

SPFL Trust

CashBack

Off the Bench

2024-25

Annual Report



SPFL
TRUST

Change the Game



spfltrust.org.uk/cotb

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Welcome

At the SPFL Trust, we know that football can reach people that others can't, and in doing so break down barriers.

Funded by the Scottish Government's CashBack scheme, Off the Bench works to provide our young people with an opportunity to access education, physical and mental health support to build better futures.

Sessions take place at each of the participating Clubs and are delivered by their associated Community Trust. Young people work towards SQA qualifications and Scottish FA coaching badges.

Throughout 2024/25, we have delivered Off the Bench in partnership with five ATCs: Spartans Community Trust, Morton in the Community, Falkirk Foundation and The Killie Community and St Mirren FC Charitable Foundation.

Participants from each group work on developing valuable skills to build confidence, reflecting the dedication of the delivering ATCs to the programme.

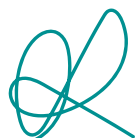
**Throughout this document,
you will see us refer to ATCs
- this means SPFL associated
trusts and clubs.**

Some move to secure employment, while others are pursuing further education, volunteering, and training opportunities. A number are even beginning their careers in football coaching.

I would like to extend my thanks to colleagues from the participating ATCs and our partner organisations for their vital role in delivering the programme.

Their support is empowering young people to shape their futures in ways that are meaningful to them.

I look forward to continuing our collaboration and wish all our participants every success in the next stage of their journey.



Nicky Reid
CEO, SPFL Trust



What is CashBack Off the Bench?

Funded by the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities programme, Off the Bench works to provide young people aged 16-25 with an opportunity to access education, physical and mental health support to build better futures.

Young people work towards both accredited awards including First Aid, SCQF Level 4 Employability Award and Scottish FA Level 1.1 Coaching Badge.

The programme is also supported by a network of partners to enable young people to build a better path going forward.

Who is Off the Bench for?

Off the Bench is for young people who:

Are aged 16-25

Want to gain new qualifications and build new skills

Want to power their potential and take the next step to a positive destination

CashBack objectives

- Support young people who are most at risk of being involved in antisocial behaviour, offending or reoffending towards or into positive destinations
- Provide person-centred support for young people, parents and families impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma
- Support young people to improve their health, mental health and wellbeing
- Support people, families and communities most affected by crime

What do participants gain from the programme?

- New skills and qualifications
- Access to support to secure further education and career support
- Increased knowledge to support and improve their physical and mental health
- Build connections within their local community
- Opportunities to volunteer at their local SPFL club or ATC
- Access to education, physical and mental health support to build better futures
- A chance to get behind the scenes at their clubs

COTB 2024-25 in numbers

Participating clubs	5
Participant total	73

SIMD profile

SIMD profile 0 - 20%	44
SIMD profile 20 - 30%	13
SIMD profile 30 - 40%	5
SIMD profile 40 - 50%	3
SIMD profile 50 - 100%	6
Did not disclose	2

Gender

Male	59
Female	9
Non-binary	1
Prefer not to say	4
Total	73

Participant ages

16-18	20
19-25	48
Over 25	1
Didn't disclose	4

The Killie Community
delivered twice in Year 2



Ethnicity

White Scottish	53
White other British	2
White other	3
Kurdish	2
Arabic	5
African	2
Other Asian	2
Mixed/Multiple ethnicity	1
Prefer not to say	3

Sexual orientation

Straight / hetrosexual	63
Homosexual	0
Bisexual	6
Prefer not to say	4

Disability

Disability identified	21
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Overall programme performance

Looking Back

Participant numbers for CashBack Off the Bench have improved throughout the last year. We would like to thank all stakeholders and delivery partners for their incredible dedication to the programme.

	2023-2024	2024-2025
Participating Clubs	4	5
Number of Participants	41	73

32

19 young people reported their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced in 2023-24. That number has increased to 32 this year!

58

Young people gained an accreditation for a new skill this year, up from 41 in 2023-24

39

In 2023-24, 19 young people report increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community. In 2024-25, 39 young people reported the same!

Outcome one

Young people are diverted from antisocial, criminal behaviour and involvement

Throughout CashBack Off the Bench, young people learn about the risks involved in antisocial behaviour and criminal involvement. ATCs work with a number of partners such as Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Police Scotland to better understand the effects of risk taking behaviour.

Support from both ATC staff and our community of partners has helped build confidence, significantly reducing risk taking behaviour and building resilience.

The numbers below are based on the participants who completed our survey

39

Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced

41

Young people report that they feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour

Participants engaged meaningfully with activities designed to raise awareness of antisocial behaviour and its consequences

Outcome two

Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment opportunities

Support is provided for young people on the programme to gain qualifications and work towards securing a positive future. Participants are supported to complete the SQA employability award, supporting their skills development and helping establish their next steps and journey to employment or education.

Through the qualification, skills and increased confidence gained during their time on CashBack Off the Bench, young people are supported to power their potential and progress to positive destinations.



Meet CashBack Off the Bench participants from the Killie Community

18

Participants gaining a modern apprenticeship/employment

59

Young people gain an accreditation for a new skill

15

Participants gaining training opportunities or work experience

18

Participants gaining volunteering opportunities

12

Participants gaining a place at college or university

Outcome three

Young people's health, mental health and wellbeing improves

Participants engage in physical activities during each session, accompanied by a nutritious lunch provided weekly. These activities foster confidence, teamwork, and problem solving abilities.

The Scottish Government has outlined wellbeing through eight indicators known as SHANARRI: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, and Responsible.

All participants complete WEMWEB Surveys at weeks two, five and eight, working with Progressive Pathways who create bespoke individual development plans.

Many reported that prior to joining, they felt they had lost their way, but involvement in COTB gave them renewed structure, purpose, and motivation towards achieving their personal goals

53

Young people report an increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators: Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion

41

Young people report their mental health has improved and they have a more positive outlook on life

55

Young people report they are more aware of the risks and impacts of harmful substance use

49

Young people report their confidence has increased

42

Young people report they are less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use

51

Young people report evidence of participation in physical and sporting activities

Outcome four

Young people contribute positively to their communities

We know how much of a positive impact young people can have in our communities throughout Scotland, and with CashBack Off the Bench, participants are encouraged and supported to do so.

Participants acquired valuable team working and problem solving skills, while also raising awareness in their local communities about the issues affecting them.

27

Young people report their perception of their neighbourhood improves

44

Young people report a heightened sense of belonging to a community

35

Young people report feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving

290

Community focused awards gained by participants

32

Young people went on to volunteer, coach, mentor, support or take a leadership role in community organisations

36

Young people report increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community

Outcome five

Young people build their personal skills, resilience and benefit from strengthened support

Mentoring continues to be an essential feature of the CashBack Off the Bench programme, with one to one support provided to all participants from fully trained coaches.

With an increased number of delivery days on the course has come stronger relationships between participants and delivery leads, boosting morale among each group.

38

Young people report feeling more resilient (e.g. believing in yourself, taking things in your stride, being determined, being self-disciplined, being optimistic, adapting to situations)

54

Young people report positive, supportive networks including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors

29

Young people report increased access to appropriate services

52

Young people report positive changes in their behaviour (e.g. reduced risk taking, increased understanding of risk, better ability to make positive choices and improved understanding of rights and responsibilities)

Scottish Government Policy Areas in Focus

Best Start, Bright Futures

CashBack Off the Bench was designed considering the Scottish Government's 'Bright Start, Bright Futures' strategy.

Aimed at people aged 16-25, we believe the programme can positively influence their long-term prospects - as well as the lives of those around them.

Research indicates that living within 10 miles of an SPFL football club makes you three times more likely to experience poverty. This is why ATCs are uniquely placed to drive meaningful change within our communities.

Throughout the programme, participants receive the following:

- Breakfast each morning, to help support a healthy start to the day
- Lunch every day, with hot and cold options available
- Surplus food to take home
- Support to secure their free bus travel
- Support to achieve SQA awards
- Support to prepare for employment, including mock interviews and CV support
- Free use of electronic devices to support them on the programme
- Kit provided as their uniform, which can be washed on site if required
- Signposting to external stakeholders
- Pathways into other ATC projects that may benefit them
- Physical activity each day, delivered by trained coaches
- Mental Health support provided by Progressive Pathways

Children's Rights

Scotland should be a fantastic place for all children and young people to grow up and learn in. For many it is, but to make it that place for everybody, young people need to have all of their rights respected at all times.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) lists all the things that children are entitled to as they grow up.

This includes having the chance to live and develop healthily, the right to primary and secondary education, and the right to rest, play and take part. You can read more about UNCRC on our website.

At each CashBack Off the Bench delivery partner, staff have completed training to make sure all key points are met, complying with the Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA).

Tasks were implemented throughout the programme to allow young people to have their own choice and options on their learning.

Fair Work Framework

At the SPFL Trust, we put our people at the forefront of the organisation, prioritising wellbeing and staff development.

In application of the Fairwork Framework, we do the following:

- We are an accredited Living Wage employer
- Staff receive annual pay reviews
- We have undertaken a review of our staff handbook and implemented new policies: Equal Opportunities policy, Anti-harassment and bullying policy, phased return to work policy, Parental Bereavement policy, Carers Leave policy, Neonatal policy and Enhanced Shared Parental policy
- We have a development budget to allow for training to support staff in their roles
- We deliver a three-year monthly programme of training directly to ATCs on identified subjects such as fundraising, marketing and communications, governance, sustainability, poverty and peer engagement sessions to upskill and support our delivery partners

Supporting Scotland's Climate Change Plan

To support Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan, CashBack Off the Bench, participants worked on a citizenship project specifically targeting climate change within their community.

Young people worked alongside their peers to research and investigate a local climate issue. Learning skills and gaining experience in project management, groups identified and supported areas such as greenspaces, recycling, drainage, air pollution and wildlife.

All CashBack participants are issued with a reusable water bottle when they commence the programme to reduce the use of single use plastic.

- Participants at The Killie Community undertook their local investigation award at Dean Park, maintaining the woodland, tidied the gardens, cut back overgrown hedges and planted fresh bedding plants
- St Mirren FC Charitable Foundation participants took part in a group volunteering session at the local community garden, clearing away rubbish and debris whilst also installing a new gate. Each young person also planted a new tree, helping to create a peaceful outdoor space
- At Morton, Participants worked closely with ground staff, assisting in the cleanup, restoration and maintenance of the pitch at Cappielow



Powerful partnerships

In year two, five ATCs delivered CashBack Off the Bench, using the unique power of football to engage young people.



As well as ATCs, CashBack Off the Bench is supported by a range of both local and national partners who offer expertise on a range of issues including mental health, racism, gambling, alcohol and drugs.



CPD Training Solutions

CPD Training Solutions delivered first-aid training to participants at all five clubs participating throughout 2024-25. CPD ensured that participants became competent in first-aid for life, learning and work.



**PROGRESSIVE
PATHWAYS
LIMITED**

Progressive Pathways

Progressive Pathways provide one-to-one mentoring across all clubs, and will be continuing to do so throughout phase six (2023-2026) of the programme. One-to-one support is crucial for all participants, as they build their skills and confidence to reach positive destinations.



Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

Scottish Fire & Rescue delivered workshops on fire safety, including pyrotechnics and flares, first aid, and recruitment and training for the fire service. Participants visited local fire stations, learning about the life of a firefighter, what the training looks like, and how to apply for the service.



Fast Forward

Fast Forward delivered addiction awareness sessions focussing on gambling, alcohol and drugs. They used interactive activities to highlight the different types of gambling, how to deal with issues surrounding gambling, and how to help others. Interactive and engaging sessions helped to teach participants about the dangers of gambling, and how it can have a real impact on your life.



Saltire Awards

The Saltire Awards are the Scottish Government's way of celebrating, recognising and rewarding the commitment, contribution and achievements of young volunteers in Scotland, aged between 12 and 25.

Young people gain nationally recognised certificates, signed by Scottish Government Ministers, for the different amounts of volunteering they do.

All COTB participants complete a minimum of 10 volunteering hours during the course of the programme and individually log their efforts.



Scottish Football Association

The Scottish Football Association (Scottish FA) delivered an Introduction to Coaching one-to-one, and the Laws of the Game course to all participants.

Through this partnership, young people can gain their one-to-one coaching badges, developing a basic understanding of:

- The Scottish FA coach education pathway and the coaches learning journey
- Effective communication and player interaction to develop effective delivery
- The fundamental principles of a games-based approach to player development
- The role of the coach within the coaching process
- How to solve some common problems faced by the coach

Participants also completed modules on mental health, child welfare and protection, and some have continued coaching in football since completing these workshops.

SHOW
RACISM
THE
RED
CARD

Show Racism the Red Card

Fast Forward delivered addiction awareness sessions focussing on gambling, alcohol and drugs. They used interactive activities to highlight the different types of gambling, how to deal with issues surrounding gambling, and how to help others. Interactive and engaging sessions helped to teach participants about the dangers of gambling, and how it can have a real impact on your life.

EmilyTest

Tackling Gender Based Violence in Education

EmilyTest

EmilyTest was set up in memory of Emily Drouet, an undergraduate law student who was subjected to a campaign of Gender-Based Violence by a fellow student.

Their mission is to ensure no other student ends up in Emily's shoes.

We worked with EmilyTest to develop a training document which was delivered to all CashBack delivery partners to upskill and support them in dealing with situations for those exposed to gender based violence.

PERRY ELLIS EUROPE

Perry Ellis Europe

Perry Ellis are one of our key corporate partners, supporting our mental health work in Scotland. This year they very kindly donated a winter jacket to all CashBack Off the Bench participants.



Participants at the Falkirk Foundation kitted out in winter jackets from Perry Ellis Europe!



Second Chance

Second Chance Project Scotland is an organisation which supports people with drug and/or alcohol problems by providing high quality, abstinence-based treatment options. Treatment integrates 12-Step recovery programmes, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and other appropriate therapies.

Their aim is to provide people with purposeful recovery by securing and supporting their alcohol and drug free life, developing structured training, counselling and self-help.

Second Chance delivered a session at our Topgolf celebration event, testing their materials ahead of delivering individual sessions with participants.



Police Scotland

Police Scotland Community police team and Football Liaison Officers were in attendance across all clubs on a regular basis, delivering workshops which helped to raise the awareness of policing issues and how crime can have a negative impact on many.

Graeme Armstrong

Graeme Armstrong is a Scottish broadcaster and novelist who powerfully explores the importance of meaningful relationships and the dangers of gang culture, knife crime, and antisocial behaviour.

Speaking to participants at our celebration event at Topgolf, he highlighted how a lack of connection, purpose, and support can drive young people toward destructive lifestyles.

Through his writing and public speaking, he emphasises that strong, positive relationships - whether with family, mentors, or community - can serve as a vital lifeline, steering individuals away from violence and towards personal growth.

He warned of the false sense of belonging offered by gangs and the devastating consequences that follow, including criminal records, imprisonment, and loss of life.

His message is clear: building genuine connections and addressing the root causes of social alienation are key to breaking cycles of violence and creating safer, more compassionate communities.

Financial breakdown

2024-25 Total CashBack grant

£241,634

This is more than
the grant received
in 2023-24

Here's how we've
spent our budget
so far:

Staff delivery
cost

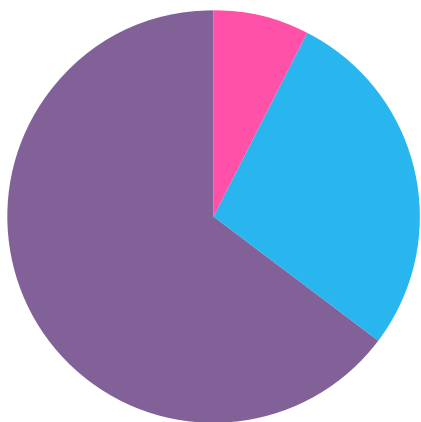
£66,892

Project
delivery cost

£156,120

Management
cost

£18,622



Local authority breakdown

City of Edinburgh Council
(Spartans)

£56,271, 17 participants

Falkirk Council
(Falkirk)

£49,651, 15 participants

South Ayrshire Council
(Kilmarnock)

£72,821, 10 participants

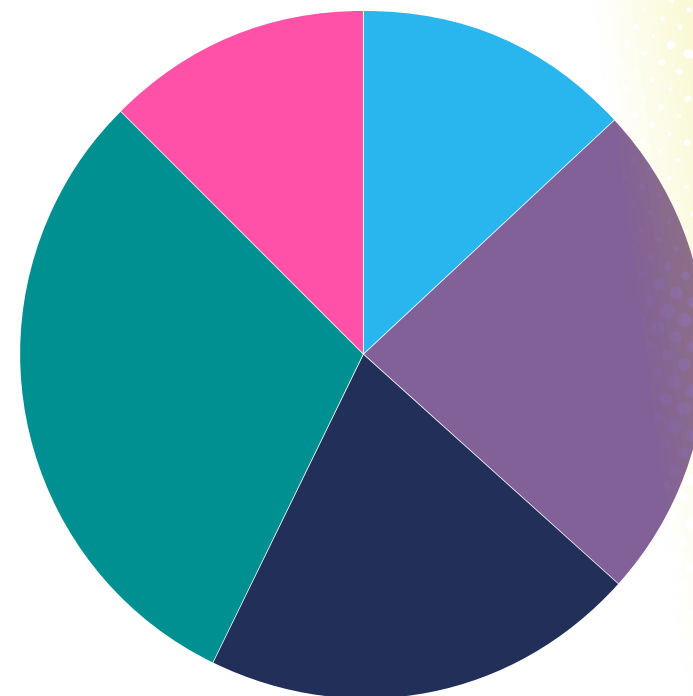
Inverclyde Council
(Morton)

£29,970, 22 participants

Renfrewshire Council
(St Mirren)

£33,101, 9 participants

Variance due to less
participants at
Morton and St Mirren



Year three priorities

As we continue developing the programme, our focus remains on continuous improvement.

Between cohorts one and two, we enhanced personal support through Programme Pathways based on feedback. In response to growing support needs, we've evolved our coaching model - from three sessions to bi-weekly coaching - providing consistent, tailored guidance and individual development plans.

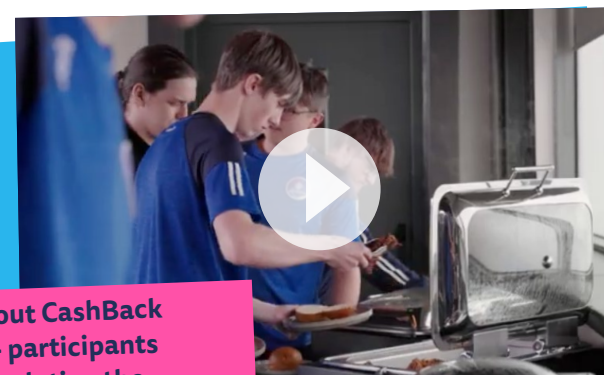
With new delivery partners enriching the schedule, we've reached capacity in our core timetable.

To maintain a bespoke, person-centred experience, we're now hosting a celebration event at our partner Topgolf. This dedicated space allows us to meaningfully recognise each young person's progress while keeping their needs central.

New partners include Graeme Armstrong, Emily Test, Second Chance, and Zander Murray. A tailored session by Show Racism the Red Card is also delivered on the day, inviting feedback from participants.



Our FFIT Lead Craig Joyce participated in CashBack Off the Bench at the start of his career!



Learn more about CashBack Off the Bench - participants celebrated completing the programme at TopGolf in Glasgow

Case study

Morgan's Story*

At just 21, Morgan joined the Killie Community's CashBack Off the Bench programme at a turning point in his life.

Living independently and managing the impact of a traumatic past, Morgan faced significant mental health challenges and lacked structure in his daily routine. Just as the course began, he learned he was about to become a father, adding emotional and logistical strain to an already complex situation.

Throughout the programme, he displayed exceptional commitment, missing only half a day due to the birth of his child, and returning the very next day. Despite regular distractions- calls from health professionals, family members, and his ex-partner - he remained fully engaged, crediting the programme with boosting his mental wellbeing

Staff recognised early on that Morgan needed tailored support. They adapted sessions to allow regular breaks, helping him better manage anger and stay focused.

Over time, Morgan showed clear growth in his communication, emotional regulation, and teamwork. He began building friendships and accessing external support services - including social work, the job centre, and healthcare - thanks to encouragement and guidance from programme leads.

“I didn't want it to end.”
- Morgan

Now focused on creating a stable future for himself and his newborn, Morgan leaves the CashBack programme with renewed confidence, stronger relationships, and the resilience to face life's challenges head-on.

**Not the participant's real name*

Year-on-year comparison

Outcome one - Young people are diverted from antisocial, criminal behaviour and involvement

	Year 1 Actual	Year 1 Planned	Year 2 Actual	Year 2 Planned	Actual Total	Actual Planned
Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	19	32	39	52	58	84
Young people report that they feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	19	32	41	52	60	84

Outcome two - Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment opportunities

	Year 1 Actual	Year 1 Planned	Year 2 Actual	Year 2 Planned	Actual Total	Actual Planned
Young people gain an accreditation for a new skill	45	32	59	52	104	84
Participants gaining a modern apprenticeship/employment	12	10	18	16	30	N/A
Participants gaining training opportunities or work experience	14	10	15	16	29	N/A
Participants gaining a place at college or university	7	5	12	6	19	N/A
Participants gaining volunteering opportunities	8	10	18	16	26	
SCQF Accreditations	9+		50			
Non SCQF awards			240			
Total into positive destination			56			

Outcome three - Young people's health, mental health and wellbeing improves

	Year 1 Actual	Year 1 Planned	Year 2 Actual	Year 2 Planned	Actual Total	Actual Planned
Young people report an increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators: Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion	19	32	53	52	72	84
Young people report their mental health has improved and they have a more positive outlook on life	19	32	47	52	66	84
Young people report they are more aware of the risks and impacts of harmful substance use	18	32	55	52	73	84
Young people report they are less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use	18	32	42	52	60	84
Young people report their confidence has increased	19	32	49	52	68	84
Young people report evidence of participation in physical and sporting activities	21	32	51	52	72	84

Outcome four - Young people contribute positively to their communities

	Year 1 Actual	Year 1 Planned	Year 2 Actual	Year 2 Planned	Actual Total	Actual Planned
Young people report their perception of their neighbourhood improves	19	32	27	52	46	84
Young people report a heightened sense of belonging to a community	19	32	34	52	53	84
Young people report feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	19	32	35	52	54	84
Young people report increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	19	32	36	52	55	84
Young people go on to volunteer, coach, mentor, support or take a leadership role in community organisations	13	32	32	52	45	84
Hours of volunteering contributed by participants	460	375	454	600	914	975

Outcome five - Young people build their personal skills, resilience and benefit from strengthened support

	Year 1 Actual	Year 1 Planned	Year 2 Actual	Year 2 Planned	Actual Total	Actual Planned
Young people report feeling more resilient	19	32	38	52	57	84
Young people report positive, supportive networks including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors	19	32	54	52	73	84
Young people report increased access to appropriate services	19	32	29	52	48	84
Young people report positive changes in their behaviour	19	32	52	52	71	84



Scottish Professional Football League Trust

Hampden Park, Glasgow, G42 9DE
0141 620 4162 | enquiries@spfltrust.org.uk

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