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**The Interim Report of the Independent  
Review of Sexual Abuse in Scottish Football**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**15<sup>TH</sup> June 2018**

## **INTERIM REPORT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 Almost 100,000 young people participate in football in Scotland. By any measure this is an impressive number which attests to the importance of the sport for our young people and their health and development as well as its significance in the cultural life of our nation.

1.2 In consideration of the sheer scale alone the protection and welfare of young people should lie at the heart of football delivery. This has not been, and often still is not, the case.

1.3 The Interim Report of the Independent Review is intended to provide information and recommendations which can be the basis for improvements in the protection of young people and the reduction of risk in Scottish football in the interim until the Final Report can be submitted. The Final Report is withheld for legal reasons until after any criminal proceedings related to the cases referred to in that Report are concluded. But the Review recognises the urgency to take things forward so that young players and other young people can be afforded full and proper protection within Scottish football now and in the future.

1.4 The accounts received by the Independent Review from individuals including allegations concerning sexual abuse in Scottish football provide, to a large extent, the most important context for the findings and recommendations of the Independent Review. These narrative accounts form a substantial part of the Final Report which is currently withheld therefore the important questions set out in the Terms of Reference for the Review ("*Who in Scottish football knew?*" *What did they know?*" and "*What did they do?*") are not directly addressed in this Interim Report. The Final Report comments directly on whether Scottish football and its constituent parts pursued a duty of care to young people. However, the issues of accountability and responsibility still loom large. Therefore, although these are dealt with in detail in the Final Report, the Review has also taken steps to address these issues more generally in the Interim Report.

1.5 The focus of the Independent Review in its deliberations was on three main areas: -

- The allegations of non-recent sexual abuse and the period in which these events mainly are said to have occurred (the 1970's, 1980's, and early 1990's)
- The developments in 'child protection' in Scottish football between 2000 and 2013
- The current arrangements for the protection of young people and the reduction of risk in Scottish football.

1.6 Although the Interim Report does not deal directly with our detailed findings in relation to the matters to which the current allegations are related it does provide important contextual information and a general view concerning matters of accountability and responsibility.

1.7 The Interim Report provides an abbreviated description of developments in "child protection" in recent years and our observations and findings as a result.

1.8 This Independent Review has examined comprehensively the current arrangements for 'safeguarding' young people and reducing risk across Scottish football including clubs (at all levels) and football organisations particularly the Sport's Governing Body the Scottish Football Association (SFA).

1.9 Until recently progress in relation to the development and implementation of arrangements for the protection of young people was unacceptably slow and random across Scottish football. Recent developments have indicated a desire to move forward quickly and with greater commitment but

are inadequate to meet the challenges of reducing risk and protecting young people now and in the future.

1.10 Consequently, this Interim Report contains a series of Recommendations aimed at improving the capacity of Scottish football (across and throughout the sport) to protect young people and to reduce risk.

1.11 All of the Recommendations contained in the Final Report are included in the Interim Report with the exception of one. The absent Recommendation is in respect of the issues of responsibility and accountability arising directly from the allegations of non-recent sexual abuse currently subject to criminal proceedings.

1.12 The recommendations contained in the Interim Report cover a wide variety of fields within Scottish football including governance; leadership: structure; resourcing; investment; football clubs; policies and procedures; quality assurance; compliance; etc.

1.13 **The main findings of the Review** contained in the Interim Report are: -

- The paramount concern always should be to reduce risk to young people and to ensure their protection and not to supersede this with the reputational interest of the organisation, club or individual. Organisational culture, processes and practices must change to ensure that the protection of young people and the reduction of risk are, at all times, the paramount considerations. Vested interest, minimisation and evasion do not satisfy the prevailing need for accountability and responsibility concerning these matters and are in direct opposition to the principles and delivery of the reduction of risk and the protection of young people in Scottish football.
- The Scottish FA should increase and improve its capacity to respond to allegations of non-recent sexual abuse and to facilitate access to support for those personally affected.
- The current structure of the Scottish FA and Scottish football is not fit for purpose in relation to the safeguarding of young people, clarity of accountability and the reduction of risk. An over-complex structure, lack of leadership and inadequate governance in relation to 'child protection' has also contributed to risk and general ineffectiveness. Structural reform and change is required as is more explicit and targeted governance and the expansion of resources dedicated to improvements in the reduction of risk and the protection of young people in Scottish football.
- Scottish football urgently requires a comprehensive Safeguarding Strategy which involves the entire game beyond the governing body alone. The successful implementation and delivery of the Strategy and the achievement of good outcomes is dependent on improved investment, resourcing and support of safeguarding in Scottish football.
- The content and aims of a Safeguarding Strategy should also emphasise proactivity and prevention in relation to the protection of young people and the reduction of risk. Crucially this must prioritise "bystander approaches" to ensure that early indicators of risk are effectively identified, risky behaviour is challenged and that the entire football community is empowered to be proactive and involved in the prevention of sexual abuse. Prevention messages also must include a focus on signs of risky thinking and behaviours in adults as well as concerning signs in children and young people.

- Culture change within football in Scotland is imperative. This includes challenging negative and harmful attitudes to mental health and distorted thinking about sexual conduct and gender based violence; changing the widely held perception of ‘men in blazers’ controlling the delivery of the sport in Scotland; effectively and decisively challenging homophobic attitudes and behaviours which seriously reinforce the fears and silence of young men when faced with sexual abuse or exploitation; and increasing/embedding the participation of young people in respect of decision making and delivery of football in Scotland. Bringing about positive change in the culture of Scottish football requires education, influence, mentoring and leadership.

1.14 The Review is also aware that those most directly and personally affected by sexual abuse in Scottish football have an active role to play in assisting the process of improvement and urges the Scottish FA to work closely with them in relation to particular issues.

1.15 The Independent Review is hopeful that the recommendations contained in the Interim Report will be positively received and that considerable progress will be made between now and the release of the Final Report.

1.16 It is vital that in undertaking the required improvements and the protection of young people in general that Scottish football is held to account. The Review believes that those who have been directly affected, football supporters, the Scottish Parliament, the media, the wider Scottish public and, most importantly, young people themselves should continue to play an active part in doing so.

1.17 Public confidence can be restored and the voice of those most directly affected can be genuinely heard if the lessons of the past are openly addressed and understood. Yet learning lessons is insufficient. A clear, unequivocal and permanent commitment to ensuring that such past events will not be repeated and that young people who participate in our national game in whatever way are protected from harm must be demonstrated by positive change. The time for such change is overdue.

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