

New project offers opportunity to gain SFA Coaching badges and volunteering experience

Youngsters aged 16 to 24 have until Tuesday 1st June to sign-up for a brand-new project in Edinburgh, supported by the Scottish Professional Football League Trust.

Funded by the Scottish Government's CashBack scheme, Off the Bench aims to prevent anti-social behaviour and will be delivered at the Heart of Midlothian's ground by Big Hearts, the Club charity.



Off the Bench offers 16-24 years old various opportunities to gain SFA Coaching badges, SQA Employability qualifications and volunteering experience, to help them build a better path, going forward.

Big Hearts' Project Officer Connor McNally is available to answer questions and register those who could benefit from getting involved. The deadline to sign-up is Tuesday 1st June. Please email connor.mcnally@bighearts.org.uk

Steven, an 18-years-old from Stenhouse, is one of the young adults who will be attending the activities at Tynecastle Park from 8th June. He explains why he decided to get involved and what he hopes to get from the project.

“Since I left school, it’s not been great. Nothing seems to fit me. I am not 100% sure what I want to do for the rest of my life, it’s a big decision to make! It’s so easy to get stuck in a rut, and fall into things that aren’t always good for me, but what else can I do? I really want to turn things around and break the kind of habits I’ve got into.

“Hearts is my club. Football has always been an escape for me, and the last year has been hard not going to the games and seeing the team play. I’ve been invited along to the Hearts’ project ‘Off the Bench’. I thought I’d give it a go. There are a few things I’m looking forward to, like being in the Stadium and meeting new people. I really hope I can meet the Hearts first team players too.

“Connor at Big Hearts told me we’ll be doing some qualifications to help me with jobs or College applications. I will also get to go out and about in the community and do some good. That sounds interesting to me. The Scottish Football Association will be doing a Coaching Badge and Refereeing course, but it’s not only about football. There’s other people on board who are going to help me figure out my next steps. See how I can turn a new leaf.

“After the past year, it’s a nice feeling to know I’m not alone. I feel ‘Off the Bench’ will help me get on my feet and I hope by the end of it, I’ve figured out what I’m doing next or at least have learned some stuff that will help me get there! Big Hearts have said helping me is what it’s all about, so I’m saying to myself – why not?”