



Scottish Women's Football

Player Dispensation Rules and Regulations

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Guidance notes

Scottish Women's Football (SWF) wants to ensure as many people as possible can play the sport that they love and to find the most appropriate team for them to participate in. There may be exceptional circumstances, occasions, and situations where the most appropriate team may be out of their usual age group. This is where SWF's Player Dispensation Process becomes appropriate for SWF Member Clubs.

The following circumstances are where a young person may be considered for dispensation:

- Geographical – the player lives in a rural location.
- Medical - a long-term medical condition or disability that has affected their ability to participate in their appropriate age group.
- Player Development Principles - A player has exceeded the technical, and tactical skill level of their appropriate age group or a player falls well below the technical and tactical skill level for their appropriate age group.

SWF's dispensation process makes decisions without favouritism or discrimination. This includes ensuring that decisions do not create a competitive advantage taking into consideration the impact on other clubs at the level to be played, the possible (if any) displacement of young people who are already involved within that age group and ensuring that there is fair playing time across the team.

SWF's dispensation process is open to all clubs in Scotland, applications are processed based on the criteria set out within this document.

Dispensation is to ensure that young people are protected from risk, harm, or danger which also factors in perceived or potential risk, harm, or danger. We want to be able to ensure that young people can participate in an enjoyable and safe environment.

Member Clubs must support their young people as best they can through the process and help prepare them for all potential outcomes. Dispensation must not be assumed and is never guaranteed. Clubs should not submit team affiliations based on dispensation applications being approved.

It is strongly discouraged that Member Clubs submit annual applications and SWF encourages Member Clubs to use any approved dispensation application as an opportunity to create a suitable Player Development Plan detailing the coaching strategy to return the player to an age-appropriate football journey within the player pathway where possible.

Rules and Regulations of Player Dispensation

Clubs may only submit a maximum of FOUR applications per age group. The dispensation process is only required for those who have exceptional circumstances, occasions, and situations to play up or down age groups within competitive SWF football. It is applicable in the following age groups, all other age groups must adhere to the age bands circulated by SWF:

1. 14s - play up and play down
2. 16s – play up and play down
3. 18s - play up only

When considering an application please be aware that:

- Any applications made must be made per individual young person via the online portal
- Applications must be submitted to SWF by the Club Secretary or Club Wellbeing Officer
- Applications are individual and considered on that basis.
- Young people with granted dispensation must only represent the team for which they have received dispensation. For the avoidance of doubt, this means that age-eligible players cannot play as part of any adult teams governed by SWF and cannot move between youth teams.
- If there is a reason for that young person to move back to their original age group, the Club Secretary must submit a notification to SWF to cancel the dispensation. If the club wish to move the player to senior football, notification must also be given. Further applications to the dispensation process following cancellation will not be accepted.
- Where dispensation is granted for young people playing down an age group, clubs must ensure that their team(s) have a maximum of TWO players with dispensation on the field of play at any one time.
- Granted dispensation applies to the 2025 season only and is granted for **all** Youth Regional League, League Cup and Youth National Cup Competitions. Players with active dispensation are not eligible to play in the 24-25 Senior season or the 2025 Senior season.
- Teams must adhere to player movement restrictions as per competition rules.

Playing Up Applications

Applications to play up an age group must be submitted per individual young person to SWF. The application will then be assessed and reviewed by SWF before referring the application to the SQGC to decide on the request.

For the 2025 season, young people wishing to play up must meet the below age criteria:

To submit an application to play 14s, the young person must be born in 2014, (Medical and geographical grounds only)

To apply to play 16s, the young person must be born in 2012, (all grounds).

To submit an application to play 18s, the young person must be born in 2010, (all grounds).

Playing Down Applications

Applications to play down an age group must be submitted per individual young person to SWF. The application will then be assessed and reviewed by SWF before referring the application to the Strong Quality Growth Committee- SQGC to decide on the request.

For the **2025** season, young people wishing to play down must meet the below age criteria:

To apply to play 14s, the young person must be born in 2010.

To apply to play 16s, the young person must be born in 2008.

Application Criteria

The appropriate criteria must be given due consideration before submission of an application. If a club is unsure if they would meet the criteria defined below, they should contact their League Administrator prior to making an application. The rationale and criteria for when dispensation may be applicable is outlined below:

Medical

There may be medical conditions that affect a young person's ability to compete and play at their age-appropriate group. In these instances, it may be in the best interests of the young person's development as a footballer to play in an age category below them. If a Member Club believes that the young person's medical condition is significant enough to impact their abilities to play at their current age group, they must work with the young person and their parents/carers to collect independent medical expert evidence to outline within their application. This would be letters or statements provided by:

- General Practitioner/Doctor
- Nurse
- Physiotherapist
- Sports Scientist
- Medical/Health/Wellbeing Practitioner
- Teacher
- Social Worker
- Other Specialists (e.g., support workers, CAMHS specialists etc)

Evidence must be submitted following the online form being completed. Please use the reference Request ID number and Player Name as the subject in your email to swf@scotwomensfootball.com

The evidence provided must identify why the young person is unable or could not play at their current age group, explaining why they must play down. If this isn't clear or documents are not submitted the application will be rejected.

Geographical Reasons

There may be circumstances where due to the rural location of where the young person lives or the rural location of a club, there isn't an appropriate age group level within a 20-mile* radius of their home. Under these circumstances, a dispensation request would be considered. As identified within the application form, the request due to geographical reasons must include:

- Confirming the young person's home address.
- The distance to the 3 closest age-appropriate teams (in miles).
- The mode of transport that will be used by the young person.
- The necessary travel arrangements that would be put in place.
- Other relevant information that helps explain the reasons for the mode of transport and the travel arrangements.

***Please note:** When calculating the 20-mile radius, the distance from the young person's home address to the registered venue of the nearest Club will be used. Regional variance may be applied to this distance by the SQGC.

SWF will consider using local knowledge and the local League Management Committee to advise on any clubs or teams that may be suitable when considering the application. This is so that SWF can advise if there are any clubs or teams that may be within the 20-mile radius that the young person, their parents/carers, or the club secretary were not aware of when submitting the application.

Player Development Principles (***This is only applicable for playing up to 16s & 18s***)

In certain exceptional circumstances, there may be a desire for a young person to play up to 16s & 18s age groups to assist with their development as a footballer. This would mean a young person playing up 4 years and therefore this requirement must have overwhelming evidence and reasons to back up the application. Where a club believes this is the case, the application must be submitted explaining how the following principles are met:

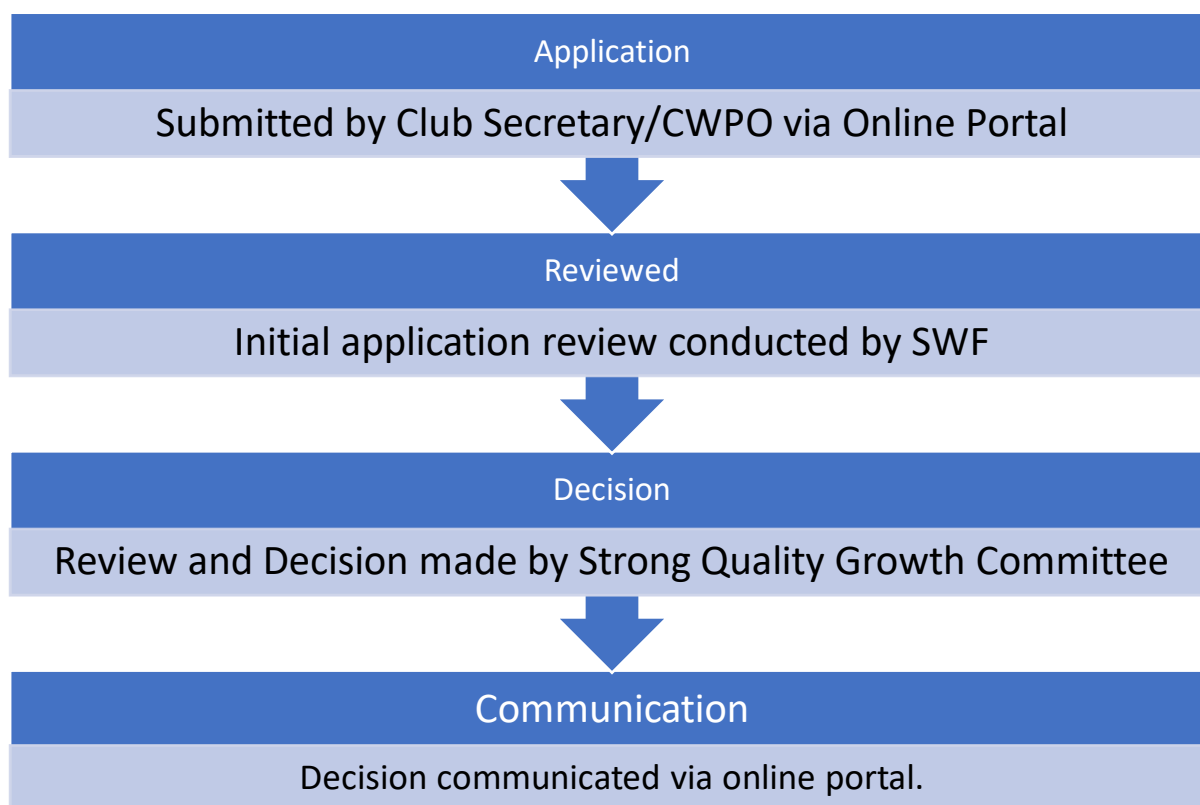
- Ensure that an underage young person's safety and well-being is not negatively impacted by playing up.
- The young person will be competitive in that age group and play at a level to match their individual ability.
- Inclusion of the young person will not displace another young person who is playing in the team currently.
- Ensure that there will be appropriate playing time for that individual young person and the others within the team.

- The well-being of the current team will not be negatively impacted by the young person playing up.

If dispensation is granted on these grounds, clubs must prepare an individual Player Development Plan after 30 days of approval, which they must demonstrate to work within for the development of the player. This should clearly detail a suitable pathway for the young person. For more information on Player Development Plans, please contact SWF.

Application Process for Player Dispensation

All the applications must be submitted via the SWF Dispensation online [portal](#). Any supporting documentation beyond the statements collated online should be sent to swf@scotwoemsfootball.com with the subject detailing the application reference number.



Clubs will be able to apply for dispensation throughout the year. Results will be issued based on when the application is received. See the table below.

Application Submitted	Reviewed and Outcome issued
November and December*	January
January and February	March
March and April	May
May and June	July
July and August	September

*Last application date 16th December

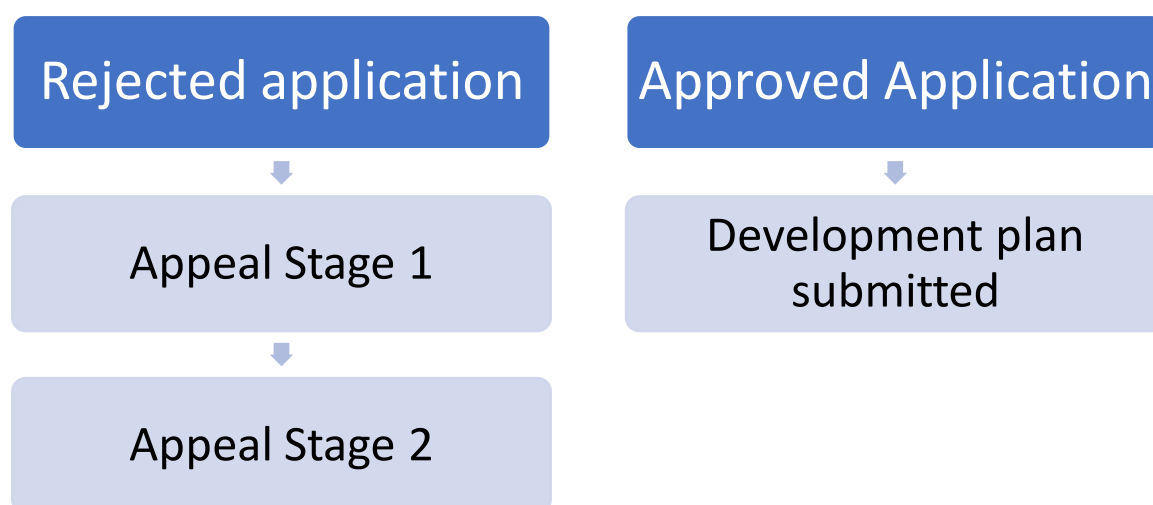
Appeals Process for Player Dispensation

There is a process for appeals regarding dispensation applications. in the first instance is the SWF's Appeals Committee. Appeals must be actioned by the Club Secretary and follow the procedure below:

Stage 1 Appeal – Scottish Women's Football

The Club Secretary must

1. Consider the grounds for appeal:
 - a. The Committee acted out with its powers.
 - b. New evidence and/or supporting documentation has become available that wasn't considering in the original application.
2. Complete a Scottish Women's Football Appeals Form
3. Submit the appeals form to swf@scotwomensfootball.com
4. Ensure the appeals form is submitted and deposit paid (£50) within **5 working days** from the date of receiving the dispensation decision.



In submitting the appeal to SWF, the young person can continue to play within friendlies and train with the age group applied for. However, clubs must consider the well-being risks of allowing a young person to play outwith their age group. Clubs should refer to the Friendly Application Guidance document for further criteria with regards to Friendlies. They are not able to play in any competitive fixtures until the appeals process is completed. Please see the SWF Appeals Procedure and Guidelines document on SWF's website and access the Appeals Form [here](#).

Stage 2 Appeal – Scottish Football Association

If a stage 1 appeal is rejected, the club can then the SFA Judicial Panel may be approached to consider a further appeal. The Club Secretary **must** consider the Judicial Panel Protocol, specifically sections 14 & 15: www.scottishfa.co.uk/scottish-fa/football-governance/judicial-panel-protocol/.

To lodge a secondary appeal the Club Secretary must contact the Judicial Panel Secretary at judicialpanelsecretary@scottishfa.co.uk with appeals submitted within **5 working days** of receiving the appeal outcome.

Appendix 1 Notes for Applicants

Dispensation applications can only be submitted by the club secretary or Club Wellbeing officer.

A minimum of two individuals must supply evidence in line with the SWF dispensation Rules and Regulations. The evidence provided must be relevant to each section of the application.

All supporting evidence provided by either a medical professional or educational institution must be provided on letter headed paper and dated no earlier than 3 months from the date of the application. For any letters of support from charitable establishments, the charity details/registration information must also be noted on the letterhead paper.

All evidence out with the web portal statements should be emailed to swf@scotwomensfootball.com using the application reference from the online submission. Approved sources for statements include GP, Nurse, Physiotherapist, Sports Scientist, Medical, Health-Wellbeing Practitioner, Teacher, Social Worker, Parent, Coach, CWPO or other Specialists (e.g., support workers, CAMHS specialists etc). We cannot accept statements from individuals that are not known to the applicant.

Any applications submitted whereby no supporting evidence/information has been provided, will not be considered and automatically returned. Therefore, please ensure all the relevant information has been provided in line with the dispensation criteria as noted in the Rules and Regulations.

When a complete application has been received, it will be reviewed by the Strong Quality Growth committee in the next available review meeting.

Application Submitted	Reviewed and Outcome issued
November and December	January
January and February	March
March and April	May
May and June	July
July and August	September

*No applications will be accepted in September and October. The Registration deadline is October and there is no player movement at this stage of the season.

Appendix 2 DISPENSATION CHECKLIST

In line with the dispensation Rules and Regulations, below is a checklist of information required for submission. A minimum of two statements are required for any application, these statements should incorporate the details requested.

Medical

The player has a long term medical condition and or disability affecting their ability to participate within their appropriate age group, please ensure supporting information has been provided by a medical professional which;

- Identifies the player's long term medical condition or disability,
- Identifies the particular characteristics of the above which are relevant to seeking dispensation to play outwith the player's own age group.
- Explains why this would place the player at a significant disadvantage over peers
- Explains why playing the year group above (play up) or below (play down) would reduce the disadvantage caused by the medical condition or disability.
- Explains why playing an age group above or below would not endanger other children
- The club secretary or child wellbeing officer has submitted the application form.

Rural/Geographical

The player lives in a rural location, please ensure the following supporting evidence has been provided;

- Current home address
- Name of the team, they are looking to join
- Name of the nearest age-appropriate team
- Confirmation of the club training venue, address and postcode.
- Explains why playing an age group above or below would not endanger other children
- The club secretary or child wellbeing officer has submitted the application form.

Player Development Play up (16s and 18s)

The player has exceeded the technical, and tactical skill level of their appropriate age group, please ensure the following supporting evidence has been provided;

- An overview of the skill level of the player in comparison to the skill level of players within their age group.

- Detail in relation to coaching strategy for the player to meet skill level of their age group in future.
- Detail concerning Wellbeing strategy for the player to integrate with players outwith their age in dressing rooms, team meetings.
- The club secretary or child wellbeing officer has submitted the application form.

Player Development Play Down (16s and 18s)

The player falls below the technical, tactical skill level of their appropriate age group, please ensure the following supporting evidence has been provided;

- An overview of the skill level of the player in comparison to the skill level of players within their age group.
- Detail in relation to coaching strategy for the player to meet the skill level of their age group in future.
- The club secretary or child wellbeing officer has submitted the application form.