and Under 16 age groups) to attend daytime coaching sessions. This practice should be commended and extended.
- 16.7 I consider that Clubs should also consider deploying suitable coaches in schools as has happened in France.

- 16.8 I am conscious of the FA National School that was attended by many of the 2004 and 2006 England Teams. It was a residential operation with its boys attending a local school for their academic education making them available through a release agreement for daytime football development work. I appreciate that since 1997 a number of Clubs have developed school partnerships and have placed Football Academy players at them. I realise that a younger boy placed at a Club may not necessarily be offered a Football Scholarship and I recognise that providing long-term residence for children is a minefield, particularly when (as is the case in football) the children concerned are unable to go home at weekends or in school holidays.
- 16.9 Nevertheless I feel that there is a case for Football Academies developing residential provision, which might include placement at a boarding school, for boys aged under-16 so as to maximise quality contact time with them. In some instances such provision will be ideal for some boys.

Recommendations

- 55) Clubs should continue to develop relationships with local schools to ensure maximum quality contact time between coaches and players.
- 56) More clubs should consider offering residency to school age players as a means to maximise quality contact time between coaches and players.

17 PLAYER RELEASE

- 17.1 Any development programme for potential elite performers in any activity is bound to have to release those who do not sustain their early promise. I have therefore considered the processes for releasing young players by Football Academies and Centres of Excellence and in particular have examined their retention in some other aspect of the game of football.
- 17.2 I am satisfied that this is an area where there has been great progress in recent years, although there remains scope for improvement. Levels of care and support have certainly increased as the Clubs have managed more sensitively the difficult process of "letting a younger player go".
- 17.3 Young players in the Under 16 and Under 18/19 age groups who are to be released from their current Club are invited to take up the opportunity of attending assessment trials arranged by the Leagues to showcase their talents to scouts from other Clubs and leagues. The laudable objective of this event is to try and assist released players in continuing their careers in football.

- 17.4 Almost by definition, it is difficult to keep track of players who drop out of the game altogether and therefore to know what was done, and what more could have been done, to keep them in the game.

Recommendations

- 57) The extension of the assessment trials to other age groups should be considered.
- 58) Alternative opportunities in the game to be considered and emphasised with routes of re-engagement into coaching, administration, support roles and match officials all to be explored.
- 59) Clubs and the Leagues' education bodies (League Football Education and Premier League Learning) should explore appropriate education and training pathways for all players being released from the Football Scholarship programmes and monitor their movements.
- 60) Utilise the membership identification system in Recommendation 50 to form the basis of on-going research studying what happens to players when released by Football Academies and Centres of Excellence.



THE FUTURE

18 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL ACADEMIES AND CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

- 18.1 Earlier in this report I have said that I consider that the dual Young Player Development system provided by the establishment of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence is consistent with the nature of professional football in England and that it should be retained.
- 18.2 Whilst it is fair to say that massive investment has taken place by clubs with Football Academies to provide for at least the minimum facility requirements to obtain a licence, it is equally fair to say that, eight years on, there remain issues of compliance with the criteria, both for the Football Academies and for the Centres of Excellence.
- 18.3 Specific staffing facility and accommodation requirements were laid down as part of the licensing criteria for Football Academies in the Charter including pitch requirements for the Games Programme and an indoor area set at a minimum of 60x40 yards. The Rules of the Leagues followed the Charter specifications.
- 18.4 However the Charter referred only to the need for “adequate” provision of some facilities and this has led to some lack of clarity since a number of rules refer to “adequate” provision as the standard to be applied both to Football Academies and Centres of Excellence.
- 18.5 Where this term is used there is a need to clearly specify the standards actually required and redraft the rules accordingly.
- 18.6 In the case of the Centres of Excellence, the Charter (and the current rules) provide for basic criteria based essentially on standards set in the 1980's. There is therefore a strong case for these criteria to be revisited in the light of current experience including that of the standards of provision attained by national game young player coaching operations.
- 18.7 Individual Clubs have extended facility provision and practice development and in some cases world class facilities, staff and programmes are now provided. However the professional game cannot be complacent. Continued investment will be required to maintain, upgrade and continue to improve both staffing levels and facilities. Standards must continue to rise to encourage further development. One area for future improvement is in specialist support. As standards get higher, sport science, nutrition and specialist support will all become more important. Those clubs wishing to recruit specialist help should have a central source to advise them. As one respondent to the consultation noted, “having information available at the end of a phone would be unbelievably helpful”.
- 18.8 With the emphasis on Health and Safety likely to increase rather than decrease attention must be paid to ensuring facilities, as a minimum, meet the legal requirements. It will therefore be appropriate for relevant certification to be used as a criteria for licensing.
- 18.9 It is without doubt harder to reach the top today than it was 10 years ago. In 10 years time it will be harder still. But improved coaching underpinned by improved facilities will enable the next generations of young players to participate in football at the highest levels.

Recommendations

- 61) Central to the brief of the YMG (ref: section 5) will be to keep the criteria for the operation of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence under constant review, having regard to best practice developments in clubs, other football jurisdictions and other sports.
- 62) All licence criteria and rules for Football Academies and Centres of Excellence that are open to subjective interpretation, for example by use of the undefined term “adequate” should be reviewed for clarification and specification as a matter of urgency.
- 63) A national register should be created of people qualified to work in Football Academies and Centres of Excellence in the fields of sport science, nutrition, and specialist support.
- 64) Facilities must meet Health and Safety standards and be certificated accordingly, to form the minimum requirement for all facilities used.

19 DIGEST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

FOOTBALL ACADEMIES & CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

- 1) The dual system of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence should be retained to defined and approved licensing standards as the basis for Young Player Development in professional football.
- 2) An appropriate re-branding of the titles “Football Academy” and “Centre of Excellence” should be considered.

LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

- 3) A Youth Management Group (YMG) should be set up to implement the findings of this Review, to act as the leadership forum for Young Player Development, and to be given the remit of decision-making, action and review.
- 4) Areas of responsibility for the YMG should include, receiving quality assurance (ISO) reports on Football Academies and Centres of Excellence, deciding fines, sanctions, suspensions, or revoking of licences subject to an appropriate appeals process; and proposing Rule changes.
- 5) The YMG should be independently chaired by someone with a strong football background and have one representative from each of the FA, Football League and Premier League each of whom should be responsible for representing the views of, and reporting back to, their respective organisation.
- 6) The process for appointing the independent Chair should be open and transparent including advertising the role. The FA should have the right to confirm the proposed appointee. For the avoidance of doubt the appointment should not be made without the support of the FA.
- 7) Members of the YMG including the Chair should each have one vote, decisions to be taken by majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Chairman’s vote should determine the matter.



- 8) The YMG should also oversee the year-on-year review of progress of the Young Player Development Programme generally and have the authority to instigate further review if required. A process of continual review and 'learning' is to be encouraged.
- 9) The YMG to receive reports from the Technical Liaison Group (TLG) and Elite Coaching Group (ECG) whose remit would be specific technical matters.
- 10) The YMG should consider opportunities to showcase Young Player Development through appropriate communications and media channels.

CLUB AND COUNTRY

- 11) In the best interests of talented English players, The FA and Clubs should continue to work together to support the production of talented English players for England teams.
- 12) Allow greater opportunity for talented English players to experience international get-togethers.
- 13) Full support and investment to be given in the drive to improve the quality of coaching available at the very youngest age groups
- 14) The FA to cement the long-term player development strategy, and make available a core national coaching syllabus to assist Clubs.
- 15) A change in ethos in age groups 5 – 11 so that much more emphasis is given to skill development and acquisition rather than an emphasis on results in matches. This should include consideration for the enhancement of development centres and their possible future licensing.

GRANT AID

- 16) I reiterate the recommendations with regard to funding and grant aid as set out in my Interim Report. They were stated exactly as follows:
 - Funding should remain as a minimum at the same levels as 2006/07 for season 2007/08
 - The framework and funding levels should be put in place and agreed for a minimum of four years. Academies and Centres of Excellence should be able to plan against that background.
 - Parachute payments to clubs relegated to the Football Conference should be for two years.
- 17) Increase levels of grant aid to £180K per club per year for the 2008/09 season.
- 18) Grant aid should not be paid unless the required standards are met for a licence.
- 19) Increased levels of grant aid should be used to permit funding for specific activities at individual clubs based on, and rewarding, best practice.

COACH EDUCATION AND COACH DEVELOPMENT

- 20) The FA should continue with the development of a national strategy for a LTPD model in conjunction with the Leagues.
- 21) The FA should produce a clear strategy and business plan for the development of coach education.
- 22) The “automatic” dispensation period for the acquisition of coaching qualifications should be removed. Coaches must be qualified to do the job from day one. I would, reluctantly, allow for application for dispensation to be granted for very short periods but only very rarely should such dispensation be given and only because of a unique combination of circumstances e.g. not just because someone is an ex-player.
- 23) Specific age group qualifications and modules to be introduced into the FA Coach Development curriculum.
- 24) More coaching courses and modules to be made available on a regional basis that would also serve as CPD.
- 25) FA approved CPD modules should be developed for all Young Player Development staff, covering a wide range of expertise, attendance not to be overly restrictive, to allow the widest possible learning experiences and interaction.
- 26) Consideration should be given to the introduction of a mentoring scheme to support coaches.
- 27) The NFC project should be reviewed as a possible base for national courses & re-establish an identity for training & development.

THE FOOTBALL ACADEMY GAMES PROGRAMME

- 28) The three Football authorities should initiate a promotional campaign targeted at key decision makers in Clubs to demonstrate why the winning of matches at a young age is not vital and does not reflect best practise in countries that consistently produce top international senior players.
- 29) Football Academies should be allowed more flexibility to determine elements of their games programme, by reducing the number of mandatory matches and allowing "free" weekends, whilst ensuring all Clubs are able to provide a meaningful Category A games programme (as defined in the Charter for Quality).
- 30) Football Academies should be permitted to play some matches against Centres of Excellence, whilst preserving the exclusive nature of the Football Academy games programme for Clubs who have invested heavily in the system.
- 31) Clubs should be encouraged to participate in, and organise, more festivals.

THE TRANSITION FROM YOUTH FOOTBALL TO FIRST TEAM FOOTBALL

- 32) Consult with Clubs on the feasibility of the possible introduction of an Under 21 match programme and development programme as part of the Young Player Development structure.
- 33) Due consideration should be given to including in an Under 21 match programme options such as overage players and potential commercial opportunities.
- 34) Hold seminars and conferences with Club boards to discuss the importance of a consistent development policy that delivers stability in youth development and overcomes the instability associated with short term hiring and removal of first team coaches and support staff.
- 35) Promote the advantages of best practice and stability of staff appointments in Young Player Development posts to Club directors.
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- 50) Introduce a membership identification system to ensure players' personal details are correct and to aid a statistical tracking system throughout their football careers.

LICENCES AND SANCTIONS

- 51) Football Academy and Centres of Excellence Licences should be reviewed annually against agreed KPI's.
- 52) Sanctions must ensure that the criteria for the operation of a Football Academy or Centre of Excellence are met by the club and should include the suspension, downgrading or withdrawal of the licence.
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- 58) Alternative opportunities in the game to be considered and emphasised with routes of re-engagement into coaching, administration, support roles and match officials all to be explored.
- 59) Clubs and the Leagues' education bodies (League Football Education and Premier League Learning) should explore appropriate education and training pathways for all players being released from the Football Scholarship programmes and monitor their movements.
- 60) Utilise the membership identification system in Recommendation 50 to form the basis of on-going research studying what happens to players when released by Football Academies and Centres of Excellence.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL ACADEMIES AND CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

- 61) Central to the brief of the YMG (ref: section 5) will be to keep the criteria for the operation of Football Academies and Centres of Excellence under constant review, having regard to best practice developments in clubs, other football jurisdictions and other sports.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Responses from the Premier League and the Football League

APPENDIX B – References to Selected Statistics on the Numbers of Players coming through Academies and Centres of Excellence

APPENDIX C – Terms of Reference

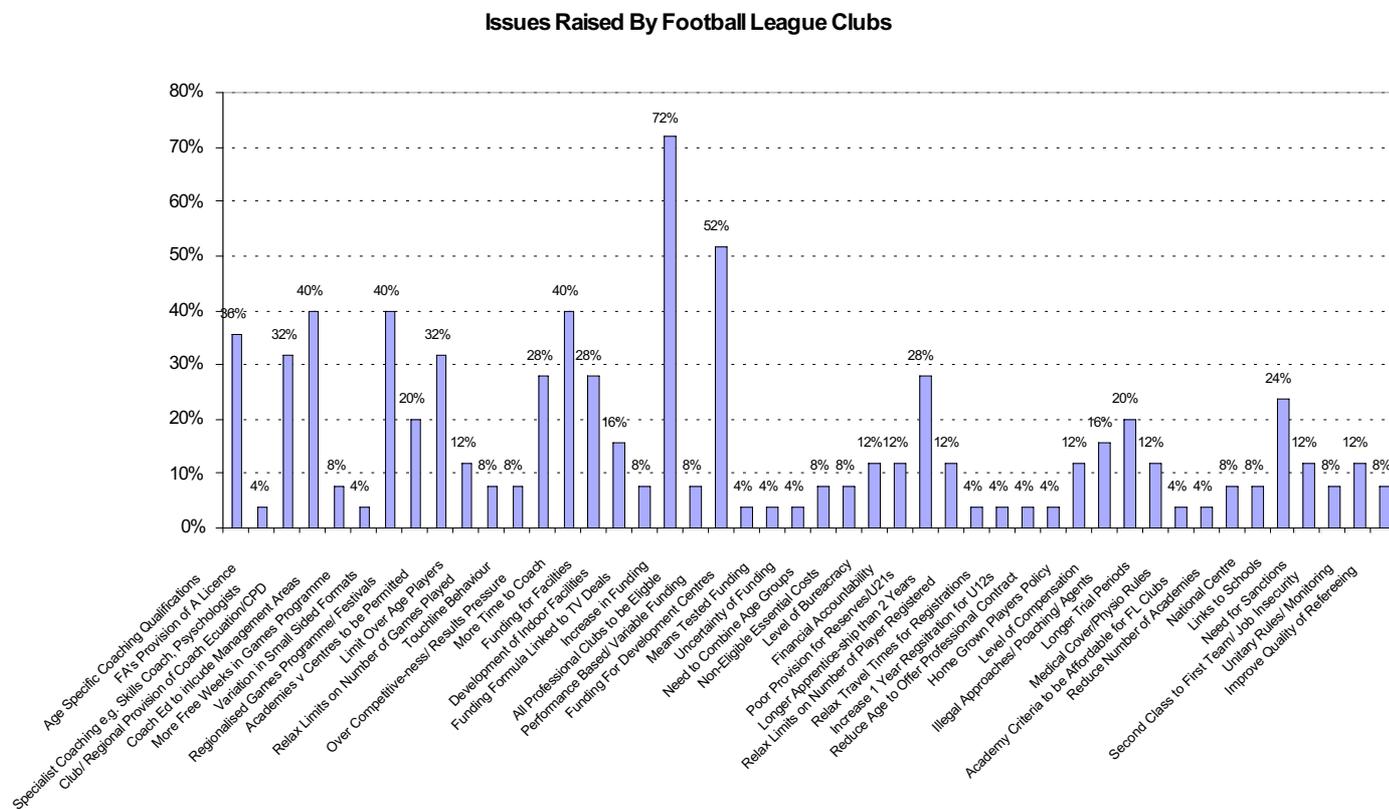
APPENDIX D – The Review Group

APPENDIX E – The Consultation Process

APPENDIX F – References

APPENDIX A – Responses from the Premier League and the Football League

Football League – Issues Raised by Football League Clubs



Premier League – Issue Raised by Premier League Clubs

Consensus views:

- Reduced size of the talent pool due to decline in participation by primary school age boys in street and parks football.
- Access time with school age players should be increased if possible.
- Need to revitalise the programme of CPD for technical staff working with young players.
- All clubs which commit their own financial resources to Young Player Development should be eligible for grant aid – subject to established criteria and audit.
- There should be one set of Rules for Academies.

APPENDIX B – References to Selected Statistics on the Number of Players coming through Academies and Centres of Excellence

Premier League (2007) – Current Contract Players who are Home Grown v2.*

*Based on current Premier League contract players where “Home Grown” is shown if a player has had in his career either a YD4, YD6, Scholarship or Trainee Registration – irrespective of nationality.

Football League (2007) – Football League Player Production Statistics*

*Based on Football League records, detailing England Players, by age-group U16 to U21, in Football League Clubs

Football Association (2007) – Nationality breakdown of players used for Season 05/06 in (1) Premier League and (2) Championship*

*Based on birthplace

Football Association (2007) – Players 16-21 in the Premier League Season 05/06*

*Based on birthplace and does not identify where the development took place.

APPENDIX C – Terms of Reference

Review of Young Player Development in Professional Football

1. The FA, Football League and Premier League have agreed
 - 1.1 To establish a group (the Review Group), consisting of representative of each to review Young Player Development in Professional Football
 - 1.2 To appoint an independent Chair of the Review Group.
2. The Terms of Reference of the Review Group are as follows
 - 2.1 To seek to achieve, wherever possible, unanimity in their recommendations.
 - 2.2 To examine the current frameworks for Young Player Development in clubs in the Premier League and the Football League as set out in the Rules' of the Leagues and to make any recommendations for changes which could lead to improved outcomes for Young Players, Clubs, the Leagues and the FA.
 - 2.3 To examine the current arrangements for the funding of Young Player Development undertaken by the Clubs in membership of the two Leagues and to make agreed recommendations for such funding from Season 2007/8 until further notice.
 - 2.4 To consult widely with all direct and indirect stakeholders in Young Player Development in Professional Football on the Review Group's preliminary proposals. These consultations to include (but not be limited to) parents of young players; past, present and prospective professional football players; Clubs (directors, management and practitioners for the delivery of Young Player Development); representative Professional Associations; and the English Schools' FA.
 - 2.5 To report on their preliminary recommendations to the Football Management Team of the FA, Premier League and Football League by 1 December 2006.
 - 2.6 In the light of the response of the Football Management Team to the preliminary recommendations, to report back to the Boards of the FA, the Premier League and the Football League with their final proposals by 31 December 2006 so as to enable these proposals to be considered for implementation for Season 2007/2008.

APPENDIX D - THE REVIEW GROUP

Richard Lewis is Executive Chairman of the RFL

Huw Jennings is Youth Development Manager at the Premier League.

John Peacock is Head of Coaching at the FA

Michael Tattersall is Deputy Operations Director at the Football League.

Hamish McInnes (Secretary to the Review Group) is an independent sports management consultant.

APPENDIX E - THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

a. The process of consultation

I consulted widely across key parts of the game. The process was crucially important as it gave individuals and Clubs the chance to let us know their views and share with us their expertise. I wrote to every Club in the Premier League and the Football League as well as consulting key national and international organisations and associations (see below).

In the main part we solicited written responses, and received 16 returns from Premier League Clubs and 27 returns from Football League Clubs.

The process also included one-to-one meetings, briefing sessions for the Club chairmen of each League, and the receipt of unsolicited comments, reports and opinions.

b. Consultation letter – 17 November 2006



To all: Chief Executives/Chairmen; Club Secretaries; Team Managers/Head Coaches; Academy Managers/Centre of Excellence Managers

Dear Colleague

RE: REVIEW OF YOUNG PLAYER DEVELOPMENT IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

I have been asked by The FA, Football League and FA Premier League to conduct a review of the arrangements for Young Player Development in Professional Football which stemmed from the Charter for Quality written by Howard Wilkinson in 1997. Joining me on the Review Group are John Peacock (The FA), Michael Tattersall (The Football League) and Huw Jennings (The FA Premier League).

I am keen to gather views on these matters from a wide range of organisations and people involved and interested in young player development and I shall very much welcome your input.

I want you to feel able to comment without restriction on the subject but in doing so I would appreciate it if you could tell me what you think about the following overarching questions:

1. What do you think is key to improving young professional player development?
2. How can we improve the environment for nurturing talented young players?
3. What is your view on the quality and quantity of coaching and support staff in youth development and how can it be improved?
4. Would any changes in the rules and regulations of each of the governing bodies better facilitate effective young player development? If so, what would these changes be?
5. What should the funding levels be? Who should be eligible? How should it be allocated?

The deadline I have been set is a tight one and I should be very grateful if you could let me have your views on these questions and any other points you might wish to make as soon as possible. The Review Group next meets on **Thursday 7th December**. It will help if you can let me have your response either by post to The RFL, Red Hall, Red Hall Lane, Leeds LS17 8NB or by email to richard.lewis@rfl.uk.com.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



RICHARD LEWIS
Executive Chairman RFL &
Chairman of Review Group

c. List of consultees

The following clubs, organisations and individuals were invited to comment:

- All Premier League Clubs
- All Football League Clubs
- The Professional Footballers' Association
- The League Managers' Association
- The English Schools FA
- The Football Supporters Association
- The Technical and Development Staffs Association
- Mr Andy Roxburgh, UEFA Technical Director
- Mr Craig Simmons, FA Player Development Adviser

APPENDIX F – REFERENCES

At the outset of the review it was deemed vital to consider relevant existing documentation. As our work progressed we also, where appropriate, commissioned key papers or reports. These were prepared specifically for the Review Group by staff of the FA, the Football League and the Premier League.

'A Charter For Quality' – Football Education for Young Players. Howard Wilkinson, The FA. (1997).

'FA Technical Control Board Academy Review' – The FA in conjunction with the FA Premier League and the Football League. (2002).

'Football Breeding Grounds (Nurseries) in Europe' – Paolo Prani and Vanni Sartini. (2006).

'FAPL U18/U19 Assessment Trials' – S.Higham. (2005)

'European Academies Review – The Structure and Operation of Football Academies in Europe' – Matthew Pain, The FA. (2006).

'An overview of the fundamentals in the physical and physiological development of young and youth players.' – The FA. (2002).

'FL Youth Development: Grant Aid Funding Information and Guidance for Clubs.' - The Football League. (2006).

'FA Players Medical Record Cards – Samples' - The FA.

'The FA Premier League Academy Handbook. Season 2006-2007.' – The FA Premier League (2006).

'Academy Fixtures Under 9 – Under 15. Season 2006-2007.' - The FA Premier League (2006).

'Football League paper on contentious and non-contentious issues' – Internal Football League paper. (2007)

