

EFL IN THE COMMUNITY

NEWSLETTER



Making a difference in Bolton

The relationship between Football Club and Club Community Organisation is crucial to maximising the impact of support projects within the local area.



Bolton Wanderers' collaborative approach has enabled them to execute several successful programmes that have strengthened the connection between the Club and the town.

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DONS DEVELOP A 'ONE CLUB' STRATEGY

AFC Wimbledon's off-the-pitch activity during the 2021/22 season gained top honours as the Club was named Your Move Community Club of the Season at the EFL Awards.

Through the combined work of the Club, its Foundation, fan groups and partners, they have developed a 'One Club' strategy to maximise their community impact.

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MESSAGE FROM MIKE EVANS EFL TRUST CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Welcome to the second edition of the EFL in the Community Newsletter, which aims to showcase a selection of the invaluable activities carried out by EFL Clubs and their Club Community Organisations (CCOs).

I think it is hard to overstate the importance of Football Clubs as anchor institutions in their communities. If you look at a typical high street even 20 years ago, and definitely 50 years ago, the shops and brands have changed and the services that towns provide have changed beyond all recognition. But if you go back 120 years, the same Football Clubs are still there, providing entertainment and a social space and service to those towns – that is remarkably consistent and resilient.

Football Clubs are trusted institutions with a unique and great engagement factor and when we combine that with well governed, high quality CCOs, the impact they can have in their communities is huge.

The EFL Trust, the charitable arm of the EFL, continues to develop and adapt to support the network of CCOs and there are many opportunities for our Football Clubs to further increase the role they can play in supporting communities up and down the country, with a new strategy being developed to maximise these opportunities.

We work with the charitable organisations associated with our EFL Clubs to create Stronger, Healthier, More Active Communities in which our EFL Clubs operate. We work with a range of stakeholders to bring opportunities to the network of CCOs, provide information, advice and guidance, and share best practice between the CCOs. We typically distribute £20m-£25m each year to support this amazing work.

Having met with all 72 CCOs recently, there are some very common challenges and these challenges are clear. The cost of living crisis is creating real hardship. There is a mental health pandemic, particularly among young people who have got used to lockdowns

and missed or lost education and employment opportunities. Local authorities are struggling to resource these and other issues, and CCOs are seen as trusted organisations who are flexible and can provide support.

There is definitely no such thing as a typical week in this job! I try to split my time between three main strands of work. Firstly, spending time with CCOs and Clubs to learn how we can help them to have more impact. Secondly, engaging with partners and stakeholders to develop relationships that will add value to our network and thirdly, supporting the team internally to ensure that we provide a world class service to our network.

I have always kept a focus on our mission – supporting our CCOs. Everything we do as the EFL Trust has to add value to what they do in their everyday work, delivering impact in their communities. If we do that well, we retain their loyalty and interest, which allows us to survive and prosper as an organisation. Building an organisation of high quality, motivated staff to deliver that mission is probably the thing I am most proud of.

After 14 years with the Trust, I have now made the decision to step down at the end of the 2022/23 season. When you have a role that you enjoy and are fully committed to, finding the right time to leave is incredibly difficult, but it feels right for a new Chief Executive to come in and help shape the next chapter, with planning starting for the post-2024 strategy.

If I were to look back on a standout experience, I recall watching a 'World Cup' festival that the Midlands CCOs were running at a venue in Nottingham on a lovely summer's day very early in my tenure. It was for children with disabilities and special needs and each CCO had a team in

full kit, hundreds of kids running around having a brilliant time.

I had my Football League Trust polo shirt on and a parent came up to me and asked if I was involved in organising the event, so I explained my role and a little bit about how we helped to fund the Every Player Counts project this was part of. The parent was in tears saying how much difference the programme had made to her son, and how a day like this just allowed her to switch off, have a cup of tea with other parents and make her feel 'normal'.

It was a powerful example of what we do and has been repeated many times over the years.

Every year, the judging for the EFL Community Awards gets more and more difficult. Across the network, we have lots of high performing charities doing incredible, innovative work and the way they present themselves and tell their story to the judges is first class.

In AFC Wimbledon (and last year with Port Vale) the judges have shown that 'biggest doesn't have to mean best' and have shone a light on those Clubs and CCOs with smaller resources who really have gone above and beyond within their wider communities to win the Community Club of the Season Award.

However, you could have easily made a case for 20 others each year and nobody would have been able to challenge the decision! The depth and innovation is just astonishing and the EFL in the Community Newsletter will celebrate this work.

Please enjoy the stories that we have captured here and look forward to more coming in the future.

MIKE EVANS
EFL TRUST CHIEF EXECUTIVE



In April, the EFL's Week of Action shone a light on the continuous work of CCOs across the country



"Our Clubs interact with a million people per year. Their place in their local communities is what makes EFL Clubs special and it's what makes the pyramid special. The world's a difficult place, it's one challenge after another, but football is definitely a constant. Its place in the community and relationship between Clubs and the fans, those are the bonds that are incredibly important."

RICK PARRY
EFL CHAIR



"The breadth and depth of the work that goes on within the EFL and the EFL Trust and the network is incredible. EFL Clubs are the cornerstone of the community and the fundamental thing is this: they provide local solutions for local challenges. That's what's important about this, it's not one size fits all. It's about Football Clubs and Community Organisations getting right to the heart of their community."

LIAM SCULLY
EFL TRUST CHAIR



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Stormzy visits Dons Local Action Group

Going down a storm

As a fan-owned Club, AFC Wimbledon has been supporting its local communities for the past 20 years since the Club's formation. "AFC Wimbledon has been built on the energy and effort of its supporters," Philip Rudling, Community Director of AFC Wimbledon Foundation, said. "The Club wanted to pay back this support by providing targeted community-based activities for local people. "Over the past nine years, since the Foundation's formation, we've managed to do that on a big scale despite being a small Club Community Organisation (CCO) in size compared to others around England and Wales." AFC Wimbledon Foundation and a supporter-led voluntary organisation, the Dons Local Action Group, merged during the COVID pandemic and, throughout 2021, this united approach has seen them reach out to more vulnerable people than ever before.

The Foundation is excelling at providing a wide range of health and education projects and community hubs that are making a positive difference to the lives of hundreds of vulnerable individuals and families. The Club, and those connected, also accomplished the major milestone of welcoming fans into their new home at the Cherry Red Records Stadium for the first time. The new venue also became an NHS COVID-19 vaccination centre and became the home for AFC Wimbledon Women. Rudling continued: "Much of our outreach work uses the power of sport and exercise, but we are nothing without our people and the local partners we work with. That's what makes the difference and how we can provide meaningful and impactful education, employability and health-focused work."

850
local people volunteered on projects over the last year

£1.28m
worth of donated food collected

1,300
laptops or devices donated to local schools

44k+
weekly food boxes distributed

Success stories



PLOUGH LANE COMMUNITY HUB

Since AFC Wimbledon's move to their new home of Plough Lane, its Foundation has developed a series of new health and wellbeing initiatives within the stadium's excellent facilities, including the construction of a state-of-the-art AstroTurf five-a-side pitch.

With around 120 participants engaging weekly in various activities, the Foundation is investing lots of time into sessions that are reducing loneliness, improving mental and physical health, and providing free and vital social opportunities for young and old.

Among the sessions is the introduction of football for refugees and asylum seekers on a Friday evening, where a group of men originally reached out to the Club Community Organisation and asked if there's space where they can play and socialise.

Fiona Sutherland, Community Development Manager at AFC Wimbledon Foundation, said: "We're delighted at how quickly Plough Lane is becoming a vibrant community hub and resource for so many different people across our communities.

"We have football-related and outreach sessions on most days, from gentle exercise and quiz mornings for elderly residents of care homes and elderly supporters, to free football sessions for women, including supporting staff from the local hospital."

DONS LOCAL ACTION GROUP

Volunteers and two full-time staff employed by AFC Wimbledon Foundation manage a vital operation that provides weekly food boxes to referred people in need.

More than 800 volunteers spared their time during 2021, including the collection of donated food on stalls outside local supermarkets and a designated point outside Plough Lane during home games.

Even grime superstar Stormzy popped along to visit Dons Local Action

Group and donated two trolley loads of food to support his community.

On top of providing food to their communities, Dons Local Action Group have provided donated IT equipment to schoolchildren and furniture to those in poverty.



MADDI'S STORY

Maddi Sweetman, 22, found it hard to secure employment after losing her job during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to challenges with her mental health.

However, Maddi has been able to overcome mental health problems and found a lifeline with AFC Wimbledon Foundation.

Through the Kickstart scheme, which provided opportunities to those wanting to gain a first step on the employment ladder during the pandemic, Maddi has been able to land a full-time role and even picked up AFC Wimbledon's Community Club of the Year award in April.

Maddi said: "To be able to have an opportunity, not only at the Club I love, but just to get my foot in the door for a career in football, is so fantastic. I'm so excited to get involved around the community. Helping is my passion, and to know everything I am doing is for a good cause, I couldn't have asked for anything better."



SUPER 9S

AFC Wimbledon Foundation has a goal of reaching every nine-year-old in the London borough of Merton by 2023 to educate them about the history of the Club and the opportunities available.

Young people are enjoying matchday visits, stadium tours, school football tournaments and workshops within the newly built Club museum.

More than 1,500 first-team shirts have been handed out for young fans to don and the Foundation has also introduced an arts and poetry competition.



Award-winning COVID response

The EFL and its 72 Member Clubs were awarded the 'Best Sports Governing Body Initiative' at the Sports Business Awards 2021 for the incredible collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The effort to support their communities was unprecedented, with one Sky Bet League One Club being recognised for the extraordinary part they played and the legacy it's created.

Burton Albion, Burton Albion Community Trust (BACT) and the local NHS Trust honoured more than 100 volunteers at a special celebration event for helping to deliver more than 330,000 vaccinations at the Pirelli Stadium.

Many of the volunteers who have worked at the centre from its opening

in December 2020 attended and received a certificate and a pin badge from the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire Ian Dudson.

Also in attendance were Burton MP Kate Griffiths, East Staffordshire Mayor Phillip Hudson and Burton Albion Community Trust Chairman John Jackson.



Burton Albion Chairman Ben Robinson MBE, who's also High Sheriff of Staffordshire, said: "When the first dose was administered at the Pirelli Stadium in December 2020, it was the start of an incredible pandemic response.

"Eighteen months later, over 300,000 vaccinations have been given and no doubt lives have been saved.

"None of that could have happened without the volunteers who put their hands up in the midst of a national emergency, without thought of the risks to themselves in order to help others through this crisis."

This incredible drive to help get as many people as possible vaccinated within their community did not go unnoticed by the EFL Awards judging panel, either.

The East Staffordshire-based Club and its Trust were awarded the EFL Community Project of the Year Award for their efforts.

Burton Albion donated stadium space and provided facilities such as power and lighting free of charge to the NHS. BACT staff worked with NHS colleagues to establish the centre and recruited dozens of volunteers to ensure the operation ran smoothly, before eventually taking over operations and freeing up staff.

"We are delighted to have won this brilliant award for what is perhaps the most important project ever undertaken by the Trust and Football Club, all of which has been at the very centre of the pandemic response," said Matt Hancock, BACT Head of Community.

"The impact the volunteers have made is also changing the way we operate across all of our programmes, so there is a lasting legacy for the Trust in the impact they have made."



Leaving a lasting legacy

Burton Albion and Burton Albion Community Trust have developed a trusting, working relationship with local partners from the NHS, before and during the COVID pandemic.

Staff and volunteers continue to manage important tasks such as vaccine management, holding weekly calls with key NHS colleagues and continually staying on top of the latest vaccine needs and demands.

Moreover, the Club has successfully partnered with Burton's Queen's Hospital and, in particular, Miss Jyoti Shah to organise prostate cancer screenings for many years at the Pirelli Stadium, while NHS midwife services have used the Club to free up hospital space for COVID patients.

Looking ahead, the Club and the Burton Albion Community Trust (BACT) want to further improve their health and wellbeing offer to the community and build on their relationships with local partners.

ONGOING COMMUNITY SPACE

Working alongside the local Primary Care Network, BACT is in the process of improving facilities at the Pirelli Stadium, including the development of a health hub for community-led projects to be delivered by the Trust. This new space will also be used for ongoing vaccine administration.



Burton Albion volunteer group

Matt Hancock - Burton Albion Community Trust Head of Community

ADDRESSING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

BACT is set to maximise legacy grant funding from the Primary Care Network to deliver projects which will support people who either live with diabetes, suffer with loneliness, weight problems or mental health issues.

"We know we have inequalities in both health and social care across our localities, with marked differences in the demographics across the region," said Matt Hancock, BACT Head of Community.

"The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact on our communities. By working together and creating more improved and compassionate communication channels, we will be able to reach out further to those in need.

"In addition, those services already up and running will be better, with community care at the heart of what we do."

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

RITA // BLACKBURN ROVERS FIT FANS

FIT ROVERS helped Rita implement a balanced lifestyle after a serious health scare.

In 1993, Rita suffered a brain haemorrhage that went unnoticed for hours.

After spending four weeks in hospital, she returned home, although it was another six months before her speech redeveloped, along with her confidence to venture outside again.

Consequently, Rita knew her health and wellbeing must be prioritised and found herself joining Weight Watchers and Slimming World programmes, but the results never stuck.

Then, she found FIT ROVERS, where she learned how to implement small lifestyle changes in her everyday life.

Rita has lost a stone and three inches off her waist but is determined to continue her newfound healthy lifestyle.

"It took this serious illness to wake me up," she admitted. "Now, I am not going to go back because I finally understand my journey is not done yet."



ETHAN // ACCRINGTON STANLEY

The Joy of Moving programme has seen Ethan's confidence excel through physical activity.

Ethan took part in the programme along with his Year 5 class at Peel Park in Accrington, where they learned about leading a healthy, active lifestyle through healthy eating, hydration and physical activity.

At the beginning of the programme, he seemed timid and reserved when in a classroom environment. However, in the practical sessions, something ignited a flame within Ethan, and he was a totally different person.

As the weeks passed, Ethan's confidence grew, and this was reflected in both practical and classroom sessions.

He now attends soccer schools in the school holidays to work on his skills and continues to lead an active lifestyle, while he is also part of his local youth football team, Hyndburn Youth and Huncoat United.

Josh Cooper, Accrington Stanley Trust's Community Sports Officer, said: "Ethan really came out of his shell when participating in physical activity. You can see how much he enjoyed it, how he wants to challenge himself and improve on his skills. He is also a great team player and brings out the best in others around him due to his encouragement and positive behaviour."

Ethan added: "I always look forward to Stanley coming into school as their sessions are really fun and help me learn and get better."



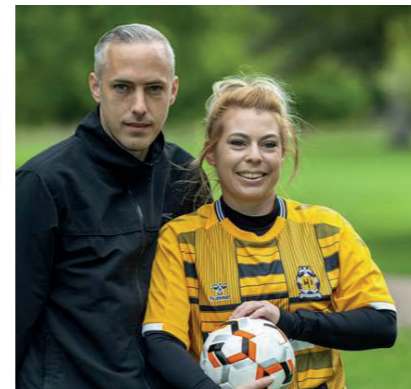
ZOE

EVERY PLAYER COUNTS CAMBRIDGE UNITED

Cambridge United's Every Player Counts session has fuelled Zoe's determination to become a role model for her children after losing her sight aged 21.

When Zoe lost her sight, she also felt that she had lost her place in the community as she had to give up a lot of her day-to-day activities.

However, when she was approached by Cambridge United's Disability Officer, Phil, while she was queuing in her local town shop, this all changed.



Zoe had not previously met any other visually impaired people within her social circle and since attending, she has gained a new circle of friends within the community.

From her first session, Zoe has not looked back and now has a wealth of opportunities, including being part of the England Women's Blind Football Talent Pathway.

"I have a full range of friends in the community," said Zoe. "Every Player Counts sessions have opened up opportunities to meet other visually impaired people in different parts of Cambridge with other social things that are going on."

"The more people say you can't do that, the more I'm driven to prove that I can. I'm trying to push the female side of the sport and be a good role model for my kids, too. I want them to know it doesn't matter whether you have a disability or not, you can do it. I'm trying to make them proud that mum is doing something."

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY



OWEN // USW MK DONS

Owen has secured himself a paid role with MK Dons Sports and Education Trust after making significant progress on the Foundation Community Football Coaching and Development degree course.

Prior to enrolling, Owen's life was football-focused having attended Denbigh Football Academy, but he picked up a serious knee injury that would eventually require a knee replacement. This is where his career path altered, and he found his desire to work as a coach.

He started the course with impressive subject knowledge and experience through finding voluntary work at MK Dons SET, while shadowing and learning from senior coaches.

Owen has reaped huge rewards as the course has progressed and is now in an area of work that he has 'always dreamt about'.

"I feel like I've changed a lot, especially with doing my work at home and not leaving deadlines to the last day," he confessed.

MK Dons SET Community and Inclusion Officer, Kelly Day, added: "He has built a good relationship with all the players and the other coaches in a really short period of time which has aided his delivery and is a testament to his likable character."



BILLY KICKSTART WIGAN ATHLETIC

"I couldn't have wished for a more welcoming and friendly group of people."

Billy Whittle had endured an unsuccessful 16-month period seeking opportunities to start his career within the workplace until he was provided a lifeline by the Kickstart programme.

The Government scheme was an initiative that has helped young people get a foothold within the professional work environment during the pandemic with EFL Clubs across the country.

Billy's persistence and perseverance paid off as he secured employment at his local Club, working as a Project Officer at Wigan Athletic Community Trust.

The 22-year-old is now ready to utilise his expertise and kickstart his career by supporting staff from across the organisation in planning upcoming events.

Billy explained: "I felt I could learn key skills and develop myself to grow professionally, and I have always respected the club's position and importance within the town I was born and raised in."

"Every day is different and exciting, and I wake up intrigued with what each day might bring. When I look at the badge, it's a great feeling to think that I work for Wigan Athletic."

"Starting a new job is always daunting, however, everyone at the Trust has made me feel like part of a team. I've made a lot of new friends who have made the four months feel like four years."

PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SHAMZA // NCS BRADFORD CITY

"NCS made a huge difference on me – it changed me as a person, made me realise that I'm worth it and that I can make friends and be myself."

When Shamza moved from Italy to Bradford three years ago, she didn't know a word of English and struggled with her confidence and ability to make friends.

Through her work on NCS, the 18-year-old has been able to integrate with the local community and received recognition from the Prime Minister for leading social action within the city of Bradford.

Growing up in an area starved of opportunities, Shamza embraced the chance to impact communities through NCS. During summer 2020, she developed a mural at Bradford City to celebrate the work done by key workers during the pandemic.

These efforts did not go unrecognised, with Shamza being invited down to Number 10 Downing Street to join former PM Boris Johnson at a special 'Thank You Day' barbecue in July.

Shamza continues to help local communities as a Peer Researcher within the PAC (Peer Action Collective Programme). Her mission is to support other young people who have been affected by crime within their community, while she intends to further this passion by eventually joining the police force.

"NCS gave me many skills such as public speaking, CPR training and many others," she said. "I was able to overcome my fears



by doing new challenges, such as rock climbing and up-sailing to overcome my fear of heights.

"Being a peer researcher means I can find out more about young people's experiences in my area and then take action to improve their lives."



CHARLIE // NCS SHEFFIELD UNITED

Charlie Boulby's NCS journey began in 2019 when she signed up to join as a participant, with no idea of what to expect.

Three years on, she has discovered new skills, new confidence and a new career as Sheffield United Community Foundation's (SUCF) NCS Recruitment Coordinator.

During her time on NCS, Charlie was part of delivering a group social action project, which involved raising £1,000 for a local heart charity. After her incredible experience, she wanted to continue with NCS, joining SUCF's Youth Board, in which Charlie continued to positively impact the community.

Possessing the right attributes to progress her passions even further, Charlie was able to secure a full-time role at SUCF, allowing her to learn a whole new set of skills, including project organisation and public speaking.

"I didn't have a clue what to expect and I ended up having the best summer of my life," she admitted. "Working with young people from different backgrounds, I acquired a great set of social skills.

"I'm now in a position where I'm learning a whole new set of skills, including time management, project organisation and public speaking, all of which are putting me in good stead to get exactly where I want to be in the future."

Young people make an impact on National Citizen Service

Through the network of EFL Club Charities, around 11,000 young people went away during the summer on a two-week experience as part of the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme.

Designed for 15 to 17-year-olds, NCS aims to develop young people's confidence and resilience, enabling them to meet new people from different backgrounds and providing them with a platform to make a difference in their local community.

During their first week, young people live away from home, developing independence and pushing themselves outside of their comfort zones through outdoor activities and team building tasks, such as rock climbing, raft building and ghyll scrambling.

In the second week, young people get a chance to use their new-found skills to plan and deliver a social action project they are passionate about in their community.

The experience might last two weeks, but the impact lasts a lot longer. Last year, the EFL Trust celebrated its 10th year of delivering NCS, supporting over 80,000 young people.

Nationally, over 750,000 young people across the country have taken part in NCS, completing over 22.5 million hours of volunteering in communities across the country.

"NCS has changed my daughter's life – she's a completely different kid since doing NCS. Her confidence has boosted and she seems overall better in herself. She loved it so much that she's applied to work with you! I would also like to look at volunteering, if possible. You're amazing, thank you for everything you do."

A parent from Wakefield couldn't believe the impact NCS has had on her daughter.



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One Club, One Community, One Town

Bolton Wanderers Chief Executive Neil Hart and Bolton Wanderers in the Community CEO Phil Mason have worked closely together to increase engagement with members of the local community, as well as driving efforts to diversify the fanbase.

Hart explained: "Phil and I speak every day, we have lunch every week, Phil is part of the Club Senior Leadership Team and he is part of a small group of trusted people who work around me on a day-to-day basis.

"At Bolton Wanderers, we have key decision-makers and influencers of the direction of the Club who understand that the Club is an anchor institution. We get that its roots run deep and are vast across the borough.

"We're not running a corporate business here; the Club is a Community Organisation in its own way. I know it's a Private Limited Company and has a Board of Directors, but it means so much to people and it has that emotive feel and garners that support.

"Every other Saturday, we have up to 20,000 people walk through our turnstiles. It's almost like a church – it's a beacon of support. If the Owners, Chief Executive and Manager don't understand that, that's where

it falls down at the first hurdle. We can put our arms around the whole Bolton family by bringing the CCO to the forefront of our work.

"Bolton is a founding member of the Football League and has been here for over 140 years. It's generational in terms of the supporter base and it's deep-rooted in the town. That allows us to play our part in the community. Going to schools and estates is really important, but also reaching out to local businesses and supporting the socio-economic community in the town as well. There's lots of engagement going on and we understand our place in the town.

"Phil and his team are fantastic for taking the brand out there. We are doing some fantastic community work and do some great projects that impact people's lives in the town and our supporters. We trust them to do that, and we want to put that on a platform."

The Greater Manchester Club has delivered a range of initiatives to benefit the local community, including extensive mental health work, campaigning around the way in which people approach gambling, and a weight management programme, which has received

significant funding from Public Health due to its early success.

In addition, the two Chief Executives have directly been at the heart of fundraising efforts, participating in a 22-mile sponsored walk to last season's Sky Bet League One fixture at Accrington Stanley alongside Chairman Sharon Brittan, with donations going towards the Club's mental health provision.

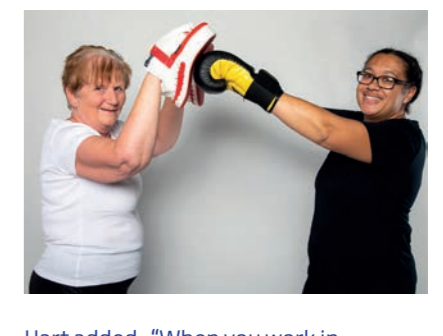
"We make sure that every element we work on has got a community aspect," said Mason, who is also the Club Chaplain. "We ask ourselves questions like, 'What would the fans want?' 'What would the community want?' 'How are we responding to the needs of the community?' That's being really appreciated now in the town.

"We pride ourselves in being One Club, One Community, One Town. When I walk around the community, people say that they feel like they've got their Football Club back. That's come through the new ownership and with Neil being the Chief Exec because we are looking at how we can embrace people in a different way, and how we can play our part as that anchor institution within the town. To have people on the same page is an absolute dream come true.

"We held a Unity Festival before a game in April to celebrate different faiths and cultures. Tickets were handed out to some disadvantaged communities that we work with, and the event was a huge success. It's the most diverse event I've ever seen within the town and a great display of Club and Community working in harmony.

"Another really good example of that is we've been working with Her Game Too and looking at all the work we do with women and girls, particularly with some of the teams from the Under-9s through to the women's first team.

"We said, 'what can we do as a Club that can help support that commitment?' We've now put sanitary units for women in every



female toilet within the stadium and they're free to dispense."

This aligned thinking has culminated in the signature of a service-level agreement (SLA) for the first time in 10 years, outlining a framework for the partnership between the Football Club and Community Trust.

"Signing the SLA this year was a big achievement," Mason continued. "Businesses who are investing in anything want to see good values, good ethics and an understanding of the community they're working in.

"Businesses are coming back to the Club because they can see that it is passionate about the town and trying to make a difference. People want to buy into that."



1 Ian Evatt, Phil Mason and Neil Hart

2 A range of Club and CCO initiatives: BWFC Great Manchester Run, FIT FANS participant Amjid, Dion Charles and Elias Kachunga Show Racism the Red Card, George Johnston unveils Community Defibrillator at Masefield Primary School, Bolton Youth Pride, Community CEO Phil Mason, FIT FANS participants and a Walking Football session.

Hart added: "When you work in collaboration, you're stronger. If you go alone, you're weaker. That's definitely the message of the Football Club.

"There's also an understanding from the Board, Ian Evatt (First-Team Manager) and all staff that we're a community-based Club and we've all got to play our part. We've got a great group of players who genuinely want to help and give their time. Whenever I've seen our players go out into the community, they've been fantastic and really engaging.

"As a Football Club, we now have the ingredients in place to move forward in a collaborative and successful manner. We have very capable people across the Club and I'm very positive that Bolton Wanderers is on an upward trajectory, both on and off the pitch."



SUMMER OF FUN FOR CHILDREN ACROSS THE UK

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.

Among the sessions was a Soccer School delivered by Preston North End Community Sports Trust, where the children were given a day to remember as first-team players Ben Whiteman and Greg Cunningham spent time answering questions, taking photos and providing autographs.

Smart way of supporting communities



Hartlepool United Community Sports Foundation Manager Keith Nobbs (pictured middle) at their Local Veterans Hub.

With the increasing cost of living, Football Clubs and Club Community Organisations across the EFL network have been reaching out to their communities to provide support and help people find ways to feel more in control of their bills.

Part of this ongoing support is the EFL partnership with Smart Energy GB – the not-for-profit campaign helping everyone in Britain understand the importance of smart meters and their benefits to people and the environment.

Through a range of projects, including health programmes, social projects and Holiday Activity Fund camps during the summer, communities across the EFL's network have all received information about smart meters, which are the next generation of gas and electricity meters.

Football fans and members of the community are being shown how an in-home display (IHD) works. The IHD comes with a smart meter and shows you how much energy is being used in your home – in near-real time, in pounds and pence – which can help you to work out how to save energy around the home, such as by switching the TV off at the wall.

Tony, a foster carer who takes part in weekly walking football sessions from (Newport) County in the Community, said: "A smart meter has made us look at cutting back on energy where we don't need it anymore. It helps us feel more in control of our energy bills."

Every household in Britain will be offered a smart meter by 2025, regardless of whether you are a homeowner, rent or have a prepay meter. There are easy steps to get your smart meter and the Smart Energy GB website (www.smartenergyGB.org) can help you do so.



County in the Community (Newport) Walking Football group learning about the benefits of smart meters at their weekly sessions.



Search 'get a smart meter'

Forest Green Rovers Community speaking to fans on matchdays about smart meters.

Blackpool FC Community Trust have been reaching out to various community groups within the area.



MAKING EWOOD PARK GREEN

The EFL launched 'EFL Green Clubs' in 2021, which sees the League joining forces with GreenCode – a new, ground-breaking environmental accreditation scheme that benchmarks Clubs' environmental rating, provides bespoke guidance and practical advice to help Clubs implement change and recognises those that excel in this area.

Clubs and Club Community Organisations are showing great examples in how they are reaching out to their communities in becoming more sustainable and eco-friendly.

During the summer, Blackburn Rovers Community Trust (BRCT) welcomed hundreds of eager pupils from across the North West who want to make a sustainable difference to their lives and those of future generations.

Rovers' Ewood Park was a bustling hive of activity as young people and teachers enjoyed the North West Eco-Schools Sustainability Conference.

Hosted by the Lancashire Schools Sustainability Forum, the event – in its fifth year – has a longstanding relationship with BRCT, who pride themselves on the event being a regular fixture on their calendar.

Gary Robinson, CEO at BRCT, said: "Ewood Park is at the heart of our

community and each year during the off season, we're proud to welcome many school communities from around the county to the stadium.

"The Lancashire Schools Sustainability Forum created fun and engaging concepts for the pupils, from making smoothies while exercising, to meeting animals and learning about the environment around them.

"Dozens of pupils got involved with an Up-cycled Fashion Show, where outfits were displayed from recycled materials, while teachers took part in Continuing Professional Development sessions to learn about unlocking sustainability outcomes in their schools alongside the Government's Sustainability and Climate Change Policy."



Mike Evans, CEO at the EFL Trust, added: "This wonderful event is a fitting example of how our Club Community Organisations across the EFL network are taking positive steps to reach out to their communities to improve and minimise environmental impact."

Ben Fisher, Sustainability Development Coordinator at the EFL Trust, commented: "We're working closely with the Club Community Organisations to develop their environmental practices and operations.

"This has included support for Sustainable Development Officers, through the Kickstart programme and encouraging CCOs to develop local partnerships to promote environmental sustainability, of which BRCT's work is a fantastic example of."