

Duke of Cambridge visits Ainslie Park to learn of mental health progress in Scottish football

The Duke of Cambridge paid a visit to The Spartans stadium at Ainslie Park yesterday to hear about the progress made in putting mental health and wellbeing at the forefront of the game in Scotland.

The trip to Spartans was the Duke's first stop on his visit to Scotland, and saw him meet with representatives from the Scottish FA, Breathing Space, Time to Tackle, the Hampden Sports Clinic and Bonnyrigg Rose to discuss some of the numerous mental health initiatives running in Scottish football.



TRH the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge arrive in Edinburgh on the first stop on their UK tour aboard the Royal Train. With the visit also coming just a day before the Scottish Cup Final, the Duke met with former Scottish Cup winners Chris Iwelumo and Marvin Bartley, who previously won the Scottish Cup with tomorrow's finalists St Johnstone and Hibs respectively.

David McPhee, Chair of the Scottish Mental Health and Wellbeing League, spoke with the Duke as they took in some action from small-sided matches featuring players from the League. The League, which was previously run by the Scottish FA, was set up to support recovery and tackle stigma.

associated with mental health.

A number of the Mental Health and Wellbeing League players then helped the Duke test his shooting skills, as he took part in a friendly skills challenge with them and former Scotland striker Steven Thompson.

Scotland's spot-kick hero David Marshall then joined the Duke and other Home Nations players in a zoom conversation to discuss changing the conversation on mental health and their experiences over the past year. Also taking part in the catch-up ahead of UEFA EURO 2020 were Harry Kane for England, Julie Nelson for Northern Ireland, and Jess Fishlock MBE for Wales.

During his visit, the Duke also met with representatives from the Scottish FA to hear about the progress made in recent years, including the launch of the Scottish FA's first ever Mental Health Action Plan last year.

The plan, which supports the Royal Foundation's Heads Up mental health campaign, aims to end the stigma around the issue in football and create an environment for people to talk openly about their mental health in the game.

The Duke also heard about the success of the Scottish FA's mental health e-learning platform, which has seen more than 9,000 players, staff, managers and officials in the Scottish football community complete mental health awareness training through the platform in less than a year.

The module – the first bespoke mental health course created by any of the Home Nations – was developed by the Hampden Sports Clinic in conjunction with Breathing Space and was launched after the Scottish FA signed a joint "Mentally Healthy Football" Declaration as a lasting legacy of the Royal Foundation's Heads Up campaign.

This commitment saw governing bodies, leagues and organisations from across UK football join in recognising that

mental health is as important as physical health, and pioneering a 'team approach' on this important issue.