

EFL IN THE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



CELEBRATING COMMUNITY SPIRIT

EFL Clubs are making a lasting impact in their communities, with more participants engaging, more session hours delivered and more social value generated than ever before.

The annual EFL Week of Action initiative is a week-long celebration of the incredible work all 72 EFL Clubs do in their community.

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YOUTH VOICE ACTION



Four EFL Clubs are setting the standard in amplifying youth voices through the innovative Peer Action Collective (PAC) programme.

Young people from Bristol, Bradford, Hull, and Exeter are taking the lead, driving change in their communities and showcasing the power of youth-led action.

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Debbie Cook
EFL DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY

Welcome

...to the latest issue of the EFL in the Community newsletter – a publication that’s dedicated to showcasing the extraordinary work of EFL Clubs across England and Wales.

2024 has been a landmark year, brimming with milestones that highlight the powerful impact the EFL, its 72 Clubs and their Community Organisations have in transforming lives.

At the EFL, we strive to amplify how these organisations are using the power of the Club badge as a force for good.

We’ve had many significant moments recently where we’ve shone a spotlight on the individuals who have benefitted from often life-changing initiatives provided by our Clubs, and showcased how these programmes are at the forefront of tackling some of society’s biggest challenges.

A significant moment was when we hosted a Community Changemakers event, a celebration of the inspiring individuals who volunteer or work with the Clubs in making a big difference in not only their lives but others around them.

Here, we launched the 2024-2029 Strategy for EFL in the Community, the charitable arm of the EFL. This five-year plan sets out a bold vision for how EFL Clubs and their charities can

be better equipped and empowered to serve the needs and challenges of the communities they serve.

During the EFL Week of Action and our Beyond the 90: Impact in Action event at Charlton Athletic’s The Valley – which was a wonderful celebration of community – we were excited to unveil the latest findings from our ‘Measuring the Impact of EFL Clubs in the Community’ report.

This research powerfully highlights the growing and lasting impact of our Clubs, with clear, measurable evidence of the positive change they are driving, and shows that EFL Clubs and their charities are delivering £1.24 billion of social value, which is incredible.

In this issue, you’ll discover more about these special moments, inspiring community stories, hear from players, coaches and managers, and celebrate the incredible work being done across our Clubs.

Let’s continue to mark these achievements while focusing on the journey ahead, ensuring that EFL Clubs continue to make an even greater impact.



“At the EFL, we strive to amplify how these organisations are using the power of the Club badge as a force for good.”

Unprecedented community impact across the EFL

Clubs across the EFL are being called upon more than ever to provide vital support to individuals and communities, according to the latest findings from the ‘Measuring the Impact of EFL Clubs in the Community’ report*.

Analysing data from 2022/23 and 2023/24, the report celebrates the collective impact of Club community work across the EFL, with figures showcasing the unprecedented scale of this life-changing work.

As more people than ever look to their local Club for support, EFL Clubs and Club charities delivered 54% more community activities and interventions during 2023/24 (890,878 hours compared to 579,712 hours in 2021/22) in response to the increased demand.

Findings showed that for every £1 spent by EFL Clubs and Club charities on community investment, £11 is generated in social value – equating to £1.24 billion in total.

Meanwhile, cost savings delivered through EFL Club Community work is helping the country to address inequalities and social issues.

EFL CEO, Trevor Birch, says: “What’s clear from the latest report findings is that the impact and value EFL Clubs and their Club charities bring to society as a whole is increasing year on year, with Clubs’ impact transcending far beyond the football pitch. They are key pillars in community life.

“We know that our Clubs play an integral role in their communities, and this report provides us with the hard evidence in relation to the value, significance and life-changing impact of EFL Club community work on a national scale.”

**The findings released make up phase one of the latest ‘Measuring the Impact of EFL Clubs in the Community’ report, delivered by the EFL and independent research experts, Substance. Phase two of the report will launch in 2025.*



5.5 million

hours of support is provided to participants.

More than

890,878

hours

of work is delivered per season by dedicated staff and volunteers in local communities.

“We know that our Clubs play an integral role in their communities, and this report provides us with the hard evidence.”

EFL CEO, TREVOR BIRCH

£1.24 billion

in social value generated.

In response to community projects:



89%

reported improved feelings of social connectedness.



76%

reported improved enjoyment of sport and physical activity.



68%

reported significantly improved levels of physical activity.



1.1 million

people taking part in community activities linked to their Club each season.

Together, these people attended

8.63 million

times between them during the season - an average of eight sessions per participant.



EFL Week of Action shines spotlight on Clubs in their communities

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EFL Clubs and their affiliated charities were put in the spotlight during November's EFL Week of Action. Here is a range of imagery from activities up and down the country, as well as the thoughts of EFL players, managers and coaches who visited some of the amazing work.



"I've found it inspiring how passionate everyone is here, how much everyone enjoys it, and how great of a community it is. I really enjoyed the evening and would recommend my teammates to come down."

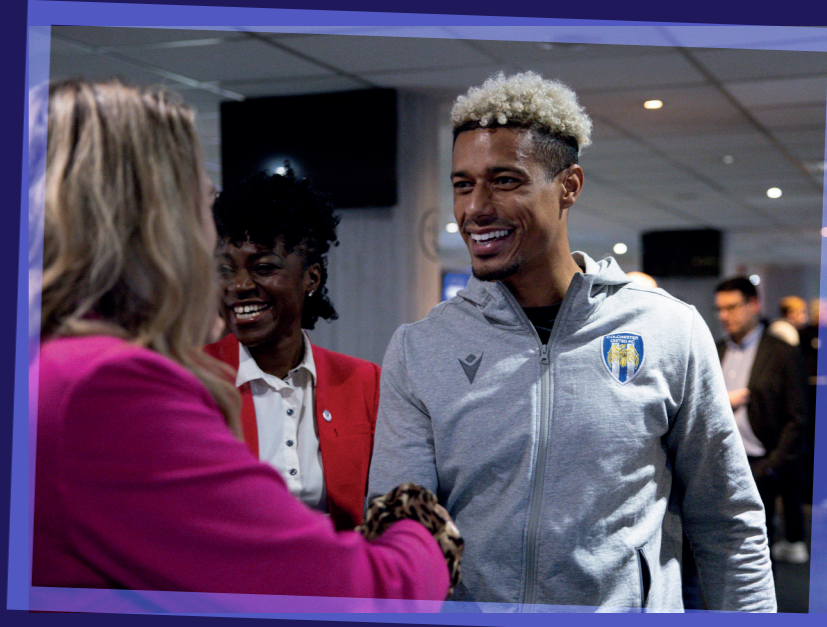
Bristol City player **Scott Twine** said at the city's Merchants Academy Sports Centre where he met the Club Foundation's Youth Council to learn more about their work.

"As players, we don't always realise the work that goes on behind the scenes. It's been a massive drive from the Club to ensure we get out into the community and help put Bromley on the map. We're fighting with some big Clubs around us, so for us to get into the community and help grow the Club is a massive thing."

Bromley captain, **Byron Webster**, commented while visiting the Club's community event that supports the Armed Forces community.

"We're immensely proud of Charlton Athletic Community Trust – they genuinely change lives for the better."

Charlton Athletic manager, **Nathan Jones**, speaking outside The Valley at the Live Well Greenwich Bus – a community-run vehicle.



"I've witnessed first-hand the impact EFL Clubs can have in positively changing people's lives and I'm looking forward to playing a small part in telling the story to a wider audience."

Rachel Brown-Finnis, EFL Community Ambassador, said at the Beyond the 90: Impact in Action event, which showcased the huge breadth and scale of community work that EFL Clubs carry out.



"Football Clubs have a unique way of bringing people together in a way that nothing else in this country does. If you're in a tough place, there's no better thing than getting out and being around people. While humans can cause problems, we also have the ability to bring people together and create community and family."

The words of striker **Lyle Taylor** after meeting Colchester United Community Foundation staff who run adult mental health support sessions that combine football with social and educational activity.



"I remember being at their age and I remember having the opportunities to go and just play football with friends and enjoy it. At that age, it is where you start playing football and the reason you play football is because you enjoy it. So, for the girls there to be given this opportunity to be doing this weekly, with friends in their environment, to go and enjoy it, is massive."

The outlook of Leeds United captain, **Ethan Ampadu**, after dropping by a weekly session at the Club's Thorp Arch training ground, aimed at boosting grassroots participation among girls in the city.



"When I was younger, when I used to come into Peterborough, I used to come to sessions, so it's nice to see a lot of smiles among the young people playing football, because I loved it when I was younger."

Peterborough United forward **Ricky-Jade Jones** spent time with the Posh Foundation as they delivered a Pan-Disability training session and a free weekly girls session.

"It's great to see the excitement and enthusiasm of young people doing something really constructive in a safe environment, it's perfect. The coaches will have an impact on these young people in a really positive way, they'll be role models for these young people."

The view of Swansea City head coach, **Luke Williams** at a Foundation coaching session that helps support young people in the city.



"From the kids' point of view, it's good for them to have a place that they can come to and express themselves. Growing up, I had leisure centres and local gyms and stuff like that, but never anywhere like this where you can do a variety of things, indoor and outdoor."

Sunderland AFC defender and Foundation of Light PFA Player Ambassador, **Aji Alese**, commented at a visit where he met children at the Club charity's Beacon of Light sports, community and education facility.





Port Vale's amazing impact on 'Valiant Val'

To the uninitiated, she's called Valerie Williams – but for many people in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, she's 'Valiant Val'.

Val's journey with Port Vale has been an emotional one, supporting her through the pain of losing her husband, Reg, after living with dementia, all the way through to using her own experiences to now help others.

The 81-year-old first had links with Port Vale's charity arm via their Memory Lane initiative, which offers a supportive environment for individuals with dementia and their families, using football-themed activities to stimulate memories and encourage engagement.



"It helped him so much," she states, recalling her sessions at the Club with Reg. "It helped him to relax more and to get to communicate with other people. He didn't know many people, but once he saw people regularly, he got to know more.

"The passing was very difficult. Obviously, losing someone affects you terribly, but Port Vale were always there.

"They were on the phone to make sure I was okay, and they invited me back as soon as I wanted to go back to join them again, to help out with people who already had dementia there. My experience of going through it helped them."

"It's so lovely watching her rebuild her life with a smile and finding new adventures. Thank you just doesn't seem enough."

VAL'S DAUGHTER, KAREN

After Reg's passing, she chose to continue attending, offering her support and wisdom to others facing similar challenges.

The Staffordshire resident is also a valuable member of the Golden Valiants – a Port Vale Foundation programme that allows elderly people in the local community to come together and socialise while taking part in a number of activities.

"I help out with the ladies who are partners with people with dementia," Val explains. "We give advice out to each other, and we can tell people what the situation is going to be along the line.

"I enjoy the experience of going to the sessions because they looked after me and they encouraged me to keep going and not to give in to the grief that was around at the time I lost Reg. It's also helped me since, because they kept me on helping out with the Memory Lane club.

"Port Vale is a huge part of my life. They help in the community so much – people don't understand how much they do help. It helps me to get up in the morning and it helps me to look after the people who were there."

Val's daughter, Karen, adds: "We as a family can't thank Port Vale Foundation enough for everything they have done in supporting our mum, both as a carer for my dad and coping with his loss. Golden Valiants has made a very difficult time easier.

"It's so lovely watching her rebuild her life with a smile and finding new adventures. Thank you just doesn't seem enough."



QPR build "fantastic" Tiger Cubs community

"I love being involved in football." Alex Field has given so much to QPR in the Community's Tiger Cubs, and in turn the project has given a lot back to him.

Founded in 2008, the Tiger Cubs programme supports young people with Down's Syndrome, aiming to create a multi-tier learning environment that will improve participants' overall physical, social and emotional health.

A long-time member of the initiative, Alex has been able to create relationships with teammates and coaches, learn technical skills and build his confidence.

"The Tiger Cubs community is fantastic," he declares. "I've had some incredibly positive experiences that will remain with me for the rest of my life.

"The coaches have been very good to me over the 10 years I've been doing it. I enjoy making good friends with the coaches and the rest of the players."

Alex has even earned his FA Level 1 Coaching Award while with the Cubs, in addition to playing at national and international tournaments.

He continues to be an enthusiastic ambassador for his Club and QPR in the Community and, earlier this year, Alex spoke on stage at the EFL's Community Changemakers event, which marked the launch of the League's new community strategy for 2024 to 2029.



Alex adds: "The Tiger Cubs has given me a great opportunity to be with coaches and friends, who have been fantastic with me. It's great fun and great to be part of it. I'd say to anyone – go for it!"

Muhammad Khamissa, aged 14, is another member of the project to enjoy the untold benefits and feeling of belonging.

His mum, Hasseena, says: "The Tiger Cubs programme has been incredible for Muhammad, and it has developed him in so many ways.

"From a sporting perspective, it's fantastic for him to get out there developing and playing with kids of a similar ability to himself.

"But, most importantly, through the programme he has a sense of community where he feels like he belongs. He has his buddies, and they all have a shared mission – they want to work together and train together to develop as a team."

Muhammad's dad, Nadir, admits that when their son first joined the Tiger Cubs, they were nervous about how he would settle in.

"Muhammad was a lot smaller than everyone there, so initially we were worried that he might get hurt or be left out," he recalls. "But we began to realise that wasn't the culture at QPR and their priority is for everyone to take care and have fun."



Overhead of the new John Jenkins Stadium

Pompey's tribute to D-Day veteran

EFL Clubs have long shared a deep connection with the Armed Forces community, supporting veterans, serving personnel and their families in various ways.

One poignant example comes from Portsmouth, with the Club paying tribute to a D-Day veteran.

Pompey's heartfelt tribute to John Jenkins, a lifelong fan who landed on Gold Beach in June 1944, stands as a testament to the city's military heritage.

Known for his warmth and dedication to local causes, John passed away in 2019 at the age of 100. To honour him, the Club named a 1,180-capacity community stadium after him – The John Jenkins Stadium.

Developed by Pompey in the Community, the stadium serves as a hub for training, learning and play in the heart of the city, symbolising John's legacy.

Clare Martin, CEO of Pompey in the Community, says: "John was a massive friend of Pompey in the Community. From volunteering at the Football Club from a young age and stewarding the boardroom until his later days to dropping in with home baked goods and being my plus

one to our end of season dinners. He was the biggest Pompey fan.

"He was a huge part of our city, so we wanted to recognise all he did for us and all that he meant to us by naming the stadium after him."



The late John Jenkins, D-Day veteran and lifelong Pompey fan

Beyond tributes during matchdays on or close to Remembrance Weekend, EFL Clubs continued to support the Armed Forces through initiatives like the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal, with special-edition shirts featuring the poppy emblem worn by players.

Clubs also offer various community programmes that support veterans, provide rehabilitation services, and help military families. These efforts highlight the significant role football plays in supporting those who have dedicated their lives to service.



Football project brings refugees 'happiness' and 'hope'

A weekly football offering by Rotherham United's charitable arm is a beacon of hope for refugees and asylum seekers.

The United 4 Communities (U4C) initiative, run by the Rotherham United Community Trust (RUCT), is transforming lives through the game, helping individuals who have faced unimaginable hardship to rebuild their lives in a new community.

Abel Zenebe, a 25-year-old from Ethiopia, is one of the many refugees who have found solace in the U4C project. After fleeing civil conflict on his own, Abel arrived in the UK last year and has been able to rebuild his life.

"I met all of my friends here at the football sessions," Abel says. "It's nice to come here and enjoy being with the team."

The U4C programme, which provides regular football training sessions and league matches for refugees and asylum seekers, not only helps participants improve their physical

health but also plays a vital role in boosting their mental wellbeing.

For many, the opportunity to connect with others in a positive environment offers a sense of purpose and joy that may be difficult to find elsewhere.

Sulieman Adam, aged 22, who arrived in the UK from Sudan in 2016, shares similar experiences



and admits football has brought 'happiness' to him over the years.

"Football is about communication," Sulieman says. "We're all from different religions and races, but football communicates to everyone like a team, like a family."

The U4C project, which began in 2013, continues to grow with Rotherham United Community Trust, one of around 30 EFL Club Community Organisations now offering similar support to over 1,500 refugees and asylum seekers across the UK each week.

"Football brings people together. Race, sex, it doesn't matter. Football is the same in every language."

EFL in the Community, the charitable arm of the EFL, is part of the global Sport for Refugees Coalition, working with the International Olympic Committee and UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) to champion the role of sport in refugee integration.

"The power of football to bring people together is unmatched," says Dylan Hadley, Youth and Inclusion Manager at RUCT. "It helps break down barriers and creates a sense of unity that is essential for integration."

Millers striker Jonson Clarke-Harris recently visited the U4C sessions, offering his support and encouragement to the players. He adds: "Football brings people together. Race, sex, it doesn't matter. Football is the same in every language."

The Sky Bet EFL Building Foundations Fund

Communities across EFL communities are already benefitting from the Sky Bet Building Foundations Fund.

A total of £800,000 was allocated to EFL Clubs during the 2023/24 season, with every penny going towards developing community programmes.

In total, over 100 new weekly sessions were put on by Club Community Organisations as a result of the first round of funding, with over 7,500 additional participants involved.

Popular initiatives included walking football and active ageing, as well as initiatives to help with homelessness, employability, adult disability and veteran provision.

The Building Foundations Fund was launched in 2023 with Sky Bet committing to invest a bumper £6 million over six years as part of its record title partner extension with the EFL. The project aims to increase participation in health and wellbeing programmes, improve levels of mental wellbeing and achieve a reduction in health inequalities and sedentary lifestyles.

Here's some great examples of how the fund is already helping to transform lives and strengthen communities...



Game-changing new facility for deprived community

Accrington Stanley Community Trust (ASCT) is driving positive change in one of the UK's most deprived areas, harnessing the power of football to unite and uplift the local community.

Thanks to a £100,000 grant from the Sky Bet EFL Building Foundations Fund, the Trust has unveiled a new 3G pitch at the Stanley Sport Hub, ensuring year-round opportunities for all, no matter the weather.

Located in Hyndburn, an area with historically limited access to sports facilities, the new pitch at the Hub is intended to become a game-changer over the coming years to allow the community to enjoy football.

The new facility will support grassroots football, enhance community engagement and cater to diverse groups, such as veterans, older adults and people with disabilities.

"It's absolutely vital that we can build facilities like this so people can come along, take part and feel proud of their community," says Martin Fearon, ASCT CEO.

Neil Burrell, a player from the ASCT Military Veterans team, highlights the profound impact of such facilities. He adds: "It's almost as daunting to leave the military as it is to start."

"Pitches like this allow people suffering from similar issues to come together and talk, and sometimes that's all it takes to put them on the right path."

Accrington Stanley Manager, John Doolan, comments: "ASCT provides a sense of belonging to everyone in the community. Football is for everyone, and you see the joy in everyone involved."



Getting job seekers back on their feet

Employment seekers have been getting a helping hand from Walsall FC Foundation to support them back into work.

The Back On Your Feet programme, backed by support from the Sky Bet Building Foundations Fund, is providing a vital lifeline to Walsall residents, especially those over the age of 50, by helping them return to employment.

In its first year, the programme has already made a significant impact, with over 50% of participants securing jobs. The Foundation partners with the Job Centre and Walsall College, delivering a blend of essential employment skills training and the fun, camaraderie-building benefits of walking football.

Once participants have bonded on the pitch, they move into the classroom for further development, focusing on team-building exercises, interview preparation, CV writing and job application support.

Ben Sadler, CEO of Walsall Football Club, says: "Every time I speak to anyone about a Football Club, they think it's what happens on a Saturday afternoon at 3pm, which is really important, but we have such a bigger duty and reason for existing than that."

"We get great support, and it's really important that we offer something back to the community, and this is just one of the endless projects covering so many different areas that people don't realise we do."

Thousands join first Kellogg's Football Camps

The inaugural Kellogg's Football Camps, delivered in partnership with the EFL, saw thousands of children aged five to 15 take part in an exciting and inclusive summer programme.

Reaching young people across England and Wales in 2024, the camps provided high-quality football education and training, offering both boys and girls a chance to thrive in a supportive and active environment. Through the collaborative efforts of over 70 EFL Clubs and their affiliated

charities, the programme provided accessible football opportunities during the summer school holidays. Up to 30,000 free places were offered by Kellogg's in the programme's first year – and Kellogg's Football Camps will return across EFL communities in 2025.



"I have coached many teams throughout the years and Football Clubs have also been a key part of the community, so it makes sense that Kellogg's would look to further support these institutions, offering children across the UK the chance to stay active throughout the summer break."

Ex-Portsmouth manager, Harry Redknapp

Sebastian's unforgettable day

When parent Cat Hatley heard that Kellogg's Football Camps were coming to Grimsby, she jumped at the chance for her son.

Traveling three and a half hours from their home, Cat was determined to give her 11-year-old, Sebastian – an avid Grimsby Town fan – a day he wouldn't forget.

"Seb was adamant he had to go," says Cat. "Every year, we visit the area for a trip to the seaside and to buy the new kit, but this time was extra special.

"He got to play in the Grimsby Town kit while being coached by the Club's coaches. He really felt like part of the Club for a day and came out with a massive smile on his face."

Impressed by their long journey, Grimsby Town invited Sebastian to go pitchside at the stadium.



Cat adds: "I was so delighted that Seb got to follow his heart, make new friends, and enjoy football like never before. We'll definitely be back next year!"

EFL Clubs amplifying youth voice

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Exeter City Community Trust and Bristol City Foundation in the south west of England, along with the Tigers Trust (Hull City) and Bradford City FC Community Foundation in Yorkshire, are all delivering the Peer Action Collective (PAC) – a £12.7 million programme empowering young people to build safer, fairer communities.



The Leader of Exeter City Council, Phil Bialyk and the Lord Mayor of Exeter, Councillor, Kevin Mitchell, with EFL in the Community Project Manager, Peter Walker, and Peer Action Collective Peer Researchers, Hanzala and Jack.

Funded by the Youth Endowment Fund, the #iwill Fund (a joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport), and the Co-op Group, the initiative is driving social change across England and Wales.

A standout campaign led by Bradford City FC Community Foundation's PAC team has already made a significant impact. In collaboration with Northern Rail and British Transport Police, young people created a powerful film addressing unwanted sexual behaviour on the UK's railways.

The campaign has led to major progress – mobile customers of four major providers can now contact British Transport Police via text free of charge, making it easier for passengers to report incidents while traveling.

Pavan Sembi, the Foundation's Head of PAC, says: "We are seeing the direct impact of the work done by young people, for young people. I am proud of everything my team has achieved and how they are using their voices to drive impactful social action. I cannot wait to see the results of where they next drive change."

Peter Walker, Project Manager at EFL in the Community, the EFL's charitable arm, adds: "This outcome really highlights the importance of youth voice, and it's great to see young people have constructively engaged with decision-makers about the issues they face, and they have been listened to."

"It's a great success story, and shows that stakeholders and decision-makers should be engaging in meaningful dialogue with young people where possible."

An important focus of the PAC programme is building trust between young people and adults who can offer support.

In Exeter and Bristol, teams are engaging with around 750 young people to better understand how to foster trust more quickly and provide more inclusive support.

Young people at Exeter City's St James Park shared their research findings and recommendations with local partners, including the local Mayor, authorities, the Police and Crime Commissioner, schools and youth organisations.

All four PAC teams, supported by EFL in the Community, recently attended The Young Foundation's PAC Conference in London. The event celebrated the incredible work of young people as Peer Researchers and Social Action Leads, addressing the root causes of youth violence in their communities.



Young people working with Bradford City FC Community Foundation as part of their Peer Action Collective work.



The EFL and Jameson get football connected

“Football has a unique way of bringing people together. At Leyton Orient’s Jameson Connects event, we saw a perfect example of this.”

Those are the words of EFL Director of Community, Debbie Cook, following the re-launch of Jameson’s Connect FC initiative, where over 90 guests were welcomed to Orient’s Gaughan Group Stadium.

Connects FC, which returns for its second season, is designed to leverage the transformative power of football via a series of vibrant and passionate events in the heart of football communities up and down the country.

Jameson became partners with the EFL in 2023/24, and teamed up with the EFL’s charitable arm, EFL in the Community, to create the project with the aim of helping unite those who aren’t feeling the love.

Over 25 million people across the UK, from all walks of life, have reported instances of feeling disconnected from society.

Hosted by Clinton Morrison, former Republic of Ireland international and Connects FC Ambassador, the launch event – the biggest Connects FC gathering to date – brought a diverse range of O’s fans together to share their passion for football, with volunteers, Club officials, coaching staff and players also in attendance.

Debbie says: “People from all walks of life came together, including representatives from the Punjabi Os, the Meshugan Os (Jewish supporters’ group) and the Club’s LGBTQ+ fan groups, all united by and brought together due to their love of Leyton Orient.”

Josh McCarthy, Brand Director for Jameson UK, adds: “When we first came up with our Jameson Connects FC initiative to support local football communities alongside the EFL,



we thought it would be a great way to give back and hopefully people would enjoy it. Little did we know it would become such a popular facet of our long-term EFL partnership.

“Meeting and greeting with fans from the local community gives you such a buzz as you feel the passion for their team and the joy in the stories shared for yesteryear.



“People from all walks of life came together, all united by and brought together due to their love of Leyton Orient.”

“Jameson has always been about bringing people together and Connects FC is the epitome of those brand values. If you get the chance, head down to our next event at your Club as they’re very special.”

Future Connects FC events are set to take place in the remainder of the season. These could involve meeting a Club legend, enjoying a behind-the-scenes stadium tour, participating in an away-day watch-party, or simply meeting down your local Club to have a coffee and swap stories about the game or Club you love.

For each EFL Club Community Organisation who participates in the Connects FC programme, Jameson will donate £2,500. The fund is in place to support and empower these Clubs to develop further community outreach programmes and events that bring people together.