Festive Friends

2025 Christmas Report

spftrust.org.uk/festivefriends

A word *from our CEO*

The festive season brings joy for many, but for thousands of older people across Scotland, it can also highlight loneliness, isolation and the absence of company.

This year, as always, our network of SPFL associated trusts and clubs (ATCs) stepped in to bring warmth, companionship and festive cheer, showing just how powerful football can be in connecting communities.

Now marking its tenth year, Festive Friends stands as one of the SPFL Trust's most enduring and impactful programmes. What began as a small pilot has grown into a nationwide initiative, delivered by SPFL and SWPL clubs and associated community trusts across the country. Over the past decade, more than 32,000 Christmas meals and hampers have been provided to older people at risk of loneliness and social isolation, a profound and lasting impact in communities the length and breadth of Scotland.

In 2025 alone, 41 associated trusts and clubs supported more than 5,000 older people through stadium events, home-delivered meals, hampers, doorstep visits and friendly calls. Each interaction offered more than festive cheer, building relationships, opening conversations and connecting people to wider local support where needed.

Stadiums provide a welcoming space for those who might otherwise find it daunting to engage, whether visiting for the first time or returning to a familiar place. Time spent together over a meal or in conversation can make a lasting difference, creating connection and community where it is needed most.

My sincere thanks go to every club, volunteer and partner who has contributed to a decade of Festive Friends, and to all those who made the 2025 programme possible.

Nicky Reid
CEO

"We are grateful to the SPFL for providing funding up to the value of £25,000 for Festive Friends"

What is ***Festive Friends?***

Festive Friends is the SPFL Trust's annual winter campaign, created and funded in partnership with the SPFL to support older people who may be socially isolated and lonely during the festive season.

Now in its tenth year, the programme has grown from a small pilot into a national initiative delivered through more than 40 SPFL and SWPL clubs and their associated community trusts. Located at the heart of local communities, ATCs are uniquely placed to bring warmth, companionship and festive cheer to those who may otherwise spend Christmas alone.

Working closely with stakeholders and third sector partners, ATCs identify people in need and put plans in place to brighten their festive season.

2025's Festive Friends participants received a hamper filled with delicious food, festive treats, and fun games, or were welcomed into their local stadium for a traditional Christmas dinner, lively entertainment, thoughtful gifts, and, above all, wonderful company.

Watch our explainer animation

Festive Friends supports people aged over 50 who may be at risk of isolation and loneliness, with referrals coming from local organisations or members of the public.

Who delivered Festive Friends **in 2025?**

41 ATCs delivered Festive Friends in 2025

"I hadn't shared a proper meal with others in a long time, it felt so warm and uplifting. I didn't realise how much I needed this."

Margaret, Festive Friends participant, The Killie Community

"Seeing Andrew's smile made my Christmas so much brighter. Hearing him talk so positively about the experience made being alone for Christmas for the first time in a long time much more bearable."

Andrew's support worker, St Johnstone Community Trust

"It meant so much to get out of the house and feel cared for. Being with people, enjoying the choir and the meal really made my day."

Sheila, Peterhead FC Community Foundation

Festive Friends ***in numbers***

Clubs involved
41

Total number of participants
5,089

Total number of hampers sent
2,101
(51% male, 49% female)

Total number of participants who attended an in-person event
2,988
(53% male, 47% female)

Total number of participants who lived alone
2,280

Total number of participants engaged for the first time
1,619

Total number of volunteers
920

Total number of volunteer hours
3,253

246 partner organisations were involved, including NHS, food banks and regional support services.

Festive Spirit

Clyde FC Community Foundation

One participant at Clyde, in his nineties, lived in Hamilton all his life. In recent years, rising living costs have put pressure on his fixed pension, leading him to rely on Hamilton District Foodbank, particularly through the winter months.

He lives alone and, since losing his wife, the festive period has become especially quiet. Although a lifelong follower of local football, he had never attended a Clyde FC match since the club moved to Hamilton.

In December, he was identified by the Foodbank as someone who could benefit from Festive Friends, delivered by Clyde FC Community Foundation and supported by the SPFL Trust. When volunteers arrived at his door with a festive hamper, complete with seasonal treats, a handwritten card and a complimentary ticket to a future home match, he was visibly moved.

"It felt like somebody remembered me," He later shared. "I wasn't expecting anything like that. I thought, why not go along to a game? It could be something to look forward to."

The gesture gave him renewed confidence to reconnect with his local community, and Clyde FC Community Foundation is looking forward to welcoming him to a match in the months ahead.

Festive Spirit

Dundee FC Community Trust

A Warm Welcome at Home

A 91-year-old lady who lives alone and struggles to leave the house received a Festive Friends hamper from Dundee FC Community Trust. On arrival, volunteers noticed she was having difficulty with her kitchen pulley, which they were able to fix, bringing her visible relief.

The hamper was heavy, so the team unpacked and put everything away, a task she could not have managed alone. She was deeply grateful for the support.

During a chat afterwards, she shared that she often feels lonely and rarely leaves the house. Her face lit up when talking about her love for Dundee FC, a passion shared with her two sons, who now live in Australia. Volunteers told her about the monthly Football Memories Group, and she was keen to attend. Contact details were shared, and arrangements made to support her attendance.

"My day started badly but this has really made my day, thank you," she said.

The visit went beyond delivering food. It was about listening, offering practical help, and opening the door to new connections, giving her a chance to become part of a supportive community.

Festive Spirit

Mrs E

East Kilbride FC

Mrs E, an 84-year-old widow, had faced significant loss in recent years, having lost her husband of over 60 years and, earlier, her daughter to breast cancer. Despite her grief, she remains active in her community, helping ten neighbours each week by putting out and collecting their bins.

When invited to East Kilbride FC's Festive Friends meal, she was overjoyed. She thoroughly enjoyed sharing time with other widows aged 80+, connecting and celebrating together. The extra goodies included in her hamper brought additional cheer, and she later sent a heartfelt thank you note to the helpers.

The event offered more than a festive meal, it provided companionship, connection, and a sense of being remembered during what can be a lonely time of year.

Barbara

Raith Rovers Community Foundation

Barbara, 86, joined Raith Rovers' Festive Friends meal and received a hamper after spending much of the year isolated due to mouth cancer treatment. With her family living in England, she was unable to spend Christmas with them, making the invitation especially meaningful.

The event offered Barbara a safe and welcoming space to reconnect with her community. Her positivity and warmth shone throughout the meal, lifting the spirits of fellow guests, players and staff. Alongside the festive meal, the hamper provided practical support, helping her feel cared for during what could have been a lonely period.

Festive Spirit

Joe

Forfar Community Football Trust/Forfar Athletic

Joe, 87, joined our Festive Friends programme after experiencing increasing isolation following the loss of his wife, who had previously been the main organiser of their social life.

With his hearing declining and his children living over an hour away, Joe had withdrawn from regular social contact.

Joe shared that this was the first social event he had attended in a long time and that he had been feeling increasingly isolated at home. Attending the festive meal offered him a rare opportunity to socialise in a welcoming environment. The relaxed atmosphere helped him feel more at ease, and he stayed longer than he initially planned, enjoying both the meal and the company. Staff and volunteers were mindful of his hearing difficulties, ensuring he was included in conversations.

Since the event, Joe has received ongoing support, including regular check-ins and encouragement to attend future social activities. He has also been signposted to local groups for people with hearing loss, helping him rebuild confidence and reconnect with his community.

DUMBARTON
Football Club Ltd

RANGERS

HIBERNIAN
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

MERRY XMAS
Jingle

SPFL TRUST Festive Friends

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