FOOTBALL UNITED

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH THE POWER OF FOOTBALL

SPFL Trust Strategy **2025-2030**

VISION

Our **Vision** is that the unique power of football improves people's lives across Scotland.

MISSION

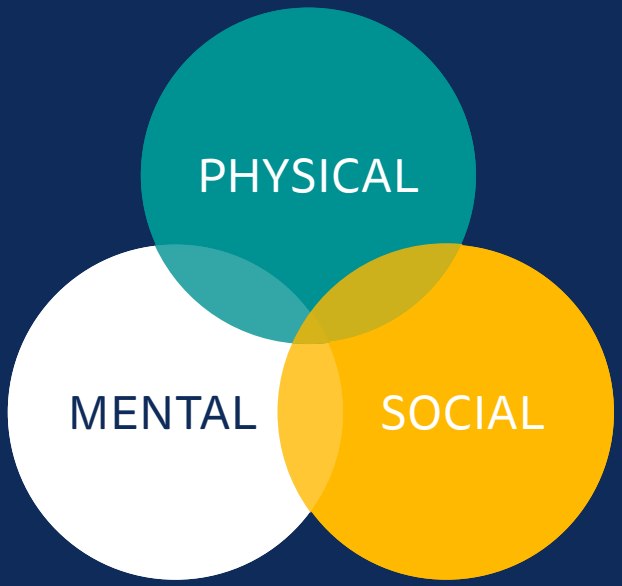
Our **Mission** is to use football to support local communities to be places where people thrive.

VALUES

Our **Values** underpin our work: Transparency, Integrity and Respect.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Wellbeing



Attainment

EMPLOYABILITY

EDUCATION

ACHIEVEMENT

Young People

ONLINE WORLD

SAFETY

ACCESSING OPPORTUNITIES

IMPACT OF POVERTY

STRATEGY 2025 - 2030

STRATEGIC PILLARS

WHERE WE WERE

For 15 years the SPFL Trust has been on a journey to identify approaches that improve lives and reduce the impact of poverty.

Our research has consistently showed that **people living near professional football clubs are more likely to experience poverty**. These are communities where football clubs are deeply rooted serving as multi-generational institutions that play an essential role in the social, cultural and economic life of their local areas.

Poverty reflects structural failings in our society and economy. Living in poverty pushes people into poor health, both physical and mental, and creates barriers to education, fair work and securing an income that meets the basics of life. This is the reality for too many of our friends, family and neighbours. Our work has set out to support people with dignity and respect, helping them to overcome the unjust barriers that stop them from meeting their potential.

We know the unique ability of football to create meaningful, measurable change to overcome this adversity.

With the highest attendance per capita in Europe, **Scottish football** is intrinsic to our society and is a common thread weaved into the fabric of our communities. Harnessing this passion and connecting fans is central to our work in realising the potential of the people we support though our programmes.

Football Fans in Training

helped over
14,000
participants lose over 36,934kg in weight

SPFL Trust Festive Friends

provided almost
26,000
meals since 2016 to older people at risk of isolation

SPFL Trust CashBack Off the Bench

supported
133
young people aged 16-25 work towards improving learning and employability, diverting many from anti-social behaviour and criminal activity.

Our national network of associated clubs and trusts **(ATCs)**, many of them registered charities, will remain central to delivery. Together, we will build on our strong relationships to co-design, develop, and test initiatives that reduce the impact of poverty and create opportunities for people of all ages to live heathier, more connected, and more fulfilling lives.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Engagement with our partners and participants have demonstrated that the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, together with ongoing cost of living challenges, continue to place pressures on individuals, families and communities.

People across all age groups are facing increasing challenges related to mental health, reduced physical activity, rising social isolation, and a lack of safe, inclusive spaces to connect, participate, build confidence and positively contribute.

Ensuring the success of our work requires an honest and understanding view of the social challenges that communities face. It is clear that poverty remains one of Scotland's most persistent and urgent social challenges. Around **one in five people in Scotland live in poverty**, and for children and young people, the situation is even more stark with child poverty rates approaching 23%. The consequences are far-reaching and complex.

To deliver on this ambition, we will continue working in close partnership with **SPFL** clubs and their affiliated charitable trusts who are the core of our operations. Simultaneously, we will expand our partnerships to include **SWPL** clubs and **SFA**-registered clubs that demonstrate the capacity and commitment to deliver our community work.

These organisations are deeply rooted in communities and uniquely positioned to build trusted relationships driven by a shared purpose and collective pride.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

Scotland's social landscape is changing in many ways which requires us to adapt in order to be well placed to offer continued support.

And change brings opportunity

Our new strategy looks to build on our previous work in **addressing the impact of poverty in communities**. This includes supporting people to secure jobs, referring people for help with debt issues, to access safe and appropriate housing, to evaluate the correct benefits and social support, to increase literacy and numeracy.

We will take a holistic and inclusive approach

Gaps in achievement, attainment, and employability have widened across the country, not only for young people, but for adults seeking increases to their working hours or earnings, second chances, career changes, or simply a pathway out of hardship. Through our projects, **we remain committed to supporting individuals across all life stages**, using football as a tool to improve mental, physical, and social health, and to remove barriers to learning,

At the same time, we recognise the urgent pressures facing many groups of young people – a generation that has faced disproportionate challenges through **educational disruption**, **economic instability** and **declining mental wellbeing**. At the same time, we recognise the great potential and determination of our young people.

So, in response, we are introducing a **new dedicated strategic pillar** which is dedicated to focussing specifically on Young People, designed to ensure that those at a formative stage of life are given the tools, opportunities, and support they need to thrive.

Tackling poverty at its root wherever possible but also addressing its impact on health, opportunity and young people is key to building a fairer and more resilient Scotland.

This context provides the evidence base of our work going forward and highlights the urgent need for coordinated equitable action.

Our Strategic priorities reflect these key highlights

1. Poverty-driven inequalities are clearly linked to poorer outcomes in health, education, and employment.
2. Disadvantage is cumulative beginning in childhood and often continuing across generations.
3. Child poverty reduction is fundamental to improving national outcomes.
4. Health inequalities require integrated solutions, particularly for mental health and addiction.
5. Educational attainment would be improved through inclusive and engaging learning opportunities.
6. Transitions into employment or further education must be actively supported, especially for those from deprived backgrounds.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

Improving lives

Strategic Objective:

To strengthen football's role in addressing inequalities caused by poverty in Scotland, empowering people to live longer, healthier and happier lives.

We will do this by ⟶

Impact:

By building on what we know works, collaborating with key partners and broadening our reach for the first time, we will be able to support more people, in more places, in more complex ways.

CONNECTING

We will apply a hub-based model to our activities, ensuring coaches are appropriately trained and connected, and can provide people with initial support and signposting across a range of issues.

PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS

We will collaborate with partners who share our values, and have skills and expertise that complement our own, to maximise impact.

BROADENING OUR REACH

We will expand our engagement out with the SPFL & SWPL and work with ATCs who have the appetite, capacity and facilities to meet a need in their community.

Locally led

Strategic Objective:

To enhance the capacity of the ATC network to deliver both local and national outcomes, driven by the needs, insights, and voices of local communities.

We will do this by ⟶

Impact:

By strengthening capacity across the ATC network, we can better address local needs with co-produced, innovative initiatives. Where ATC capacity is limited, we'll help them to delivery, ensuring their community can benefit immediately, while supporting ATC growth.

LISTENING LOCAL

We will listen to the voices of our network and communities to effectively support ATC capacity building and workforce development.

PRODUCING LOCAL

We will co-create interventions, and manage funds, in a way that meets local needs and compliments existing local plans and services.

SUPPORTING LOCAL

Where local ATC capacity is limited; we will apply a supported delivery model to allow for peer-to-peer development and ensure local communities can benefit from services whilst ATCs expand their capacity.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

Nationally connected

Strategic Objective:

To leverage our national presence, position, connections, and profile to maximise impact and benefit for people across Scotland.

We will do this by ⟶

Impact:

by harnessing the strategic leadership position of the SPFL Trust, we will be able to amplify the voice of our network and communities, making meaningful connections and creating opportunities that genuinely improve lives. In doing so, we will reaffirm the role that football can play as a strategic and proactive national partner.

STORYTELLING

We will use our national voice, collective data, insights, and real-life stories from across Scotland inspiring others to get involved in, and support, our work.

LEADING

We know our network best and will leverage that understanding to maximise opportunities for communities, key partners and people across Scotland.

POSITIONING

We will use our national role to share best practice, mobilise our network and cement football's position as a proactive player in the delivery of national outcomes, at local level.

Internationally respected

Strategic Objective:

To position Scottish football as a global leader in community engagement by sharing our learning internationally, adopting best practice from peers, and ensuring Scotland benefits from world-class approaches.

We will do this by ⟶

Impact:

By connecting with and learning from global partners, we will strengthen our programmes at home while building Scotland's reputation as an innovator in using football for social good. As part of one of the most community-engaged leagues in the world, we will share that experience internationally while continuing to learn from others. Communities across Scotland will benefit from proven international models, and our successes will inspire and influence partners and peers worldwide.

SHARING OUR VOICE

We will showcase our insights, evidence, and impact on international platforms, ensuring Scotland is recognised as a leader in community-focused football.

LEARNING FROM PEERS

We will actively engage with international organisations, adapting best practice from around the world to enhance outcomes for people in Scotland.

BUILDING GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

We will seek collaborative projects with international communities, creating knowledge exchange that strengthens delivery both at home and abroad.

What will success look like?

More people meaningfully supported

By 2030 we plan to engage with 20,000 people per season, many from communities with limited access to opportunities, in programmes and activities that provide person centred, meaningful support. This represents an increase of just over 50% on 5 years.

Greater understanding of our work, and that of the network

Policy makers, potential funders and potential strategic partners will better understand the work of our network, the impact it has and will use that knowledge to aid strategic decision making.

People are happier and healthier

programme evaluation will show that people feel happier and healthier because of their engagement in our work.

Increased investment to support communities across Scotland

We will increase investment through a diverse range of income routes to ensure sustainability; as a result, we will increase annually, funding to our network to aid delivery of national outcomes at local levels.

Strategic player in delivery of national outcomes, at local level

We will become a respected partner at national level, included, where appropriate, in the proactive planning and development of strategic approaches that support communities.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

We recognise the critical importance of robust monitoring and evaluation in ensuring our work is effective, continually improving, and delivering real impact.

We are fully committed to a collaborative monitoring approach that involves the entire organisation. This includes strategic oversight at board level, rigorous internal, external evaluation and audit, and a clear commitment to listening to and learning from the voices of those we aim to support, and those of our key strategic partners.

We will ensure our work remains

RESPONSIVE

RELEVANT

ACCOUNTABLE

HOW WE GOT HERE

The following key data points represent the most significant drivers impacting poverty, health, education, and employability. These insights have been central to informing the direction of our new strategic plan.

- **24%** of children in Scotland lived in relative poverty between 2020–23—the highest rate among age groups.
- Persistent child poverty rose to **23%** in 2023–24, indicating deep-rooted disadvantage.
- **21%** of working-age adults also lived in relative poverty during this period, highlighting widespread economic insecurity across families.
- Men in the most deprived areas live **26 fewer** years in good health than men in the least deprived (Healthy Life Expectancy gap).
- Suicide rates are nearly **three times higher** in areas of Scotland that experience higher socioeconomic disadvantage.
- Young adults **(18–29)** reported the worst mental health of any age group during the COVID-19 pandemic, with ongoing impacts as restrictions eased.
- In 2023–24, the attainment gap at SCQF Level 6 was **38.4** percentage points, the widest since 2015–16.
- The school attendance gap between most and least deprived pupils reached **6.7** percentage points.
- **95.7%** of school leavers entered a positive destination, yet a **4.3** percentage point gap persists by deprivation.
- Unemployment increases the risk of premature death by **63%**, even after adjusting for lifestyle factors like smoking or obesity.
- Young people were disproportionately affected by COVID-19: **39%** felt pessimistic about future job prospects, and **41%** of those in part-time work saw their hours reduced.
- Lower attainment in deprived areas limits access to secure employment, reinforcing cycles of poverty and poor health outcomes.

The BIG ideas

1. Young People as a new specific priority
2. Broaden our Reach out with the SPFL pyramid
3. Supported Delivery for trusts when needed
4. Locally Led | Nationally Connected | Internationally Respected
5. 5 Year Strategy Duration

FOOTBALL UNITED

OUR NEW FIVE YEAR STRATEGY IS HERE

SPFL Trust Strategy **2025-2030**

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