

Sports Chaplain provides wellbeing support to Newtongrange Star during Covid

Since the start of the pandemic, football fan and Sports Chaplain, Steve Nash, has provided wellbeing support to his local Midlothian team, Newtongrange Star FC.

Before Covid, Steve would be at Newtongrange Star every Tuesday evening for training and every Saturday for the match, providing support to the committee, management, players and wider club community however since lockdown, he has had to adapt his role to continue providing support when they weren't able to meet in person.



Thistle Foundation – Steve Nash.

Newtongrange Star FC, NewtonGrange, Midlothian, UK.

30,09, 2020.

Pic shows: Thistle Foundation – Steve Nash

Credit: Ian Jacobs

Drawing on his experience of first receiving support from health and wellbeing charity, Thistle, and from his current role as a volunteer supporting others Steve explained: “Football and faith have always gone hand-in-hand for me. Back in 1980, I was playing for my Church team in Birmingham and we went on tour to the USA for a fortnight. It was an amazing time and a great experience.

“In October 2019, I was approached by Mark Fleming, Chaplain to the Scottish FA, who asked me if I'd be interested in being

a Chaplain for Newtongrange Star FC, I was delighted. An opportunity to serve others and watch football? What a privilege.

“Years ago players didn’t talk about their mental wellbeing, they wanted to make sure that their manager thought they were fit enough to be picked for the team.

“And team bosses didn’t want to give the opposition the advantage of knowing a particular player was struggling with their mental health.

“Everyone was encouraged to ‘just get on with it’ rather than paying attention when people were feeling anxious, depressed or stressed.”

“By having a Chaplain, players can talk to someone in complete confidence about how they’re feeling and any issues they’re having. And managers can focus on developing their players as a team.”

“I created a twice-weekly, chatty email that included some of what I had learnt at Thistle about maintaining mental wellbeing. I kept it topical and practical and used cartoons and pictures. I’ve covered topics including pacing, planning your day and being kind to ourselves.

“With lockdown over, I now do an article each month that’s shared on the Club’s Facebook and website under the heading ‘Chaplain’s Chatty’.”

Steve also explained how his own journey helps him to support others having been supported by ‘Thistle’ an Edinburgh-based health and wellbeing charity which supports people across Edinburgh and the Lothians who are struggling with the devastating diagnosis of a long-term mental or physical health condition such as MS, chronic pain, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder to regain control of their lives.

Across all Thistle's work there is a consistent approach to providing support called 'person-centred' which means Thistle focuses on each person they work with and supports them so that they can live life to the full irrespective of disability or health condition.

He continued: " I've gone from someone needing support to someone able to give support. This rich experience helps me in my role as Chaplain to be the difference for someone else and develop relationships based on compassion and trust."

"I have seen many others benefit from wellbeing coaching when I've helped facilitate the Lifestyle Management Course, so I know that what I'm sharing works."

Newtongrange Star Club President, Joe Wilson commented, "We really appreciate having Steve's support. He's part of our team, an important part of our Club community and understands the challenges that we're all facing trying to keep each other well during these uncertain times.

" Our Club has seen some difficulties in our 120 year history and we're grateful to our wonderful fans and supporters who are helping us to keep going even when we're having to play our matches behind closed doors"