

# Football clubs to receive suicide prevention training



Football clubs across Scotland will be among the first to receive a new mental health and suicide prevention training resource for their players and staff.

Funded by the Scottish Government and created by NHS National Education for Scotland and NHS Health Scotland, the online resource will be shared with all 42 professional football clubs, along with 300 mental health first aiders employed by around 80 football organisations throughout the country.

It will also be shared across all junior, youth, women's, amateur and para-football leagues and clubs, reaching around 190,000 players.

The training, which is part of the Scottish Government's Suicide Prevention Action Plan, will also be distributed to all local authorities and will be included in NHS health board workforce development planning from June 2019.

Mental Health Minister Clare Haughey said: "We must ensure that mental health is given parity with physical health, and our new online resource is a significant step and a key part of our suicide prevention plan, which aims to reduce suicide in Scotland by 20% by 2022.

"We want to create a Scotland where suicide is preventable,

and where anyone contemplating suicide or who has lost a loved one gets the support they need. I'd like to thank the Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL) and the Scottish FA who will be among the first to roll this out to players and staff across 42 all clubs.

"I'd also like to thank Scotland's councils for their commitment to take this training to almost 250,000 local authority workers across the country. Our approach recognises the need to work together across sectors and organisations to identify and support people in distress, strengthen communities, and save lives."

Neil Doncaster, SPFL chief executive, said: "The SPFL and its clubs are proud to be able to play a part in this ground-breaking initiative. It's vital that mental health issues are given the prominence they deserve, and that more people are encouraged to seek the support and treatment they require."

SPFL Trust chief executive Nicky Reid, who also sits on the Scottish Government's National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group, said: "We are happy that Scottish football is able to support the dissemination of this new suicide prevention training resource to our clubs across the country.

"Every football club in Scotland has now participated in our programme of mental health first aid training, with nearly 400 clubs now trained in our partnership with NHS Scotland and Positive

## Mental Health Scotland.

“We’re also pleased with the progress of our ongoing pilot projects with Hibernian, Heart of Midlothian, Movember Foundation and SAMH which have delivered The Changing Room – our project supporting football fans who are at risk of poor mental health by creating a safe space within their clubs. We are working with SAMH to look at ways to expand this programme.

“Our commitment to the wellbeing of staff, players, and supporters has never been stronger.”

Ian Maxwell, Scottish FA Chief Executive, said: “The Scottish FA is dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all footballers in Scotland, so we are pleased to lend our backing to this important resource, which addresses such a worthy topic.

“It is through services such as this that we will work to ensure that Scottish football is a supportive and nurturing environment for the mental wellbeing of everyone who wants to participate in our wonderful game.”

COSLA Health and Social Care Spokesperson Councillor Stuart Currie said: “Suicide prevention is everyone’s business, and local government employees have a key role in preventing, recognising and responding to distress. This online resource provides an additional way for the 250,000 strong workforce to learn more about suicide prevention.

“This is important both in terms of their role in serving

our communities, but also on a personal level and with family and friends,  
because anyone can experience distress and suicidal thoughts.

“The animations within the online resource will be screened across all 32 local authorities and will be one element of the work we do to  
build a culture of understanding distress and preventing suicide across  
Scotland.”

George Dodds, Member of the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group and Director at NHS Health Scotland said: “On average two  
people die by suicide every day in Scotland. That’s tragic and preventable. We  
also know one in three people who take their own life have had no contact with  
any specialist services before they die. We need to change that dramatically.

“That’s why NHS Education for Scotland and NHS Health Scotland have worked together to develop these resources, to help the Scottish  
workforce improve mental health and prevent suicide. The online animations aim  
to raise awareness of the issues that affect people and that can lead those in  
distress to sometimes think about taking their own life. They’re also designed  
to increase the confidence of healthcare staff to respond compassionately and  
effectively to support anyone in that situation.

“We hope the animations will also help staff from other sectors have the confidence to hold compassionate conversations with those they  
meet, so that they can get help to those most vulnerable at

the time it's  
needed."

The online resource consists of three animations totalling  
nine minutes.

The importance of workforce Mental Health and Suicide  
Prevention

Training across a range of settings is emphasised in both our  
Mental Health

Strategy 2017-2027 and our Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

The development of these products have been informed by  
engagement with national and local delivery partners,  
healthcare practitioners,  
third sector, academia, the National Suicide Prevention  
Leadership Group and  
also individuals with lived experience.

Alongside the online resource, NHS Health Scotland and NHS  
Education Scotland will be publishing a new Knowledge and  
Skills Framework and  
Workforce Development Plan for Mental Health and Suicide  
Prevention. These will  
be applicable across both NHS Scotland and wider public  
services.