



SPFL Trust

Mental Health Awareness Course



In partnership with the Chris Mitchell Foundation
2020-21 Season Report



Introduction

Five years ago we took the first steps on an important journey. We had a vision: for the world of Scottish football to become a place where mental health is talked about and wellbeing is prioritised.

Some may ask why a football organisation is so interested in mental health, and the answer is because it is our duty. We know that football has the power to change lives, and we must act upon that.

We joined forces with Positive Mental Health Scotland and, thanks to generous funding from the Chris Mitchell Foundation, began delivering Mental Health Awareness training. These courses are free of charge, and available to anyone connected to the beautiful game.

It is estimated that one in four of us will experience a mental health problem at some point in our lives and what we also know is that too many lives have been lost to suicide in Scotland.

Over the last four years, there has been a worrying trend showing an increase in suicide. Men are still three times more likely as women to die by suicide, and men in their middle years (25-54) account for the largest group.

As a male-dominated sport, it's vital that we acknowledge this, and do what we can to get men, and those who support them, to open up and talk about their hopes, aspirations and what is keeping them awake at night.

Despite covid restrictions and challenges to delivery in the 2020-21 season, we switched to online delivery and were able to reach a significant milestone: all 42 SPFL clubs have now taken part in course, with an average of five staff from each club receiving this training.

Our bespoke training gets participants right to the issues at hand, focusing on real case studies and experiences commonly found in a football environment. The two-day course is delivered by a qualified professional, with extensive experience working in both football and mental health.

The aims of the training are to:

- Equip staff with the skills to provide initial support
- Prevent the problem from getting worse
- Provide participants with tools for giving comfort

In fulfilling these aims, participants of the training are able to meet the following objectives:

- Talking about suicide
- Recognising the signs of mental health problems
- Providing initial help and how to guide a person to appropriate help

2020-21 courses

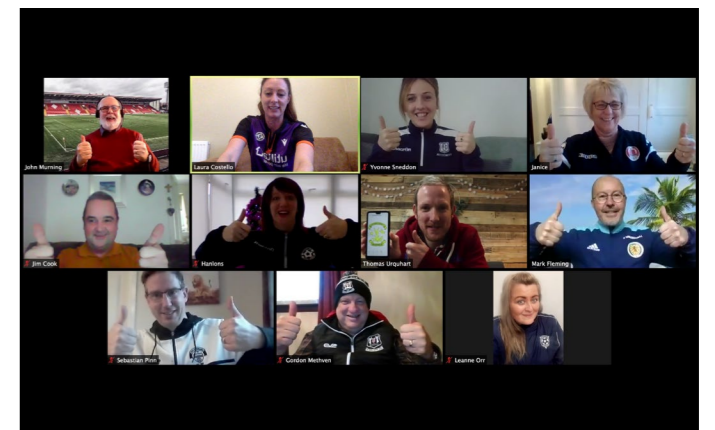
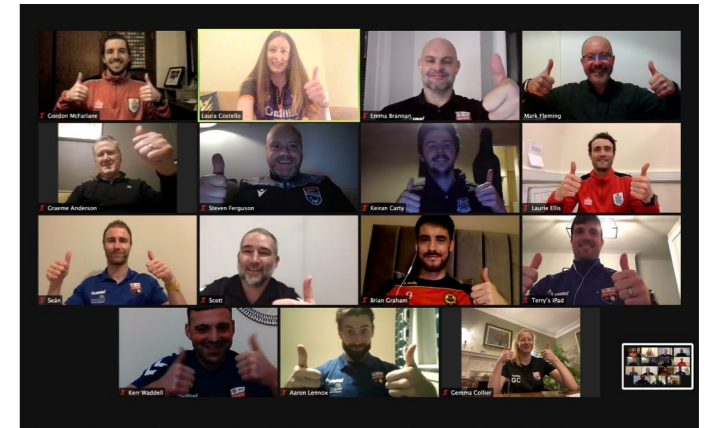
Covid restrictions did not stop this vital training taking place. The course was adapted for online delivery and as soon as we could, we began delivering training over Zoom. More recently face-to-face training has recommenced, where possible.

Between November 2020 and May 2021:

- We've delivered 14 mental health courses
- 13 of these have taken place online
- One took place face to face at Dundee United FC

Who can take this course?

The Mental Health Awareness Course is available, free of charge, for anyone connected to Scottish football.



In 2021:

157 participants took part in the course



They represented **104** organisations including: local authorities, football clubs, their associated community trusts and other third sector organisations connected to the football world

Participants came from a broad range of backgrounds including: players themselves, coaches, chaplains, club secretaries, physiotherapists, ticketing managers and other operational staff from clubs



Feedback

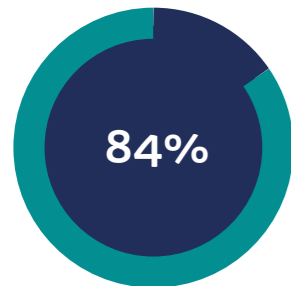


“This informative course really educated me and changed my perspective on many taboo issues such as suicide. It really made me look at what I do in both my personal and professional life, to encourage myself and those around me to have good mental Health.”

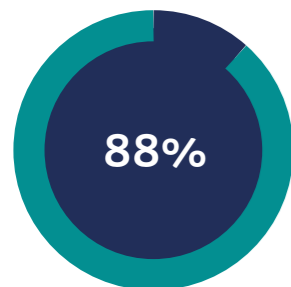
2021 course participant



To measure the impact of the course in the 20-21 season, we surveyed all participants who took part in our online training courses. In total we received 55 responses, and saw a great deal of positive feedback:



Over **84%** of participants who completed the survey, said they found the course very useful



88% of participants who completed the survey said they would recommend the course to others working in Scottish football



100% agreed that despite the change to online delivery, they found the course content engaging and interactive

We also asked participants how their learning from the course would benefit them in the future. Their responses can be grouped in 5 main themes:

Increased confidence

“I now feel more confident and prepared to help people with specific needs.”

“This will allow me to fulfil my role as sport chaplain with more confidence.”

Ability to notice signs of poor mental health

“I think this course will make me more adept at supporting those who are struggling from poor mental health, or even recognising that they are struggling in the first place.”

“It is a great benefit to be able to notice when any of our players will be struggling mentally.”

Protecting their own mental health

“Personally, it’s a reminder to get more rest which in turn makes me more able to use the passion of helping others.”

“I think it will help me to be a bit more open with others about my mental health.”

Wider learning

“I plan to share some of the information with my football club particularly around improving your mental health.”

Signposting

“It’ll help me take care of my players better and help them find support for their mental health issues that are outwith my expertise.”

“I hope to be able to recognise changes in people I interact with and have the skills to start the support of signposting should they need it.”

Moira, Dundee United December 2020 course



“I heard about the Mental Health Awareness course from a colleague who said it was the most empowering and interesting course she had ever been on. I thought it was a great way to increase my knowledge of mental health.”

“There were people on the course from every part of Scottish football. I don’t think it matters whether you work in a ticket office, whether you’re a physio, or a footballer, the stuff you learn on the course can be used across all aspects of life.”

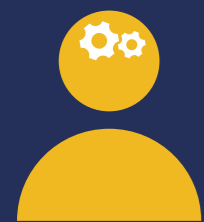
“The course opened up some avenues I’d never come across in my life. I’ve noticed that people have been struggling since lockdown, and I’ve actually checked in with a couple of people I follow on social media since completing the course, just to ask if they’re okay.”

“We need to get past the stigma of mental health, we need to speak to each other.”



Five years of mental health awareness

2021 marked five years since we began delivering Mental Health Awareness Training. We have reached all areas of Scottish football from club CEOs to hospitality staff and first team coaches and players.



Since the start of delivery in March 2016 we have delivered:

45 courses

To 686 individuals

From 231 organisations across Scottish football

We have reached 42/42 of the SPFL clubs

To dig deeper into the impact the course has had since delivery began, we surveyed all previous participants, receiving 136 responses.

- Over 96% of previous participants feel more confident in providing support for mental health after being on the course
- 80% told us they had used the skills they learnt on training

We asked survey participants to tell us about how they have applied their learning, and their responses can be grouped into four key themes:

Increased awareness

“It has just taught me to be more considerate around colleagues and the general public.”

“It’s certainly given me more of an awareness as to what to look out for.”

Change in approach

“What was immediately clear to me at the time was what I would have instinctively done in the situation to try and help and what my training advised were not in complete harmony. The training continues to be of help as I continue to support situations within and outwith the football club.”

“It is less a specific incident and more general about the change in my communication style. I found that I have had more open conversations about how someone is feeling by changing how I say things to make it clear that not only am I listening to what they have to say but that I am willing to listen to whatever they need to talk about.”

“I have a family member who has struggled with depression, having completed the course it gave me the tools to understand and approach the situation in a completely different manner to how I would have done previously.”

Wider learning

“I had a slot in a team meeting and shared some of the broad principles and ethos. The idea was to begin a conversation and bring some of the issues into the open. It led to many conversations and also a regular feature in the matchday programme interviewing players from a chaplaincy perspective.”

Intervention

“I was able to ask a patient directly if they had thought about ending their life.”

“Before attending this course I would have only been able to guess what to do or found myself being unhelpful. After attending this course I was able to help a young female individual through her panic attack while on a train and successfully get her breathing under control again.”



Sam,
Giffnock Soccer Centre

Sam took part in the Mental Health Awareness course in 2019. He shares more about what he learnt:



“I had a lot of friends, and people close to me, experiencing mental health problems so I thought the course would be a good opportunity to learn a bit more, not just so I could help them but I could help myself to be able to know how to handle that.”

“The way the course was laid out made it so valuable, and we got to hear from individuals about their own experiences, which was sometimes hard to hear because they were just so strong. Now I understand situations more, and before I may have never been able to notice these things, or even know there was a problem.”

“One of the smallest, but perhaps most important bits of information I learnt from the course is that everyone has mental health. I feel like there can often be a stigma related to mental health, and if you take this course you manage to get past that.”

Mitch: What Happened Next

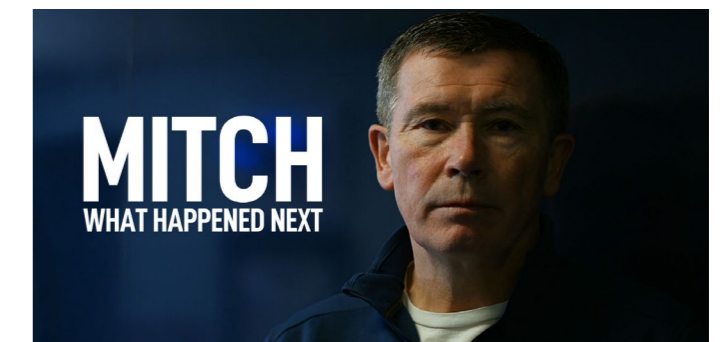
To mark five years of Mental Health First Aid training, we worked closely with the Chris Mitchell Foundation, to develop a new film about the impact of his legacy, ‘Mitch: What Happened Next.’

Chris died by suicide in May 2016. He had played for Falkirk, Bradford City, Queen of the South, and Clyde.

The Chris Mitchell Foundation was set-up by his dad Philip and sister Laura. The foundation aims to dispel the stigma associated with mental health in Scottish football through education and by raising awareness.

The film picks up the story and explains the impact Chris’ legacy has had on Scottish football through the Mental Health Awareness Course. It features Philip, his friend and Rangers star Scott Arfield (who appeared in the original film), and three different training participants.

Since releasing the film we have seen high levels of engagement, and a 20% increase in demand for places on the course.



400,000+ impressions



12,000+ engagements



92,000+ video views



600+ shares



27 pieces of media coverage

Appendix

Course 1	Online
Dundee FC	Coach
Dundee FC	Coach
Dundee FC	Coach
Dundee Utd	Coach
Dundee Utd	Coach
Sports Chalplaincy	Chaplain
Sports Chalplaincy	Chaplain
Sports Chalplaincy	Chaplain
Sports Chalplaincy	Chaplain
Sports Chalplaincy	Chaplain
SPFL Trust	Project Officer
Sports Chalplaincy	Chaplain
SPFL Trust	Project Officer

Course 2	Online
Giffnock Soccer Centre	Coach
St Mirren	Chaplain
Motherwell Women FC	Chaplain
Stirling Albion	Coach
Central Scottish	Sports First Aider
Queen of the South	Sports Chaplain
Brora Rangers	Sports Chaplain

Course 3	Online
Caledonian Braves	Sports Chaplain
Gala Fairydean Rovers	Sports Chaplain
Roths	Sports Chaplain
Spartans Women	Sports Chaplain
Clyde Women	Sports Chaplain
Buckie Thistle	Sports Chaplain
Motherwell	OTB Project
Falkirk Foundation	OTB Project
Falkirk Foundation	OTB Project
Partick Thistle	Chaplain
Dundee United	Disability Access Officer

Course 4	Online
Dundee	Criminal Justice Worker
Airdrie	Chaplain
Elgin City	Chaplain
East Stirlingshire	Chaplain
Inverness Clachnacuddin	Chaplain
Thorn Athletic	Secretary
Condorrat Football Club	Child Protection and Wellbeing Officer for the Club
Wasps Community Club/The Man Cave	Mental Health Support Group Facilitator (The Man Cave Alloa)

Course 5	Online
Falkirk Foundation	Community Football Coach
St Anthony's Football Club	Chaplain
Edinburgh University Association Football Club	Head Coach
Edinburgh University Association Football Club	Sport Psychologist
Fort William FC	Chaplain
Edinburgh University Association Football Club	Chaplain
Boroughmuir Thistle	National Performance coach
Finishing Touch	Owner/Head Coach of 1-2-1 Business
Falkirk Foundation	Community football coach
St Mirren Charitable Foundation	Coach
Partick Thistle	Community Football Coach
Culter Youth Boys Club	Team Coach
Johnstone Burgh	Head Coach/Development Team Liaison
Carnoustie Panmure FC	General Manager
Partick Thistle	Academy Coach

Course 6	Online
Kelty Hearts	Sports Chaplain
Rangers FC	Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer
Stirling Uni Women	Sports Chaplain
Kelvindale Amateurs	Coach
Queens Park & Kilmarnock	Academy Sports Therapist
St Mirren	Supporters liaison Officer, SLO
Dundee United Community Trust	Community Development Officer / Academy Coach
Dundee United Academy	Under 10s-16s Coach
Falkirk FC	Ladies Team Head Coach
Fife/Cowdenbeath FC	SFA Assistant Football Development Officer
Patrick Thistle	FFIT Coach and Camp Coach
Hibs	Activity Leader of Over 35s Fit Group
Glasgow Women	First Team Player
Glasgow Women	First Team Player
Glasgow Women FC	Physiotherapist

Course 7	Online
Dundee United	Academy Coach & Football Development Officer
Raith Rovers Community	Assistant Development Manager
Dundee United	Academy Coach
Preston Athletic	Sports Chaplain
Easthouses Lily MWFC	Sports Chaplain
Dream Team Youth Academy	Managing Director
East Fife Community Football Club	Football and Community Development Officer
Hibernian Football Club	Hibernian Supporters' Representative
Broxburn United Sports Club	Community Development Officer
Fife Council	Scottish FA / Fife Council Football Development Officer
Gala Fairydean Rovers FC	Sports Chaplain
BSC Glasgow	Sports Chaplain
Broxburn United	Sports Development Officer
Dumbarton FC	General Manager
Broxburn United	Business Development Officer and Alive & Kickin Co-ordinator
Education, Culture & Communities	Active Schools Coordinator St. Columba's Cluster

Course 8	Online
Montrose FC	Physio
Montrose FC	Sports Therapist
Montrose FC	Goalkeeping Coach
Montrose FC	Player
Montrose FC	Player
Montrose FC	Player
Partick Thistle	Player & Manager of Womens Team
Ross County Football Club	CEO
Queens Park FC	First Team Sport Scientist
Dundee United FC	Safety Officer
Elgin City	Company Secretary

Course 9	Online
Airdrieonians	First Team Coach / Player
Hearts FC	Central Services Director
Deveronvale	Chaplain
Hearts FC	Head of Community / Scottish FA Football Development Officer
Hearts FC	Community Co-ordinator / Academy coach
Hearts FC	Community Club Development Officer/ Head of Children's Academy
Patrick Thistle	Academy Physiotherapis
Bonnyrigg Rose Community FC	Chaplain
Falkirk Football Community Foundation	Coach (Mental Health Programme)
Glasgow Women	Chaplain

Course 10	Online
St Johnstone	Chaplain
Threave Rovers	Chaplain
Heriot Watt University Football	Head of Football Performance at Heriot watt University
Westdyke CC 2008	Assistant Coach
Dryburgh Athletic Community Club	Club Development Officer
Game On - Coalfields Regeneration Trust	Game On Scotland Development Manager
Partick Thistle	Player Catering Manager
Brechin Community Football Trust	Development Officer of Brechin Community Football Trust
Arbroath FC	Assistant Manager

Course 11	Online
Celtic FC Foundation	Major Donors Manager
Dundee United Football Club	Technical Performance Academy Coach
Kirkintilloch Rob Roy	Manager
Dumbarton Football Club	Safety Officer and Disability Access Officer
Dundee FC	Child Wellbeing & Protection Officer
Montrose Community Trust	Project Manager
Penicuik Athletic	Chaplain
Kilsyth Rangers	Chaplain
Kirkintilloch Rob Roy	Chaplain
Dundee United Community Trust	Early Years Development Officer
Hamilton Academical FC	Ticket Office Manager
Aberdeen FC	Lead Academy Scout in Tayside/Perthshire
Montrose FC	First Team Player

Course 12	Online
East Fife Community Football Club	First Aider, Team Secretary, Coach
Banks of Dee	Chaplain
Brora Rangers	Chaplain
Ross County	Chaplain
Glasgow Women	First Team Player
Hamilton Academical FC	Head of Communications & PR
Hamilton Accies WFC	First Team Coach
Condorrat football club	First Aider, Club Treasurer and Team Secretary
GDSFC & Pollokshields Utd	Manager of Pollokshields Utd member of SAFA
Arbroath FC Community Trust	FFIT Coach

Course 13	Online
Lesmahagow FC	Chaplain
UEFA Pro Licence Manager	Chaplain
Dundee United FC	Academy Coach U16's Assistant Coach
AM Soccer Club	Director of Coaching at an SFA Quality Mark Community Football Club
The Scott Martin Foundation	Co-founder and Director
Clyde Community	Secretary
Scottish FA / Hamilton Academical WFC	Club Development Manager - SFA Central/ Head Coach of Hamilton Academical WFC
Coatbridge Rovers FC	Chairman
Coatbridge Rovers FC	Club & Coach Development Officer
Coatbridge Rovers FC	Girls Academy Co-ordinator

Course 14	Online
Arbroath FC Community Trust	Football Development Officer
Downfield	Chaplain
AM Soccer Club	Football Coach
Broughty Athletic FC	Chaplain
Dundee United	Representative
Dundee United	Sports Therapist - Academy

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 @SPFLTrust

 SPFLTrust

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