

Hibs announce GameChanger partnership to benefit communities



A pioneering development in the way Scottish football can work to benefit its communities was unveiled today when Hibernian FC announced the GameChanger partnership also involving its charity, Hibernian Community Foundation, and NHS Lothian.

The Public Social Partnership (PSP) is supported by Ready for Business, and more than 100 different organisations – including local authorities, universities, colleges, charities and private companies and individuals – have signed up.

The scale of the work being planned by GameChanger – the first Public Social Partnership involving a football club in Scotland – is greater than anything currently being undertaken within the sport.

Scotland's political leaders and the Scottish FA are both keenly interested in GameChanger, and will be attending a Parliamentary Reception being held to introduce the partnership to MSPs at Holyrood on March 16th. Several MSPs, notably Iain Gray who chairs Hibernian Community Foundation, Kenny MacAskill, Keith Brown, Malcolm Chisholm and Kezia Dugdale have already taken a keen interest. The Scottish Government, at Ministerial level, is following things closely. The aim is to harness the power of football to tackle social inequality and deliver positive health, learning and social outcomes by using the Club's physical, digital and emotional assets including Easter Road Stadium and land at Hibernian Training Centre.

Discussions to create a vibrant health hub at Easter Road Stadium – with a brand new approach to delivering primary care – are well underway, as are plans to create a centre for families and children in crisis at the Club's East Lothian training centre. Other major projects are in various stages of planning, including a major community growing project, and a state of the art learning and innovation environment.

There are smaller, roadmap projects also – things like the

ongoing partnership with the NHS Living it Up team to deliver health awareness and health checks for supporters on matchdays at Easter Road; and the club's work in supporting suicide prevention through the Choose Life campaign.

Dr Richard Williams, a local GP and a non executive director of NHS Lothian, said: "I am delighted to be part of this exciting initiative. As a local GP I welcome the enormous opportunities that Gamechanger offers to improve the health and wellbeing of our citizens"

Leeann Dempster, Chief Executive of Hibernian, added: "While football, and the team on the pitch, is always our first consideration and the very heart of what we do, we also have a role to play in the wider community, not least because it embeds the Club in the community and helps us create new generations of supporters.

"Consider this statistic: 1 in 48 people living in Scotland pass through their club turnstiles every match day. That's an incredible number. Then add to that the acres of daily column inches, hours of weekly broadcast coverage, and endless digital media coverage that football spawns.

"What does this mean – apart from the fact that we are, genuinely, fitba' daft? It means our sport has a unique opportunity to reach out to people and communities in a way that nothing else can. And at the moment, we don't do enough with that potential.

"At Hibernian, we want to change that. This Club, which has pioneered so much in the game, now wants to be pioneering in our wider society. That is why we are all so excited about our new GameChanger partnership."