

Following the AGM of The Football Association on Wednesday 21st May it is important to note some changes to the age qualification rules for youth football.

A child is now permitted to 'play up' above his or her chronological age by one year group, irrespective of any difference in format or competition structure. They cannot play in a match where a child is greater than two years as the rules previously stated. This is to allow children in many parts of the country to remain participating with existing peer groups, support family circumstances such as single parents, enable those in rural areas to play in available teams locally and support talented individuals.

With regards to defining who is a talented player, for example, this could be a young player that has been on trial, or released, from a Professional Club and a conversation locally would be expected utilising experienced coaching staff, such as FA Skills Coaches, FA Club Mentors and County FA Development Staff to support making this judgement.

If there is provision locally within their specific age group, or within their existing club, it is not expected children will play up a year group. Furthermore, the change in rules is not aimed at allowing an entire team to 'play up' an age group to play in a greater format of football and this goes against the principles of player development.

A further change to the entry age of youth football has been agreed by shareholders at the AGM. Previously, unless a child had attained the age of six before the 31st August as of the start of that playing season they were not permitted or encouraged to play in a match of any kind.

The rule has been relaxed to allow children when they turn six to participate in matches and play for local clubs. This will permit children during the season to register for local clubs and start playing organised football slightly earlier.

These changes are effective from the start of the 2014/15 season.