



Swindon Town FC Community Foundation **COVID-19 RESPONSE**



Swindon Town FC
Community Foundation

Swindon Town FC Community Foundation Officers Report

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Presented by:

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Head of Foundation

This is a special programme report pertaining to the Community Foundation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. This report is presented in line with the Swindon Town FC Community Foundation Strategic & Business Plan for 2019-2021. The report is a reflection on the delivery undertaken by the Foundation for us to gauge, monitor and assess that we are attaining our target requirements set out within the Community Foundation Business Plan.

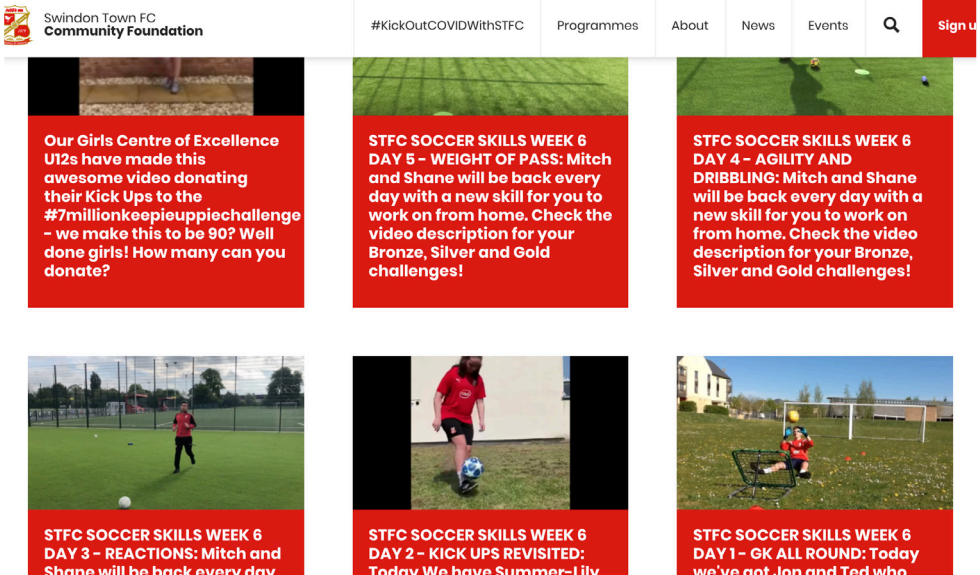
The project reports are points for discussion, check and challenge within the structure of the Trustee's meeting, enabling the Trustees and the Head of Foundation in relation to assessing the aims, targets and objectives within the official Foundation Strategic & Business Plan.

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Social Media posts – Education, Health and Fitness, and Football Activities:



Since the start of the lockdown, daily posts have been uploaded to social media encouraging participants to stay healthy and active. These activities have included:

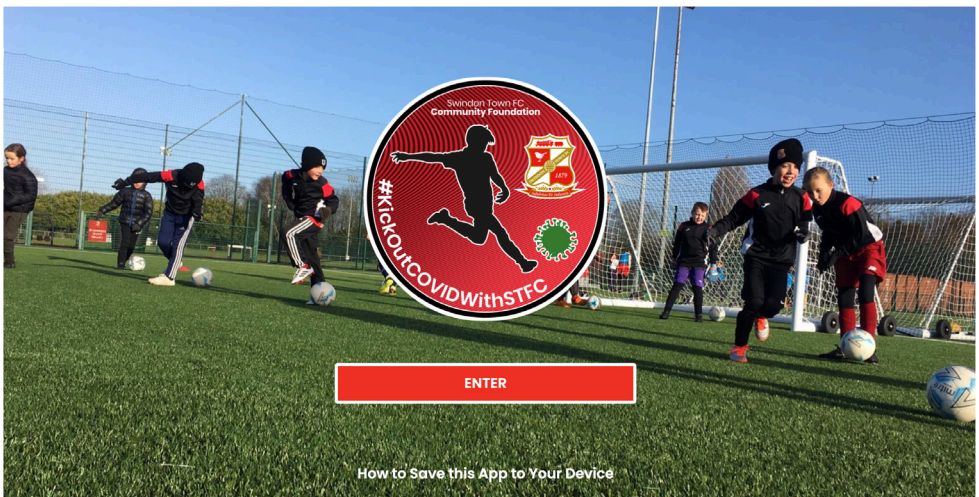
- Health and fitness exercises such as home workouts which has aimed to encourage people of all ages to participate in regular physical activity to maintain their wellbeing. The content of the activities has been varied to incorporate activities for different ages in order to engage more people

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- Educational activities for primary school aged children as part of the Primary Stars project through the sharing of resources from the Premier League website. This content has included a mixture of Maths, English and physical activity that combines football with educational activities.
- Football related skill challenges aimed for our weekly after school clubs, development centres and Elite, Advanced and Girls Centre of Excellence groups. Each activity was differentiated through bronze, silver and gold challenges.

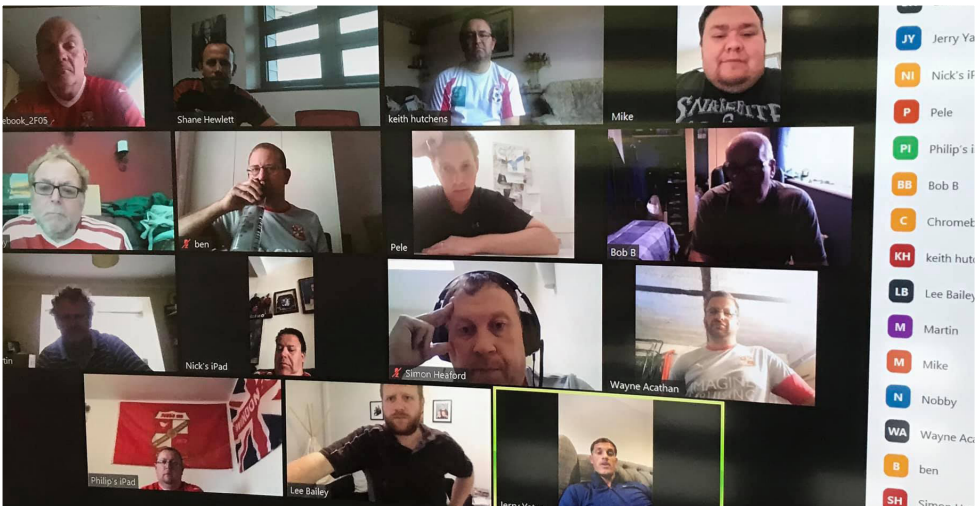
These daily posts helped us to stay in touch with participants whilst also expanding the reach to new followers who started to use the content during the lockdown which was shown by an increase in followers, likes and shares through the insights on Facebook. All the activities have also uploaded to an app created by the Foundation, so the content is easily accessible.



On top of this, there have also been additional posts which have linked to both local and national campaigns such as clapping for the NHS and Men's Mental Health to showcase the good work happening in the community.

Football Fans in Training Zooms:

When government advice led to regular sessions stopping, the current Football Fans in Training cohorts were mid-way through their healthy lifestyle course. To allow their education to continue, the sessions were delivered online via the zoom platform, giving the participants access to the theoretical content whilst also challenging them through physical activity. This platform has allowed staff to keep the participants motivated whilst offering a support network with others on the course. The sessions ran in this format across 13 weeks and engaged a total of 35 out of 60 individuals enrolled on the course.



Easter Egg Donation:

With the COVID lockdown causing the postponement of the Easter holiday camps, the Foundation were left with 200 Easter eggs which would usually have been given to participants as part of their goody bag. Instead, these Easter eggs were donated to the Brighter Futures charity so they could be distributed across the NHS.



Swindon Borough Council Food Deliveries:

Throughout the lockdown, the Community Foundation have worked in partnership with the Swindon Borough Council to support vulnerable members of the community through the delivery of food parcels. This involved 5 Community Foundation staff, volunteering whilst on furlough to help make deliveries to families across Swindon. This included individuals in the community who were shielding, COVID-19 vulnerable

and the elderly who were unable to leave the house to get essentials for themselves. Across the lockdown period, the Community Foundation helped the council to deliver 918 food boxes to those in need across Swindon.



Bowls Club:

The Council were also supported by the Foundation through the renovation of the Swindon Bowls Club adjacent to Foundation Park. Community Foundation staff spent time clearing both inside the bowls club as well as the perimeter to prepare it for future community use. With the bowls club having been closed for several years and the area remaining unused, gardening jobs were required such as cutting back overgrown hedges and cutting the grass.

Scrapstore Deliveries:

As well as working with the Swindon Borough Council, another strong partnership was formed with the local charity, Swindon Scrapstore. Across lockdown, 5 Community Foundation staff helped the Scrapstore with a total of 441 deliveries of food and other items to people across Wiltshire. In addition, staff also volunteered to help within the shop to help clean and make space in anticipation of the store reopening.

Premier League Projects:

Throughout the period of March to June, delivery of projects in partnership with the Premier League has continued predominantly using an online platform. There has been regular contact with the PLCF via zoom meetings and webinars to stay on top of current advice and this will continue until it is safe to return to play.

Primary Stars:

In addition to the sharing of the Premier League resources through social media platforms, the Foundation also used the COVID-19 lockdown to create and share with schools for them to distribute to their pupils. This included football related codebreakers which aimed to increase engagement within Maths. Further educational material such as activity booklets were also produced and distributed to schools for them to share with their pupils.

During the uncertain time the Foundation wanted to find a way to share messages of positivity within the community to help with mental wellbeing. This led to the social action project 'Spreading a Little Happiness' being implemented which involved Primary School aged children sending us positive messages and images within their home schooling which were then delivered to vulnerable and shielding members of the Community alongside the food parcels. The Foundation received 51 pieces of work from children between years 1-6 with the best being selected to have multiple copies printed and distributed to the community.

PL Kicks:

During the lockdown, the Foundation launched a series of challenges for young people between the ages of 8-18 to try at home which was branded the #AtHomeChallenge. This challenge consisted of a variety of physical, creative, and educational activities which children could send in for the chance to win some prizes. Through this competition a total of 26 pieces of work were submitted from 12 different participants. Out of the entries, 3 pieces of work were selected to win match tickets for a Swindon game of their choice when the season returns with the work being shared both on social media and with the Premier League.

With regular delivering being suspended due to the pandemic, a large number of CCO's, including Swindon, organised online FIFA Tournaments to maintain engagement with participants. Our tournament took place between the 13th April and the 26th April and engaged 16 players between the ages of 13-18 across both the Xbox and PS4

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consoles. This allowed for players to connect with each other socially as well as having the opportunity to compete against peers for the chance to play against a professional footballer (Cameron McGlip) at the end of the lockdown. Of the 16 participants, 50% were regular Premier League Kicks participants who attended weekly sessions at Foundation Park.



In addition to this, at the end of April, the Premier League organised a national FIFA tournament which they branded the #StayAtHome Cup. This aimed to engaged existing PL Kicks participants in an online tournament against other young people from other clubs also engaging in Kicks as a substitute for the Kicks Cup which had to be postponed due to the pandemic. In total, 4 Kicks participants represented Swindon in the tournament across 2 Fridays.

With the need for social distancing, the original Kicks social

action of offering work placements was no longer suitable. Instead, this was changed to have Kicks participants volunteer to help with the delivery of the Swindon snoods around their local area of Swindon whilst having conversations with people in the community, helping to tackle the potential issue of isolation. In total, 11 young people aged between 8-18 assisted making at least 10 deliveries each.

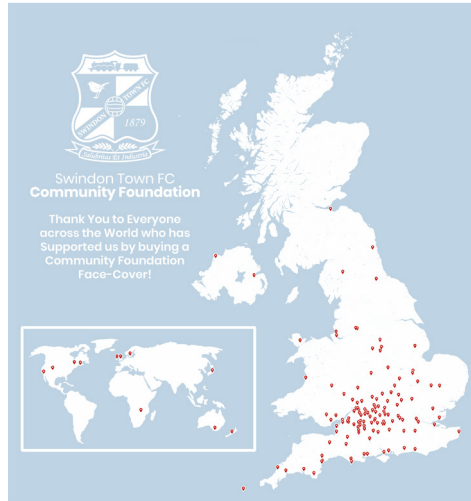
Snoods:

As a fundraiser, the Community Foundation sold snoods/ face masks. The masks proved to be popular with a total of 1251 individuals placing an order with over 3000 snoods being sold.



A team of coaches and volunteers delivered the snoods across Swindon whilst the others were posted. There was an impressive reach on the snoods with orders being received

from 5 countries outside the UK including America, Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand.



Off the back of this, with Swindon winning the League Two title a decision was made to produce Champions snoods. Since first releasing them on the 12th June, 150 orders have been placed, with the anticipated arrival of the snoods being Thursday 25th June.

Zoom meetings with Teams:

With the Elite, Advanced and Centre for Excellence teams not able to have their weekly training session, we wanted to make sure players were still having contact with their teammates and their coach for their social development. Across a 2-week period in May, each of our 23 Elite, Advanced and girls Centre for Excellence teams had an individual team zoom with their coach and teammates. Out of the 361 players who

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are a part of these teams, 90% of them attended at least one zoom meeting with their coach and teammates.



Water Bottles to Schools:



Once a date was announced for the return of some year groups to Primary schools, the Foundation donated water bottles to 3 partner schools to make sure each child had their own bottle. Altogether, around 90 water bottles were donated to these schools with 2 of the classes being those we had previously worked with on the Premier League Primary Stars project.

Football to Mental Health:

When delivery stopped in early March, it was a priority to support the welfare of our vulnerable groups. One group that was identified as needing support was the Mental Health team who usually train together weekly. To keep the team active during this time, they were lent footballs which they could use to practice, whilst staying safe at home. The players were also encouraged to stay in touch with their teammates through the creation of a WhatsApp group chat. Extra Time Socially Distanced walk:

With the easing of lockdown restrictions, the decision was made to invite participants from the Extra Time project to Foundation Park for a socially distanced walk. With these participants being part of the elderly population who were considered vulnerable during the pandemic, a lot of them had been shielding and therefore not socialising as much as they would normally. With the date set for Thursday 25th June, 22 participants out of a possible 32 indicated that they would be interested in attending with 11 from the men's group and 11 from the women's group.

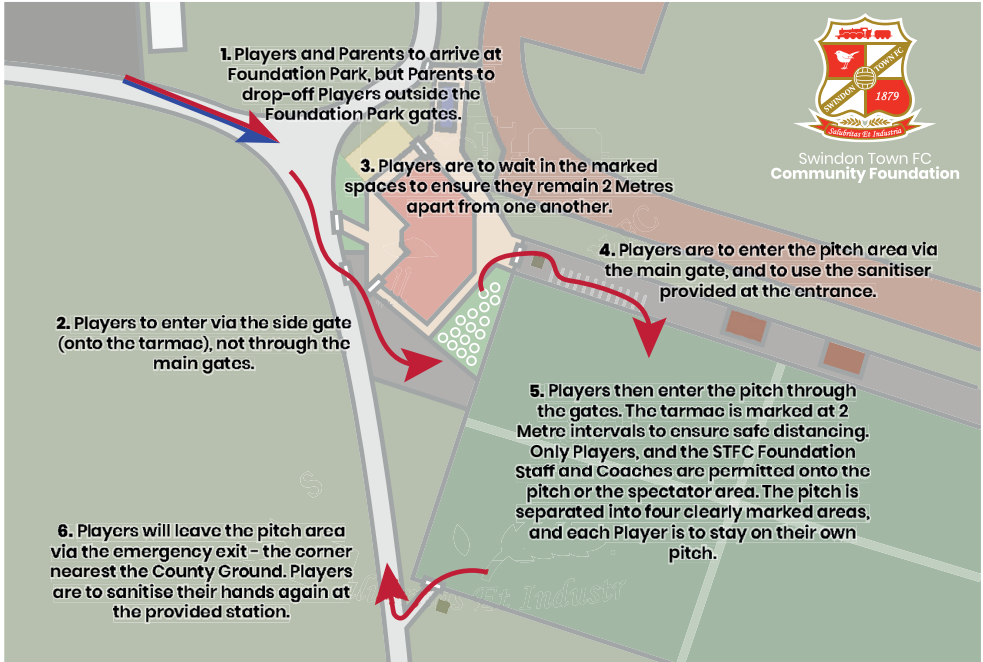
Safe Return to Play:

At the time of writing this report, the Foundation is currently in Phase 1 of the approach to safe return to play. This has included the return of the Elite, Advanced and Girls Centre for Excellence teams as well as the Mental Health team, in bubbles of 4 or 5 ensuring social distancing of 2m is always observed, in line with both the Government and FA guidelines. Across Monday to Friday, there are groups participating in individual training activities between 4-9pm and on Saturday between 10-2pm which has allowed all 23 teams to return to training.



A plan is currently in place for a Phase 2 for when contact football can return and bubbles can be extended greater than the current 4 or 5. This will allow for more teams to be able to train in one evening and training will be able to

incorporate more team work and games based activities. The Foundation are currently awaiting for guidance from both the government and FA before progressing with phase 2.



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Back to Foundation Park:

Phase Two saw us return to Foundation Park and develop a new normal. We welcomed back more and more of our participants from different groups, and managed to facilitate the vast majority of our programmes, with appropriate changes to ensure that we were COVID safe.

We put up a large amount of signage instructing people how to use the facility, reminding visitors to wear a face mask and maintain social distancing. When the NHS app was launched, we produced signage to allow people to check in without creating choke points. We also purchased a number of automatic and manual hand sanitiser dispensing units.

Our process for allowing participants and spectators back onto the premises continues to evolve, as the situation changes and develops. Currently the pavilion remains closed to the public, outside of specific scheduled activities, such as our Football Fans in Training, but we hope to be able to welcome everyone back into the building in the near future.

Tackling Loneliness Together:

Upon returning we embarked on a new project spearheaded by the Department of Media, Culture, and Sport via the EFL. The aim of the project is to contact people who are at high risk of loneliness and isolation caused by the lockdown and

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continuing COVID prevention measures. We initiated the programme by writing to 600 Swindon Town FC season ticket holders aged 70 and above, explaining what we are endeavouring to do, and sending them a STFC Community Foundation snood and a brochure.

After this was delivered, we contacted the 600 participants via telephone for a chat to follow up on the letter, check if they were ok and gently find out if they needed support or would like to be contacted again via phone, Zoom or with an in-person garden gate visit.

We were very pleased to ascertain that the vast majority of people that we contacted were in great spirits, managing to get out for regular exercise, and had a support network of family and friends around them. All participants expressed how much they appreciated the letter and the call, and although some said they wouldn't require further contact, many said they would appreciate further phone calls just for a chat and a catch up.



September saw us hold our first Zoom meeting for the participants, along with Noel Hunt, the (then) STFC Assistant Manager. We have since followed this up with calls with STFC players Paul Caddis, Mathieu Baudry, and Joel Grant.

We further identified a number of participants that may appreciate a face-to-face visit and have been out to provide socially distanced garden-gate or doorstep visits. For some of these we were able to take the EFL League Two Trophy with us, allowing the participants to get an up close look at the silverware. On other visits, we have taken out STFC activity books, and boxed Community Foundation pens.



In the lead up to Christmas, in partnership with the STFC Supporters Trust, we are putting together 100 Christmas Parcels. These boxes will contain food, drinks, christmas puddings, mince pies, chocolates, as well as gifts such as calendars and books. We will deliver these out to 100 of the Tackling Loneliness Together participants before Christmas.



As this project was launched as a short-scale project made possible by an initial grant from the DCMS, we are currently investigating ways to continue this project into the future.



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