

# EFL IN THE COMMUNITY

# NEWSLETTER



## FOOTBALL SUPPORTS VETERANS

**The Armed Forces community are a huge part of EFL communities, with more than 1.85 million people in England reporting they had previously served in the UK.**

Earlier this summer, ahead of Armed Forces Day, the EFL and EFL Trust invited members of the military and the Ministry of Defence to their joint signing of the Armed Forces Covenant.

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## Donny Create Inclusive Culture

**"I feel included, valued and accepted in my workplace."**



As a transgender woman, Charlie has been given a fresh start in her life thanks to the support of Club Doncaster Foundation, and is actively improving inclusivity in the local area in her role as Health and Wellbeing Officer.

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# Paving the way for the next generation

The success of the Lionesses in recent years has shown there's real growth in the women's game.

Following the England side's historic World Cup final appearance and the EUROs victory just over 12 months ago, many players have become household names and there have been record stadium attendances and TV viewing figures.

EFL Clubs and their Club Community Organisations (CCOs) play a crucial role in the development of the women's game, providing opportunities and access for women and girls to play and potentially wear the famous Three Lions shirt in the future.

**A**t grassroots level for girls, there's the Wildcats programme, disability specific Wildcats sessions and Squad Girls Centres that offer access to enjoy football and develop skills in a fun, safe environment and provides pathways into continued participation.

However, what happens to those girls that are showing potential?

One such programme – Talent Inclusion – ensures that through the existing community activities delivered by more than 60 EFL CCOs, female participants can be identified and referred to the FA England Women's Talent Pathway.

Supported by an education and learning programme managed by the EFL Trust and backed by The FA, together they recognise that social class, ethnicity and demographics should not be a barrier to success.

Each Club, through its Community Organisations, works in some of the most deprived communities in England, where individuals and families experience challenges when trying to participate in sport and other activities.

The CCO develops their own programme plan based on their expertise of the local area, taking into consideration known barriers faced by young girls.

"For those girls showing potential, the Club Community Organisations create a pathway from community to full England honours, with an educated workforce that identifies and supports potential," says Nicol Meredith, Project Manager of the Talent Inclusion Programme with the EFL Trust.

"Talent is everywhere but opportunity isn't. The partnership work is crucial in us creating inclusive and accessible opportunities for local talent, where we learn to understand some key issues society and young people face.

"It is crucial the England team becomes more diverse, and creates more role models for young people – the more we understand about barriers, the more inclusive we can become.

"Our Club Community Organisations play an integral part in community talent identification, and we should not underestimate the power of football in the community and that trusted brand."

Mia Endacott and Taya Pomfret have benefited from the initiative, having joined Plymouth Argyle Women's side this year after being part of community programmes at a younger age. Both have featured in numerous England Under-16s talent camps, unlocking their potential at a national level.

Taya, like most girls, began her footballing journey out of pure enjoyment but it soon became evident that she was destined for greater heights.

"Being called up to England U16s has been a huge highlight of my footballing journey for me so far," she admits. "I was delighted and very emotional when I was told that I had been called up to attend the camp. All my family were thrilled and so proud of me."

Argyle Community Trust Head of Women & Girls' Football, Ryan Perks, adds: "I was delighted for the girls when they were called up. This is a great demonstration of the strength of our thriving female player pathway here in Plymouth.

"Mia and Taya are incredibly talented footballers and are a pleasure to work with. I look forward to continuing their journey, further developing them and watching their progress in the future."

Nicol concludes: "Female football has become a significant part of Club Community Organisation delivery over the past 10 years and engagement has hit an all-time high.

"Given this, there is a considerable opportunity for potential to be identified and developed in the right environment.

"With the success of the Lionesses, we must not rest on our laurels. It is paramount to the future of England's female football that the pathway is a system for all.

"We, at the EFL Trust and The FA, are committed to working collaboratively to be creative and inventive to achieve this goal together." ■



## "IT'S SOMETHING I'LL REMEMBER FOREVER"

That's how Surbiton High School student Coco Williams Everett summed up her Wembley experience after scoring twice to lead AFC Wimbledon to victory in the Utilita Girls Cup Final.

Coco was one of more than 6,300 Under-13 youngsters who took part in the six-a-side competition during the 2022/23 season, culminating in a grand final prior to the EFL Trophy Final between Bolton Wanderers and Plymouth Argyle.

Coco and her team-mates played at the home of English football against Trinity School, representing Carlisle United, and winning 2-1.

By encouraging these young people to participate and develop a love of sport via regional and local stages, the Clubs and their Community Organisations are helping to deliver

the EFL Trust's vision of creating stronger, healthier, more active communities, while also supporting Sport England's ambition of creating an active nation by focusing on the benefits sport can bring to people and society.

Surbiton were presented the Girls Cup trophy by former England international Fara Williams.

She said: "The competition is fantastic. The opportunity for any young player to play in a Cup Final at Wembley is unbelievable and this is a fantastic occasion for the girls to experience." ■







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# United in Support for our Armed Forces Community

The EFL, the EFL Trust and the network of Clubs and their Community Organisations (CCOs) recognise the value of the Armed Forces community and want to show their commitment to supporting them and their families.

**I**n signing the Armed Forces Covenant, which took place at EFL House, the EFL and EFL Trust seek to uphold the covenant's principles, recognising the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans and military families bring within the organisation and community by pledging their ongoing support to them.

Cathy Abraham, CEO of the EFL Trust, says: "Members of the Armed Forces make a significant contribution to our country and we understand the issues that veterans and their family members face.

"We are proud to make a commitment to share opportunities with the Armed Forces family, using football to bring people together for the greater good, and in an environment where they are treated fairly and equally and with an opportunity to thrive."

Also in attendance at the signing were representatives from EFL CCOs, who are already supporting the covenant in their communities.

Mark Ward from Stockport County Community Trust, who served as a soldier and was awarded the Military Cross in 2010, reveals: "I served 10 years in the infantry with my local regiment. Throughout this time, football was a big part of army life – the connection between football and the armed forces has been going for a long time.

"Upon leaving the army, I found it really difficult to settle back into civilian life, but thanks to football, it helped me get to where I am today. I gained my coaching badges and got a full-time role with Stockport County Community Trust.

"We're now looking at piloting our own programmes for the Armed Forces in the local area, where I can use my personal experience to help others from a similar background to me."

Many Clubs and their CCOs across the EFL provide a range of support projects for veterans of all ages, helping them with mental health challenges, as well as education and employment opportunities.

Morecambe FC Community Sports, working in collaboration with Morecambe FC, have a proud history of supporting their local Armed Forces community.

Veterans, serving personnel and families of veterans from across Lancashire unite at the Mazuma Stadium monthly via a successful coffee morning session, where they have the chance to engage, seek out agency support and rediscover camaraderie - pictured above are participants from Morecambe's coffee morning.

With growing numbers in attendance and further opportunities within and outside the stadium, the CCO, which recently signed the Armed Forces Covenant along with the Club, has even recruited a dedicated Veterans' Support Officer among its ranks.

Stuart Glover, CEO of Morecambe FC Community Sports, explains: "We have a duty to look after our Armed Forces and their families, and we and local partners have a proud tradition of doing just that.

"Our coffee mornings have gone from strength to strength, including a newly established volunteer group to work on more community projects. We felt it was right to introduce a dedicated role, which has been gratefully



funded by the Veterans Foundation to allow us to grow our support.

"We are also Bronze Award recipients of the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme and working towards the Silver Award in due course."

Many CCOs provide weekly support to local veterans, using their stadiums as welcoming environments. At Cardiff City FC, their Community Foundation's Armed Forces Veterans Hub supports veterans who are at high risk of social isolation and loneliness.

Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan has a veterans population of around 27,000 and 8% suffer from mental health issues, including depression and anxiety.

Weekly online and face-to-face sessions provide structure and support for people to get together, connect and take part in a range of activities that improve physical and mental wellbeing.

Blackpool FC Community Trust go beyond Bloomfield Road and use their own facility at the Aspire Sports Hub, as well as their popular weekly walk where gentle routes around the scenic grounds of Stanley Park are enjoyed.

Speaking at the signing at EFL House, Ashley Hackett, CEO of Blackpool FC Community Trust, said: "When we talk about armed forces veterans, typically we think of people aged 60 to 70 years of age, but it is absolutely not just that



age group. The people we are engaging with at Blackpool FC Community Trust are in their 20s and early 30s.

"While our provision primarily focuses on football activities, we also deliver support for things like housing benefits and mental and social health for each veteran and their family members."

Colonel Darren Doherty, who signed on behalf of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Community, adds: "People who serve in or have served in the armed forces and their families have to give up quite a lot. The covenant looks to make sure they are not disadvantaged as a result of that service.

"Particularly those who suffered from mental illness or life-changing injuries, we're just looking to make sure that they're not disadvantaged in terms of the practical aspects, such as with housing, employment, education.

"Football is the soldier's game and is so connected with community. This is why it's so important to have support from organisations like the EFL and the EFL Trust." ■





# Breaking Down Barriers

In 2021/22, EFL Clubs and Club Community Organisations engaged with over 840,000 individual participants in community-focused sessions and events.

Almost one in five of those people live with a disability, many of which are children and young people.

Here are some stories of incredible young adults and youngsters, with the support of amazing community initiatives in EFL communities, who are excelling in the face of adversity.

## THOMAS' NATIONAL SUCCESS

Double amputee Thomas Atkinson uses his disability to inspire others in the community to follow in his path.

Thomas talks about his experience at Carlisle United Community Sports Trust and how his time there has helped shape him to become the person he is today and play for the England Amputee Team.

"Being a student of the Carlisle United Community Education Programme was wildly beneficial for me," he admits.

"I wasn't just getting regular top level training sessions, I was learning about health and the way my body functions, which is so important.

"I was the only student with a disability, but I felt included every step of the way. Everyone was very supportive to help me achieve my goals."

Thomas was referred to the England setup by the Cumberland FA after being spotted playing in various football camps, including Carlisle United's soccer schools while he was a Community Sports Trust Football Development student with the Cumbrians.

In addition to now being a coach at the Club Community Organisation, he has also managed to become a regular starter in goal for England Amputee Football, recently winning a Nations League competition in Poland, bringing back the team's first major trophy in 30 years.

"Through my experiences as a community coach, I know I have inspired people in their own way," he adds.

"I feel a sense of pride when I am coaching, especially when young people have smiles on their faces during my sessions. It's an amazing feeling."

Thomas gives his advice to anybody facing challenges within the sports industry.

"The way you are is the way you are," he says. "I was born with a disability and I can't change that. You cannot change your situation, so your best move is to be grateful for what you have and do your best with what you can offer.

"I was born with one leg and I also have one arm. That doesn't mean I can just sit back and watch everyone else and it doesn't mean I can't play. Everyone has their challenges; you just need to find your own way to overcome yours."



## ZAC'S JOURNEY

With his positive personality on full display, Zac has brought his passion to every session and now aims to pursue a future in coaching.

At just 18 months old, Zac was diagnosed with cerebral palsy – a lifelong condition that affects movement and coordination.

In 2017, he became a Shrewsbury Town Foundation participant and joined ShrewsAbility, and it was here that he found a passion for football and was able to play alongside other participants facing familiar challenges.

Zac joined the Foundation for a week of work experience in 2022, in which he got involved with different areas of the organisation, from coaching to media.



One of the employment pathways the Foundation provide is their Coaches' Academy, a programme that teaches 14 to 15-year-olds how to develop their coaching skills through both classroom and practical-based learning.

Zac says: "When I first joined ShrewsAbility, I didn't think I'd be able to participate in football, but they gave me the opportunities to do something I didn't think I'd be able to do."

Jamie Edwards, CEO at Shrewsbury Town FC Foundation, adds: "What you see with Zac is about us getting him ready for employment, which is what we're doing across all our programmes – providing that pathway into employment."

Upon graduating from the programme, Zac wishes to join the Foundation's College and University programme and achieve a coaching qualification.

## OSCAR'S STORY

Young Oscar doesn't let his disability get in the way of him staying active and having fun.

Whether its handball, dodgeball, cricket or football, Oscar – a double amputee – always has a smile on his face and loves taking part in physical activity.



Much of that enjoyment is down to the support he receives from Watford FC Community Sports & Education Trust's Ruby Jager, who provides engaging and inclusive sessions for him.

Discussing what it's like to coach Oscar, community coach Ruby explains: "Not only has Oscar learned about different ways to overcome his barrier and use it as an advantage, but he has also learned what is healthy and unhealthy for his body.

"Oscar is a pleasure to teach and always gives everything a go. He always challenges himself and is not afraid to ask for help when he needs it. His friends are so encouraging of him, and he always has a smile on his face when he's around them.

"By schools bringing in us coaches to deliver different programmes, it allows kids to learn new sports, learn different skills, learn about healthy eating and frees up teachers' times."



## Foundation Help 'Role Model' Bryson

"If I hadn't have gone to Phil's sessions, I wouldn't have been walking on my own."

**BRYSON, AGED 11**

Bryson's relationship with Cambridge United Foundation's Phil Mullen has been life-changing for the youngster, who lives with cerebral palsy.

The 11-year-old started playing frame football at the Club Community Organisation when he was four years old and could not do independent steps at the time.

He has progressed from using a frame to quad sticks, tripods and monopod sticks – now taking some steps without walking aids.

Much of this progression is down to the popular football-based sessions provided by Phil, which helps participants who live with a disability.

Bryson's mother, Ann, says: "It's just so lovely to see Bryson and Phil's relationship because he trusts him completely."

The Foundation notes that Bryson is a fantastic role model to new participants joining the sessions and a shining example of how football can help improve coordination, agility and motor skills.

Bryson adds: "My greatest achievement is walking and doing my skills with a size three ball now!"



# EFL Clubs roll out new Education Opportunities

Football fans who want to learn about the business of football are now studying at their Football Club thanks to a new BA Hons degree in Sports Business Management.

Delivered by the EFL Trust in partnership with the University of South Wales, the degree – which kicked off its availability this September – is specifically designed for students who are looking for a career in business and management within the sports industry.

Each student now gets the unique chance to study at their local Club, often at the stadium via an online learning platform and will receive mentoring support and practical work experience through the Club's Community Organisation.

To launch the degree, BTEC students from Queens Park Rangers were invited to demonstrate their business acumen and to come up with

ways to boost matchday revenue for the Club. Their ideas were pitched to a group of football 'dragons', including R's defender Trent Rendall and former Hoops player Dillon De Silva.

QPR are one of 16 EFL Clubs running the new degree from this September, where students will cover topics such as business planning, financial management and marketing.

Jay Probert from the University of South Wales and Emily Fermor of Hanbury Strategy also joined the judging panel at Loftus Road for the 'Dragon's Den' launch event.

"We were very impressed with the plans and it was obvious

that the students had done their market research," says Emily. "We were particularly impressed with how each pitch had considered and looked to improve the fan experience and deciding the winner was very difficult."

The first pitch was by Avante Joseph and Myles Mari, who presented the 'QPR App', giving fans the chance to access exclusive content about the Club, from the men's first team to the academy, as well as live commentary of games.

Denzel Magezi, Matheus Rossi and Oliver Hearn-Lee proposed the 'e-Sports room' for the second pitch, offering fans the opportunity to compete in e-Sports tournaments against their heroes in

renowned games such as FIFA and Fortnite.

The final pitch came from Angela Ocej, whose idea was a pre and post-match 'Community Festival' to ensure the Club embraced every aspect of its local community. It would give a platform to local DJs, performers, food businesses and other local entertainers to participate.

The 'e-Sport room' pitch was judged as the overall winner, with the trio taking home their very own tablet as their prize.

"The market research that the students had carried out was very impressive," Rendall states. "We could really see how this would work and would be something that we'd be excited to get involved in."

Cathy Abraham, Chief Executive of the EFL Trust, adds: "The degree is a fantastic opportunity for people to learn about the business side of sport and to do so while getting invaluable hands-on experience at a professional Football Club.

"This is another great example of how Clubs use the power of the badge and their unique position in the community to improve people's education and chance of gaining meaningful employment."

Read more from Jay on the back page.



## Building Strong Foundations

Two coaches are seeing their careers flourish after undergoing the University of South Wales' Foundation Degree with the Stevenage Foundation.

Prior to enrolling on the course, Sonny Sturgess was already well known as an apprentice. His experience within the Football Club and with the Foundation meant he already had a high level of confidence when it came to coaching and working as part of a team environment.

However, since starting the degree – which allows students to gain practical experience in their desired nature of work while allowing for a blended learning approach, where students have both face-to-face and online learning – Sonny has moved on to Tottenham Hotspur as lead development coach, having previously been lead coach for Bishop's Stortford.

"The degree enabled me to develop my understanding of coaching techniques to discover how they work in getting the best out of each individual or group," he says.

"My new job involves me working in private schools and colleges, plus travelling abroad coaching with our partners."

Meanwhile, Josh Newman gained job experience through Stevenage Foundation's community projects, that has allowed him to make the natural progression into full-time coaching.

Through the mixed learning styles that the USW degree course offers, Josh was able to develop both personally and professionally to benefit his own coaching, and the experience of the participants he now coaches.

"The course allowed me to learn different coaching techniques in order to manage each and every individual differently," he explains. "This allows me to add a different strength to my coaching, as my own ability to manage individuals with different abilities has improved."

Via the course, Josh has also gained professional qualifications with a UEFA B licence, which set the foundations for his progression where he not only coaches at the Foundation but is also the lead Under-12s coach at Stevenage FC Academy.

## Football Clubs delivering BA Hons Degree in Sports Business Management

1. Accrington Stanley
2. AFC Fylde
3. Barnsley
4. Birmingham City
5. Burton Albion
6. Cardiff City
7. Carlisle United
8. Derby County
9. Exeter City
10. Hull City
11. Leyton Orient
12. Lincoln City
13. Nottingham Forest
14. Preston North End
15. QPR
16. Sheffield United
17. Shrewsbury Town
18. Tranmere Rovers
19. West Bromwich Albion





# REMOVING BARRIERS AND CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

A few years ago, Club Doncaster Foundation CEO John Davis was challenged by his Board regarding how inclusive and far-reaching they were as an organisation to different members of their community.

The truthful reply at the time, he admits, was: "We didn't really know."

John continues: "We knew we were successful in engaging with people, but we hadn't really been putting a metric on that area."

That started a whole new process for the Club Community Organisation in scrutinising how inclusive and represented they were – not just for the beneficiaries they work with, but for their staff and trustees, too.

"What we wanted to do was ensure our provision removed barriers and was as far-reaching as possible," he outlines.

"That is a key underlying pillar of what our new strategic vision for our organisation is based on. We put in many different programmes to essentially break down those barriers."

The LGBTQ+ community within the local area lacked much provision, left without a safe space to meet or to open up about the important topics they faced.

That was until a pilot project was introduced at the Eco-Power Stadium, designed for members of the LGBTQ+ community to socialise at the Club Doncaster Foundation gym – Foundation Fitness – on a weekly basis in a closed, peer-led and inclusive environment.

Nick Gillott, Community Development Manager at Club Doncaster Foundation, says: "We partnered up with one of our local organisations, The People Focused Group, who identified through some of their provision that the LGBTQ+ community was massively under-represented."

"There weren't particularly many opportunities for that community to engage in physical activity, so that's why we set up weekly evening sessions in Foundation Fitness, as well sessions in the gym specifically for the trans community."

"All the sessions have been led and developed by participants, which is something we take great pride in as a Foundation."

Despite this progress in engagement with the LGBTQ+ community, Club Doncaster Foundation are committed to increasing their work with the population and sharing best practice with other EFL Football Clubs and their Club Community Organisations.

Nick adds: "We want to empower existing participants and use the Football Club as a hub, but also create sessions in different parts of Doncaster because transport can be an issue, not just for the LGBTQ+ community, but for other areas of the community we engage with."



"We're doing well but there's more we can do. However, to hear that people are comfortable coming to us in a safe environment is worth its weight in gold." ■



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## Supporting Charlie's Transition

Charlie's confidence as a transgender woman has increased since her move to Doncaster.

So much so that she now leads safe and inclusive sessions for the LGBTQ+ community, on behalf of Club Doncaster Foundation and The People Focused Group.

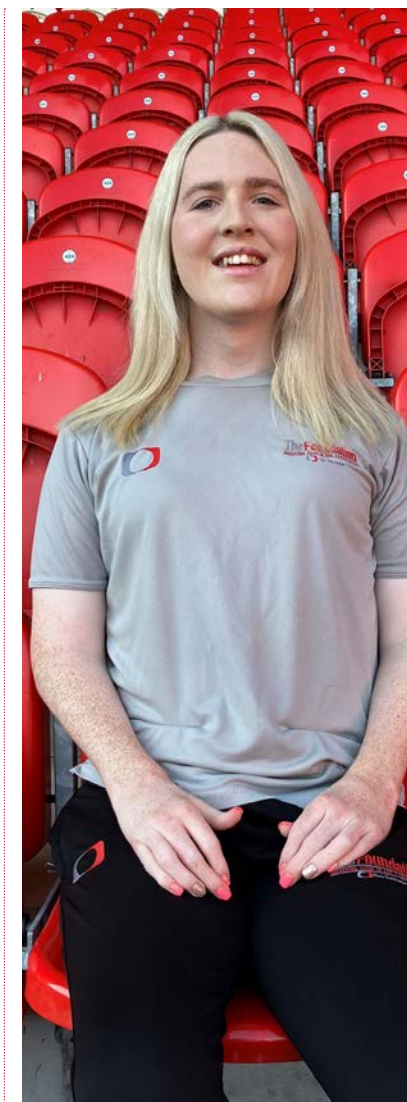
Charlie, aged 24, saw her move to the city – and becoming the Club Community Organisation's Health and Wellbeing Officer – as a 'fresh start' in her life.

"I pretty much came out when I came here," she says.

"I can look in the mirror and say that this is who I am. I'm happy with how I look. I'm still the same

person on the inside but I'm a lot more confident and comfortable person. That's just really powerful for me in my life."

Charlie is proud to be part of the Club Doncaster Foundation team that provides weekly support to the local LGBTQ+ community, as well as attending events like Doncaster Pride, and supporting other health and wellbeing provision at the Eco-Power Stadium, like FIT ROVERS – a free health and wellbeing course for males and females aged 18+.



On top of the weekly LGBTQ+ gym and social initiatives, she is planning a brand-new FIT ROVERS Rainbow course for LGBTQ+ members.

"It's closed sessions that we provide for the LGBTQ+ community, and that is so important because it's in a safe environment," says Charlie.

"Members come to us, who maybe are at different stages of their journey, and have said they feel more comfortable and confident in identifying who they are."

"Our participants are extremely grateful of the work we do for them, which makes them feel valued and accepted in society, which is extremely powerful."

Charlie adds that she hopes her story can inspire other people going through a similar pathway in their lives.

"As a transgender woman and a person with a physical disability, I aim to use my own personal lived experience of overcoming barriers and challenges to raise the profile of our inclusion work, which I am extremely proud to be a part of," she explains.

"Having a proactive support network consisting of great parents, friends and supportive family members is a huge positive which I am lucky to have had access to my entire life, and this has helped me to get to where I am today."

"I also feel included, valued and accepted in my workplace, which is a huge credit to the welcoming nature of Club Doncaster Foundation as an inclusive organisation." ■





# Just the ticket from Wrexham

Newly promoted Wrexham AFC have re-established a community ticketing initiative that proved a huge success during the 2022/23 season.

Launched in July last year by the Club's Co-Chairmen Rob McElhenney and Ryan Reynolds, the Racecourse Live programme continues this campaign – Wrexham's first season back in the EFL following a 15-year absence.

The scheme set out to 'reserve' 200 tickets for each home fixture at the Racecourse Ground with the intention of making the Club accessible for all supporters, including community groups.

Among the local community groups to benefit from the initiative – which included foodbanks, Wrexham Special Olympics, Community Youth Groups and Shelter Cymru – one of the charities to work with the Red Dragons was local organisation Dynamic.

The Wrexham-based charity works with children and young people who have a range of disabilities, from physical, intellectual, sensory impairment and emotional problems, to limited illnesses.

"For a lot of the children and families that we've worked with, they wouldn't have been able to access these opportunities if the Club hadn't facilitated that," Sam Jones, Project Development Officer at Dynamic, explains.

"In the current climate, people don't have the disposable income



to get to football games if you've got a big family. And if you've got a family with maybe one, two or more children with disabilities, the average income is even lower."

Last season, 4,572 tickets – worth a total value of more than £96,000 –



were gifted to supporters through the Racecourse Live project.

In total, the Club collaborated with 56 community groups and with a further 29 individual applicants across 22 home matchdays.

Sam continues: "We support lots of children and young people, but for me personally, I've worked with three people who have started attending inclusion Football Clubs since coming to the games. The Club wouldn't even be able to measure the long-term impact of that, only we can see it.

"The Club is the beating heart of the town. A lot of the families and young people we support have been coming to games for years and we have a lot of dedicated fans.

"Considering the size of the Club and considering where they are and where they have been, it's huge. You don't tend to see that as much going up the leagues. It's fantastic."



(Left to right): Layla Lucas (FIT JACKS participant/Swansea Community Fridge manager), Robin O'Brien (Swansea City Foundation) and Shauna Thornhill (Swansea City Foundation)

## FIT FANS group's extra effort for those in need

Swansea City AFC Foundation's FIT JACKS participants collected around 50kg of food for their local foodbank to mark the end of their training programme and to support those in need.

The participants brought 110 items to their final FIT JACKS session for the Swansea Community Fridge foodbank, having planned the donations with participant foodbank manager Layla Lucas.

Layla was delighted to see her fellow participants come together to support the campaign, having suggested the idea to the group.

"It's absolutely amazing," she says. "I thought we might get three or four tins here, but to get as much as we did is great, especially with the cost-of-living crisis.

"I thought it would be nice for the group to have a collection for an organisation that organises food, it didn't have to be mine, but after running it by the Foundation, they were happy to take part and thankfully everyone got on board."

Layla, who works at Swansea Community Fridge, takes in surplus food from supermarkets and other places before distributing it to the community to prevent waste going to landfill.

"This will help us feed up to 200 people with our food parcels each

week, it's a huge benefit," she adds. "Some weeks we don't get much food from supermarkets, so this will help supplement it."

Layla was a participant of FIT JACKS – a free, weekly fitness programme, planned and organised by the Foundation's coaches and catered to those who wish to lose weight and improve their general fitness and wellbeing.

FIT JACKS is part of the EFL Trust's FIT FANS initiative, which has already helped thousands of football fans to achieve long-term improvements in weight loss, physical activity, diet and general wellbeing. Participants on average lost over 5% of their body weight and have seen lasting benefits. ■



Blackburn Rovers duo Tyler Tolan & Lucy Shepherd with female participant.



Blackburn Rovers' Tyler Tolan & Lucy Shepherd with Soccer Camp.



Bristol City First Team Coach Jason Euell with children.



Female participant at Blackpool FC Community Trust Soccer Camp.



Cambridge United players taking part in a Q&A.



Leicester City Player Callum Doyle takes part in a session with youngsters.



Stevenage Boro Bear with participants who won Players of the Day at camp.



Ipswich Town striker Freddie Ladapo signing an autograph



## Summer of football fun across the network

Thousands of children were kept busy with exciting and entertaining activities and courses from EFL Club Community Organisations this summer.

Ranging from multi-sports activities to goalkeeper sessions, there were multiple opportunities for young people to get involved and play the beautiful game.

Several player visits from both men's and women's football teams took place across the network, where children could enjoy a session with the players, take part in a Q&A and collect autographs.



Quickfire Questions with...

# JAY PROBERT

HEAD OF SUBJECT (SPORT), UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH WALES

**Q: Tell us about the partnership between USW and the EFL Trust.**

A: The partnership is entering its 10th year and was set up originally to help future proof the Club Community Organisation (CCO) workforce.

CCOs provide a gateway to higher education for many learners that may not have considered it a viable pathway previously. I guess this aligns to many other initiatives delivered by CCOs, where they realise aspirations and help widen access to education for pockets of England and Wales where traditional higher education institutions find it difficult to do so.

Students on the course study online learning materials while based at a CCO learning hub. This 'flipped university' approach enables learners to study on the job in the workplace, allowing them to contribute to the wider CCO strategic objectives.

This in situ learning is complimented by periodic visits to USW where students are assessed on their practical coaching ability.

**Q: How has the partnership developed in the past 10 years?**

A: Since humble beginnings in 2013/14, the partnership now offers three degree pathways – Community Football Coaching and Development, Sports Coaching and Development and Sports Business and Management.

We currently have over 600 students enrolled at over 40 CCOs across England and Wales. However, it is the investment in infrastructure by CCOs, the EFL Trust and USW which has been most impressive within that time.



There are more than 60 dedicated Club mentors who work tirelessly to support students daily. Their role is to identify meaningful work-based learning opportunities within the CCO and also facilitate learning sessions. The EFL Trust has also employed a team of dedicated staff to support students academically, promote and deliver a national coach education calendar to support employability and support CCOs with targeted recruitment. Over recent years, USW have appointed dedicated blended learning lecturers who have a specialism in online delivery to cater for the differing learning needs of our students.

**Q: What's been your proudest moment over the past 10 years?**

A: That's a tricky one. Every graduation day is a very proud moment and listening to some of the subsequent employment stories from our alumni always fills me with great pride and serves as a useful reminder as to what the partnership is about.

In 2018, the partnership was recognised with a CATE (Collaborative Award in Teaching Excellence) Special Recognition Award from Advance HE. This award recognised our unique and explicit approach to collaborative working, which has helped diverse student groups achieve full access to the opportunities of sector-leading HE, growing their local community engagement, making meaningful impact and gaining employment while remaining in their local community and home Clubs.

**Q: What do Football Clubs and their Community Organisations offer to students in higher education?**

A: A safe, inclusive, supportive learning environment that enables them to fulfil their potential and achieve a career within or outside of the sports sector.

So often, this is achieved through applying learning in the workplace via meaningful work-based learning opportunities, where graduate attributes such as communication, leadership and project management are refined and developed. ■

