



Recommendations

- 1 *The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee are invited to **note** the information provided concerning the benefits, investment and challenges with running the Football Academies associated with Motherwell Football Club.*

Introduction

- 2 *Motherwell Football Club welcomes the continuing interest shown by the Scottish Parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of 11 March and 17 June concerning Football Academies in Scotland¹.*

Purpose

- 3 *The purpose of this response is to contribute to this discussion based upon the experience and reality of running Football Academies for boys and girls within the financial envelope of a community focused fan- owned club competing within the Scottish Premiership and to make some observations based upon the differential compensation mechanisms that are in place north and south of the border.*

Background

- 4 *The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament of the 11 March 2025 made a number of observations concerning Football Academies in Scotland². The main facts raised during this session were:*

- *Approximately 3,000 young men/boys are registered with Football Academies in Scotland of which about 0.7% will end up in football.*
- *Approx 0.7% make the grade in men's football.*
- *99.3% therefore that have to leave the clubs.*

- 5 *Key questions asked by the committee were:*

- *How do football clubs support or prepare those leaving the football academies?*
- *Is it right for any organisation to control the freedom of movement of children?*
- *What more could be done to support, mainly boys, who are cut lose from Academy football?*

The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament of the 17 June 2025 called upon further evidence concerning welfare and sustainability in Scottish Youth Football³.

Key areas covered by the committee included:

- *Comparisons with some other football systems.*
- *Regulatory procedures and governance of youth football.*
- *Reflections upon a possible 4 rule changes*
- *Historical evidence from different committee's e.g. public petition's committee.*

¹ See [Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of 11 March 2025](#).

² See [Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of 11 March 2025](#)

³ See [Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of 17 June 2025](#)



Motherwell Football Club acknowledges that the official report of the 17th of June makes several allegations that it is not for us to answer but rather the football authorities. There does seem to be a degree of divergence between members present on the 17th of June concerning the experience of football academies.

- 6 In contributing to this case Motherwell Football Club acknowledges that the Scottish Parliament has had a long-standing interest in improving the provision of youth football in Scotland. Something that is substantiated in the report of the Public Petitions Committee of 22 June 2020 entitled *Improving Youth Football in Scotland*⁴. Something that is welcomed by Motherwell Football Club.
- 7 Motherwell Football Club recognises the long-standing nature of the debate and recent questions raised by the Committee and *for example* coverage of the issue and its history as represented in the *Improving Youth football in Scotland* report⁵. It also recognises the Scotland's professional football clubs have been reported to the UK's competition watchdog over the rules for registering child footballers⁶.
- 8 *The Scottish Football Associations Social Return on Investment study reported at the time*⁷: 61% of all youth under 16 in Scotland participate in football. The Minister res[ponsibhle for sport at the time for Social Care has acknowledged the reach and scale that football has in Scotland and how it is contribution to non-sporting outcomes such as health.
- 9 *Motherwell Football Club recognises that it has a social and economic commitment to the communities reached by its football activities. Motherwell Football Club's social return on investment study reported that*⁸: (i) £8.563 million economic impact of social benefits; (ii) £387, 000 direct contribution to the economy; and (iii) a preventative health care spend of £4.62 million.
- 10 *Our football participation activities also helped to reduce school absence and improve education attainment. Football participants included in this data capture those aged from under 11 to over 70 with 326 being male and 126 being female. Should this 2022 report be repeated today the expectation is that the social and economic return on investment would be considerably greater than that reported in 2022.*
- 11 *Part of this commitment includes Football Academy provision for boys and girls. During the 2024-2025 season The Boys Academy numbered around 110 and the Girls Academy numbered 60.*
- 12 *The benefits of being involved in the Motherwell Football Academy include:*
 - (i) *Access to the highest standard of coaching for young players to develop as players and young people on and off the pitch.*
 - (ii) *Access to the highest standard of Sports science and medical provision.*
 - (iii) *Support from a dedicated trained Child Wellbeing Officer.*
 - (iv) *Improving the young person's health, fitness and wellbeing by around 8-10 hours of sporting activity per week.*
 - (v) *All players guaranteed playing time minutes throughout the season.*
 - (vi) *An exit strategy to assist players if and when they move on to provide options to continue their development and playing football either at other Club Academies, University Scholarships or grass roots football.*

⁴ See [PE1319: Improving Youth Football in Scotland 22 June 2020.](#)

⁵ See [PE1319: Improving Youth Football in Scotland 22 June 2020.](#)

⁶ See [Clubs reported to watchdog for youth football deals.](#)

⁷ See [Scottish Football Association Social Return on Investment Reports 2020.](#)

⁸ See [Motherwell Football Club Community Trust Social Return on Investment Report 2022.](#)

- (vii) *Football development and participation within a safe, supervised environment.*
 - (viii) *Academy players at Motherwell progress at Motherwell and get game time – the history of Lennon Miller's development through to national team is perhaps the most recent example of this.*
- 13 *The committee acknowledged in response to a question asked by Gillian Mackay MSP that participation in sport by people from low-socio -economic backgrounds was low. An observation that is supported by sportscotland's evidence.*
 - 14 *The costs to the club of running the Football Academies are such that operating revenue rarely matches operating costs. As an example, the Motherwell FC Boys Academy receive an annual grant for meeting the SFA Criteria for elite level of £120,000 per annum, however costs for the Academy will average around £500,000 per annum including training & playing facilities rentals, provision of qualified coaches and medical staff, provision of training & playing kit for all players, and travel costs for away matches.*
 - 15 *The cost of running Motherwell Girls Academy*

Total income for the Motherwell Girls Academy averages around £45k (including a grant from Scottish FA or around £8k) however costs for facility hire, kit & equipment, match officials and operational expenses average £70k.
Motherwell Football Club is committed to women and girl's football. The club carries a loss of about £100k per annum supporting this mission.
 16. *Motherwell Football Club works to ensure the connection between the club, the Academies and the Community is the best it can be within the current level of resource available. The former Chair of sportscotland sits on our Community Trust board. The club benefits from local Active School Sport Co-ordinator funding associated with the Community Trust activities.*
 17. *The areas in which the club operates include significant areas of social-economic deprivation. For example, Motherwell Football Club provides regular support to local food banks. The Football Academies are located within an environment and culture that cares for the community. This is a form of informal learning in and of itself.*
 18. *It has been estimated that our economic activity generates about £2.5 million of tax revenues across the UK.*
 19. *All of this and more happens within a competitive context in which the compensation mechanisms for developing young footballers are different in Scotland and England. In Scotland at present academy players can move at the end of any given season for no compensation unless the new Club in the future sign the player on a professional contract. At Motherwell FC, we have in the past year developed 4 players who the subsequently moved to Rangers (2 players), Celtic and Hearts who despite the investment and costs incurred by Motherwell FC as noted in 13. in developing the young players over the years there is currently no requirement to contribute to the costs incurred by the new Club.*
 20. *Despite Motherwell FC having a better pathway to 1st team football we are noticing the bigger Clubs operating a scatter gun approach and taking all the other Clubs best talent with the requirement to compensate towards cost only if the young player when they leave school and only if they turn professional.*
 21. *Scotland qualified for the Euro Finals in Germany in 2024, of the squad that travelled to represent our country:*

- 13 (50%) came through Scottish non-Rangers/Celtic Academies

- 2 (7.7%) came through Rangers but only played a few or no games for Rangers
- 7 (16.92%) came through English teams where they made their debuts
- Just 4 (15.38%) came through Rangers/Celtic Academies

There is therefore a real risk that many of the Academies will look at the costs incurred and weigh up the risk of losing young players to 'bigger clubs' for no compensation towards costs and consider closing them. This could be a real concern for Scottish football in the long term in terms of reaching Euro Championship Finals and World Cups.

In England it is completely different, despite there also being a Child Commissioner. The EPPP system was set up in 2012 by the FA. Premier League and English Football League who recognised the importance of nurturing home-grown talent but also that Clubs investing in young players for their development require to be compensated for their expenditure.

The English (EPPP) compensation system is shown below:

Under 9:	£5,000 per year
Under 10:	£7,500 to £10,000 depending on Category of Academy per year
Under 11:	£10,000 to £15,000 depending on Category of Academy per year
Under 12:	£15,000 to £45,000 depending on Category of Academy per year
Under 13:	£20,000 to £60,000 depending on Category of Academy per year
Under 14 to 16:	£25,000 to £80,000 per year depending on Category of Academy

The English governing bodies (EPPP) finance Club Academies by contributing around two thirds of their expenditure per season (unlike Scottish FA where the maximum grant is £120k per season) e.g. an EFL club spending £450k per annum on their youth academy will receive circa £300k centrally funded yet the English system still have a compensation system to recover some of the 'investment' in the young person dependant on the young players time at a Club and the level of Academy which relates back to the expenditure to reach particular levels.

The compensation system was brought in 2012 as they also wished to minimise the movement of young players from one academy to another which was regarded as not in the young person's best interests.

Observations

22. *The purpose of this contribution is to provide some further information on benefits, investment and challenges with running Football Academies associated with Motherwell Football Club.*
23. *The development of young people in football clubs does not exist in isolation from (i) the multi-faceted operations and opportunities created by being part of a Scottish Premiership Football Club; (ii) the comparative context which is Scotland where for example (a) clubs chose to carry the costs for girls academies and (b) development compensation for young people in football is greater in other parts of the UK and (c) all contributing partners acknowledge that more can and needs to be done.*
24. *Motherwell FC are excited about the possibility of enabling the development of new training facilities for boys, girls, men and women and the community in one of the most socio-economic under resourced areas of Motherwell which in turn is one of Scotland's SIMD challenged demographics with a high level of low-income households.*
25. *Participation in football academies and Scottish Premiership football clubs more widely carries with it significant non-sporting outcomes.*

Resource implications

26. *It is not the purpose of this contribution to provide a detailed resource case. We are happy to contribute to this at a national level. It is interesting to observe that football has scale and reach like no other sport and that countries like Australia are planning a gold and green decade of investment on the basis of what is and can be delivered through this asset.*
27. *The framing of the enquiry into football academies could benefit from a broader acknowledgement of what clubs deliver and enable as well as what they could do better.*



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