

# Police Scotland National Football Engagement Strategy



**POLICE  
SCOTLAND**  
Keeping people safe

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# Introduction

## 1.1 Football in Scottish society

Football plays an important role in Scottish life, for communities and individuals, and can make a positive impact in many ways. Our clubs – and the organisations associated with them – deliver a wide range of programmes, which bring positive outcomes. Involvement with the game can bring a variety of benefits to participants and to the wider community, such as health improvements, social interaction, benefit for business or charitable initiatives supporting those most in need.

## 1.2 Roles and relationships in Scottish football

Many people across Scotland enjoy following their clubs and countries and the primary relationship for football supporters is with their chosen team. The majority of football matches are organised by football clubs<sup>1</sup> with very little, if any, need for police attendance and the club Safety

Officer is in charge of the event at the stadium on match day, even where police resources are part of the event. This only changes in extreme circumstances and the general position is that the police provide a supporting role.

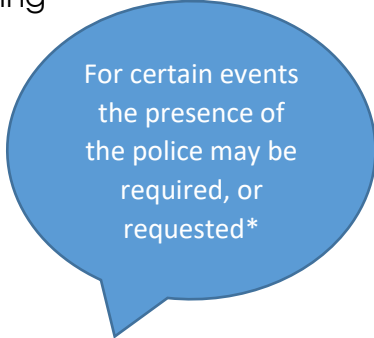
In season 2018-19 only 17% of matches in Scotland had a policing operation

Responsibility for all people present in a sports ground during an event lies at all times with the ground management\*

<sup>1</sup> 'Club' is referred to as the event organiser throughout this strategy document and includes matches where, for example, the Scottish FA, a league body, UEFA or FIFA are the event organiser.

\*Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds 6<sup>th</sup> Edition

This is why we recently changed the title of the officer in charge of the policing operation from 'Event Commander' to 'Event Policing Lead' as we felt this made it clearer that in normal circumstances the police are not in command of football events.



For certain events the presence of the police may be required, or requested\*

The Safety Officer and other club officials will plan the event safety and security operation, along with the other functions such as hospitality and catering which make up the match day experience for supporters. However Police Scotland has a role at some matches to support event organisers to deliver a safe and secure event, with the club requesting, and paying for, police officers to assist them in and around the venue.

Police Scotland may also put extra officers into an area such as a town / city centre near to where football is taking place as part of our normal policing duties if we believe there is an increased risk of crime or a risk to public safety. This can be either as a stand-alone policing operation or can be alongside the stadium policing operation if the club has requested police assistance.

Whatever type of policing operation is in place, we know that having officers in attendance at football matches can bring police and supporters together into emotionally charged situations, as well as impacting on those who live in communities where football takes place.

### **1.3 The importance of engagement**

A key factor in ensuring a safe and secure environment at football is effective engagement between police and public to foster mutual respect and understanding. This first National Football Engagement Strategy is intended to develop effective engagement at local, regional and national levels, building upon existing good practice to integrate the input of football supporters and our communities into Police Scotland's football policing operations.

Crucially, by developing good relationships away from the sometimes high drama atmosphere on match day, it is hoped that we can minimise conflict and tension when challenging situations arise.

It is important to note that while this strategy is new, much of the engagement to which it refers is already being done in a variety of ways across Scotland and this strategy is intended to make sure what we do is consistent with what the public has told us they want from us.


\*Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds 6<sup>th</sup> Edition

# 2 |

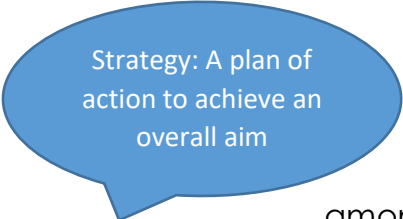
## What is Engagement?

### 2.1 Engagement in this strategy

Engagement can take many forms and can be carried out for many purposes. For the purposes of this strategy 'engagement' is any form of communication which allows meaningful two-way discussion between Police Scotland and the public, both footballing and non-footballing, about issues relating to football policing.



Public engagement is one of the 11 considerations Police Scotland uses to set its priorities for policing



Strategy: A plan of action to achieve an overall aim

### 2.2 Why have a strategy?

Engagement has to have a purpose and the intention behind this strategy is to build stronger relationships amongst police, football supporters and the communities who host football. This in turn is aimed at assisting in building:


- I. Football as a safe and secure environment for everyone
- II. Community wellbeing, with the impact of football fixtures on our communities being a positive one
- III. Confidence in policing, with policing operations having the least possible impact on supporters and community life
- IV. Links between police, clubs, supporters and communities based upon respect and fairness

Football as a safe and secure environment for everyone

The priority for all organisations involved in the management of football events is the safety and security of everyone attending the event. Behind the scenes before every match a huge amount of planning goes into making sure everything goes smoothly on match day. Likewise, on match day there will always be staff working feverishly to deal with anything that occurs, ranging from slips and trips to burst pipes, disorder or turnstile failure.

However, supporters themselves also have a key role in ensuring their own safety and the safety of others around them through how they conduct themselves on match day and also by being active partners in how events are managed, whether through interaction with Supporter Liaison Officers, via supporters' clubs etc.

As well as engaging with event organisers, Police Scotland's principle of policing by consent makes it crucial for us to have the understanding and approval of supporters and the wider public for the actions we take.



The main purpose of policing is to improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland

Community wellbeing, with the impact of football fixtures on our communities being a positive one

Community wellbeing is written into the Act which created Police Scotland, the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. This Act states that:

“the main purpose of policing is to improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland, and

(b) that the Police Service, working in collaboration with others where appropriate, should seek to achieve that main purpose by policing in a way which—

- (i) is accessible to, and engaged with, local communities, and
- (ii) promotes measures to prevent crime, harm and disorder”

Confidence in policing, with policing operations having the least possible impact on supporters and community life

In an ideal world all football matches could take place without the need for police to attend but at present this is not possible. However we are confident that our planning processes mean that we only send police officers to football when there is an identifiable need to do so. Discussions take place between clubs and police before each season begins to make sure we are identifying

the right matches to send officers to and these discussions continue throughout the season on a rolling basis as each match approaches. Policing operations at football grounds are only put in place if the host club has asked for police assistance and furthermore, where we do send officers to work at football, we aim to have no more than absolutely necessary, based upon a thorough risk assessment of what is likely to happen.

This makes sure that not only is the policing operation proportionate to the event, it also makes sure that as many officers as possible are retained in their communities doing their normal policing duties.



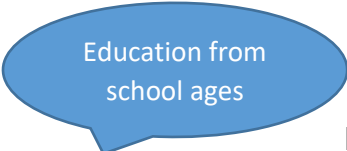
Policing must be accessible to, and engaged with, local communities

We appreciate that some policing tactics and decisions cause disruption to football supporters and the wider community and also recognise that the reasons why we do things may not always be understood by those affected by our actions.

By engaging better to explain what we do, how we do it and why we do it, we aim to build public confidence and understanding in football policing. Also, by developing this confidence and understanding, it is hoped that we can draw upon the public's ideas for improvement.

Links between police, clubs, supporters and communities based upon respect and fairness

Football clubs are embedded in their local communities and many provide services through their Community Trusts and supporter organisations that go far beyond what happens on the pitch.



Education from school ages

Similarly, policing is embedded in local communities and local officers often collaborate with clubs to deliver programmes to local people, such as employability skills, diversion from prosecution or to those for whom mainstream education is not suitable.

There is, however, sometimes a 'them and us' relationship between local residents and football supporters arriving from outside the area to attend matches, and a similar feeling between football supporters and police officers. By building better links amongst police, clubs, supporters and communities we hope to reduce community friction and, as far as possible, to make football events an enjoyable occasion for all.

### **2.3 Limits to engagement**

While on many occasions Police Scotland will be able to be very open during engagement discussions and will be able to incorporate the public's views into its policing operations, on some occasions there will be legal or tactical reasons that we have to hold back some information. If this is the case we will explain this.

It is also important to highlight that because Police Scotland's role is to support the event organisers, the majority of decisions which affect how an event is managed are taken by people from organisations such as football clubs, league bodies, Scottish FA etc. It will often therefore be the case that Police Scotland will have no authority to resolve certain issues but wherever possible we will explain this and will pass on concerns and queries to the individual / organisation who can.



# 3 | The Case for Change

## **3.1 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland'**

The case for change has been driven by 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland', which was commissioned by Police Scotland in 2018.

This review provided Police Scotland with an external view of our football policing arrangements and after taking evidence from a wide range of police officers and other stakeholders, the review team published its report in March 2019, providing 18 recommendations for consideration.

Police Scotland accepted all of the review's recommendations and immediately began work to fulfil them. In addition, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) also undertook an assurance review to examine the progress of Police Scotland towards meeting the recommendations from 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland' and the HMICS report was published in August 2019.

## **3.2 Relevant recommendations from 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland'**

Seven of the 18 recommendations from 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland' relate to engagement. They are detailed below along with information explaining what we have done to fulfil these recommendations.

Recommendation 3: The Police Scotland media plan should engage supporters and the media to explain the force's responsibilities and what sits with others.

Recommendation 16: Police Scotland should review its media strategy for football policing.

A new Police Scotland corporate communications strategy was approved in summer 2019 and communicated to commanders of all local policing areas. This strategy is used to provide consistent messaging across Police Scotland and is based upon:

- improving the public's understanding of Police Scotland's role in policing events
- making clear that responsibility for public safety at events lies with the organiser and that Police Scotland will, if requested, support the event with an appropriate policing operation
- encouraging event organisers to take the lead in issuing event-related information

Recommendation 9: Police Scotland may wish to review their existing DFO model to ensure it is fit for purpose in enabling DFOs to undertake the necessary engagement activity to build strong relationships with clubs, supporters and communities over the long-term.

Recommendation 12: Police Scotland should consider undertaking further work to develop an overarching engagement strategy in order to give clarity of direction and cohesion of activity.

The acronym 'DFO' stands for Dedicated Football Officer. These are Police Scotland officers whose role includes responsibility for much of the work involved in football policing and each officer has one or more clubs that they engage with. This includes engaging with club officials as well as supporters and supporter groups and also providing information to policing colleagues such as Event Policing Leads.

Since the publication of 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland' work has been underway to provide more support for DFOs in their role and by encouraging sharing of good practice amongst DFOs. The National Football Information Point-Scotland (NFIP-Scotland), Police Scotland's central football policy unit, has begun hosting regular telephone conferences for all DFOs and has been meeting Local Policing senior management in some areas to help them further professionalise their DFO function, including advising on allocating appropriate resources to this role, adopting good practice from elsewhere and ensuring effective succession planning.

Recommendation 13: Police Scotland may wish to review their integration of supporter input to the above strategy to build a fully inclusive model.

Recommendation 14: Consider the establishment of a national forum including key stakeholders and supporters' groups, supported by local fans' forums.

The public engagement strategy survey undertaken in autumn 2019 provided an opportunity for any interested individual, whether football supporter or not, to tell us their views on football policing, fulfilling Recommendation 13. Crucially, this input forms the basis for much of the action detailed in section 6 below.

Police Scotland has a forum called the Football and Events Working Group (FEWG) which has been in existence for many years. This groups already brought together senior police officers from across Scotland along with representatives from organisations such as British Transport Police (BTP), the Scottish Football Association (Scottish FA), Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL), Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), Scottish Government and the Football Safety Officers' Association Scotland (FSOAS) to discuss issues relating to policing of football and other events.

As this group was already in existence, it was decided to fulfil Recommendation 14 by inviting representatives from football supporter organisations to also attend. This resulted in the Scottish Disabled Supporters' Association (SDSA), the Scottish Football Supporters' Association (SFSa) and Supporters Direct Scotland (SDS) becoming member organisations and representatives of these groups now routinely attend FEWG meetings.

## OFFICIAL

In addition, Police Scotland representatives now also attend group forums for Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) to provide updates on relevant issues and to answer questions from SLOs from clubs all across Scotland.

Recommendation 15: Existing NPT [Neighbourhood Policing Team] good practice and engagement is shared nationally either via CPD [continuing professional development] events or at a national seminar.

A national Police Scotland good practice seminar took place in November 2019, bringing together speakers from as far apart as Aberdeen and Ayrshire to showcase their good practice to colleagues around the country. Plans are already in place to build upon this with further events and initiatives to share good practice being developed.

Recommendation 17: Police Scotland may wish to review their existing social media policy, particularly with respect to access levels and its use within the overarching engagement strategy.

There have already been changes to Police Scotland's use of social media to communicate information about football as part of the work to fulfil Recommendations 3 and 16. In addition some of the changes detailed in section 6 below will make further improvements and will ensure the changes are consistent with what we have been told via the engagement strategy survey.

### 3.3 Engagement Strategy survey results

The engagement survey was open from October to December 2019. It was completed by 6,817 people and the analysis of these responses has provided valuable insights into how football supporters and the general public view Police Scotland's engagement about football policing.

At the time this was the largest response to a Police Scotland survey of this kind

Responses came from a mix of football supporters (95%) and non-football supporters (5%) and 57% of those who replied live or work in an area where football takes place.

As is routine in Police Scotland surveys, we included some demographics questions at the end of the survey so that we could determine if the survey had reached a good cross section of society. We found in each of the questions, which covered age, gender, disability, sexuality, ethnicity and religion, there was representation for all of the sub categories, meaning participants included people from all kinds of background. We also received responses from supporters of over 60 different football teams.

Responses from supporters of over 60 different teams

Encouragingly, 68% of respondents who answered the question about the impact of football believed the impact on their community was positive with only 15% believing the impact was negative. For those people experiencing a negative impact, we will look at addressing the issues raised, either directly ourselves or in conjunction with clubs and other partner organisations.

A large majority (82%) of football supporters said they had not previously engaged with Police Scotland about football policing. Of those who have previously engaged, it is clear that many of your experiences have not always been positive and this is something we will work to improve on in future.

Suggestions for improvement that we can act upon

It is also clear that there is some good practice being carried out locally that could be adopted elsewhere as well as constructive suggestions for introducing new good practice.

Details of the survey responses are provided in sections 4 and 5 below and our action plan for improving engagement is provided in section 6.

# 4 |

## Survey Responses - Engagement with Football Supporters

### 4.1 What the survey told us about engagement with supporters

Most respondents had no previous experience of engaging with Police Scotland about football policing, which is not surprising because we only send officers to a small proportion of the matches that take place each season because for the majority of matches the event organisers don't need our help.

For those who did have experience of engaging with us, this was mostly on a match day and was a combination of contact outside and inside the venue. The overwhelming majority (76%) had never engaged with us via social media or news items. Similarly, 87% had never engaged with us at a supporter event and 88% had never engaged as part of a supporters' organisation.

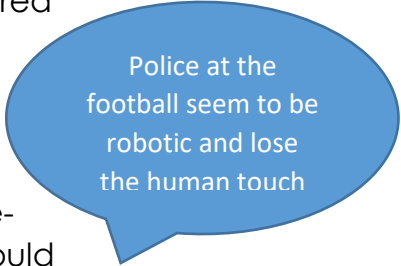
Kids felt safe in a busy area with police overseeing

This is important to know as it means almost all the engagement we do is in the period immediately surrounding matches when situations can become tense, with supporters and police officers being put under pressure when, for example, people are trying to get through turnstile queues before matches, during incidents while the match is being played or at the end when people are trying to make their way home through crowded areas and traffic restrictions.

Particularly away games engagement with police is a tense affair

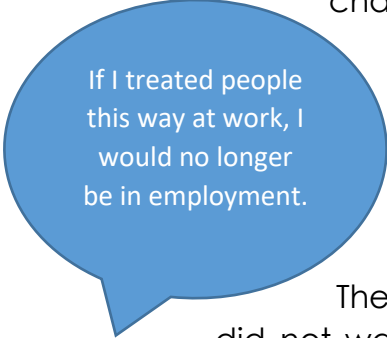
This is particularly relevant because the football matches which have a policing operation are a selected minority of matches - only 17% of matches in Scotland in season 2018-19 had a policing operation - for which police are required due to an identified risk and they are therefore

already those matches where police officers will be prepared for the likelihood of violence, disorder or anti-social behaviour.



Police at the football seem to be robotic and lose the human touch

These types of situation often don't allow the chance to chat through an issue in the way that a pre-planned meeting with supporters would allow, and after asking respondents to rate their experience with us, it is clear there is improvement needed in how we are seen to be exercising our powers and explaining our actions on match day.



If I treated people this way at work, I would no longer be in employment.

The majority of respondents (59%) to our survey said that they did not want Police Scotland to engage with them about football. However, 41% of football supporters said that they did want us to engage and amongst that 41% the most popular methods for doing this were:

- for the engagement to be carried out via their club
- using Police Scotland local social media accounts
- passing on information from other sources such as traffic and travel information
- face to face meetings

It is clear from this that there is a very limited desire amongst football supporters to engage directly with Police Scotland, with the overwhelming majority either not wishing to hear from us at all or wishing police-related information to come via their club.

This is important to know so that we can tailor our programme of engagement so that people are being told the information they want in the way they want it and that we are not wasting effort by trying to engage using methods that people don't want to participate in.

The survey also told us that only about one third of respondents were members of supporters' organisations so while we will continue and, where possible, improve engagement with supporter organisations, we will also make sure that we don't unintentionally neglect individual supporters.



The cops who wear the blue coats are at the games and always make an effort to speak with us

One theme observed in survey responses over a number of different questions was the benefit of having officers regularly working at football who can get to know supporters and can therefore interact with

Police Scotland were very open and willing to listen

them as part of an ongoing relationship rather than as a response to single incidents. This allows officers and supporters to engage with each other at times when there is no conflict and build relationships which can prove hugely beneficial when conflict does arise. It is clear that for many supporters these officers are trusted by supporters to look after them and that a known face encourages more positive interaction.

This regular use of the same officers is something that all Local Policing Areas are encouraged to do and we will continue to emphasise it as good practice.

Many survey responses showed a desire for supporters to be given better explanations for why things like cordons are used and, disappointingly, a large number of responses indicated that officers had given the impression they were not interested in dealing with supporters' enquiries or that they assumed all supporters were criminals.

Officers look like they don't want to be there

There were comments on how well officers had dealt with supporters needing assistance or reporting incidents, however there were also responses telling us of officers failing to reply to enquiries or to update on investigations.

Failing to do so falls below the standard we expect and this is something that the football lead officer in each region will be tasked with addressing.

The officer I spoke to most recently was excellent and explained a lot

There was also a perception that Police Scotland is good at dealing with small crowds but that officers become more difficult to engage with when there are bigger crowds. This is perhaps not surprising as bigger crowds are more challenging and officers face additional demands on their attention, however it should never be a reason to be less than civil to any member of the public and is very much contrary to the expectations Police Scotland has of its officers.


Many of the interactions that police have with supporters on match day relate to information that people could have had access to in the days before the match, such as parking, traffic restrictions, disabled access and the location of specific turnstiles. While a large number of supporters already access this information from sources such as club websites or fans forums, there are still large numbers of

The police officer was helpful and informative and even although I did not get what I wanted it was a positive experience.



supporters who arrive at the venue with limited information and this is something we can work with clubs to address.

A number of survey responses related to problems with disabled access, particularly in relation to officers being inflexible in allowing close access to stadiums to drop off disabled supporters or being unable to answer questions related to disabled access. In 2015 we worked with the Scottish Disabled Supporters' Association and clubs to improve disabled access to football but the survey results suggest there is a need to refresh this work and we will now do so.

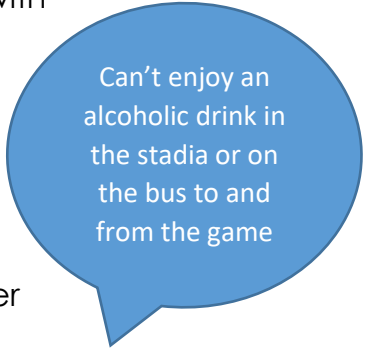


Give the younger men a bit of respect

Interestingly, the 16-25 years age group, which comprised 21% of survey participants, was over-represented in the responses detailing negative previous engagement experiences – 31% of the participants who gave a score under 5 (out of 10) for previous engagement with police were from this age group. Conversely, the 41-55 and 56-70 years age groups were under-represented in reporting low scores for previous engagement. These age-related disparities could be the result of a number of factors but whatever the reason, it is important to know that as a group young people view engagement with police in more negative terms than older age groups.

It is, however, encouraging that people in the 16-25 were well represented in the group of survey participants who wanted to engage in future with Police Scotland regarding football - 19% of the people who wanted to engage were from this age group which is approximately in line with them comprising 21% of overall participants – suggesting that while some people had experienced negative interactions, there is still a willingness to engage with us.

Police operations to check for alcohol being carried on supporters' buses caused a lot of adverse comment in the survey. It is clear that many supporters feel that these operations are unnecessary and that they are being treated unfairly in comparison to supporters attending other sports or events. In particular posting online about alcohol which was seized during these operations was seen as disproportionate by many football supporters.

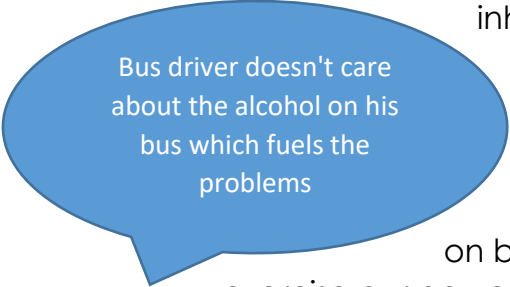


Can't enjoy an alcoholic drink in the stadia or on the bus to and from the game

In response to this, it must be clarified that it is an offence to carry alcohol on football supporters' buses and any change to this would have to be carried out by Scottish Ministers / Scottish Parliament. Police Scotland has previously said that we are open to participating in any work to change the availability of alcohol for football supporters but that this would be dependent upon

clear support for such changes from a survey of the Scottish public, including those who are not football supporters. The reasons for this are that unfortunately many of our communities suffer the worst of alcohol-related anti-social behaviour by a minority of supporters, behaviour which tarnishes the reputation of all supporters in the eyes of many local residents.


Alcohol continues to be a factor in a large proportion of arrests at football in Scotland. It is widely known that alcohol can cause people to lose their inhibitions and this can make them a risk to themselves and others, especially when in a crowd situation.



Bus driver doesn't care about the alcohol on his bus which fuels the problems

However, we know that stopping buses to check for alcohol disrupts journeys and can cause annoyance to those supporters whose buses do not allow alcohol on board. We have therefore been working on ways to exercise our powers in a more low key way. For example we have been working with the Traffic Commissioner and Road Policing colleagues to develop information sharing arrangements where police crime information can assist the Traffic Commissioner to deliver an educational approach to encourage bus operators and drivers to comply with the law, whilst ensuring the Traffic Commissioner has the necessary information to take formal enforcement action if that is required.

We have also developed a compliance check system that can take place before, during or at the end of journeys on an intelligence-led basis to better identify those buses which continue to allow alcohol. Over time this will allow us to narrow our focus onto persistent offenders, ensuring as far as possible that law-abiding supporters are not inconvenienced while allowing us to continue efforts to minimise alcohol-related anti-social behaviour.



A sensible and friendly approach to our supporters' bus while checking for alcohol

There were a lot of comments, both positive and negative, about the use of our Mounted Branch at football. Given the range of comments and the depth of feeling behind some of the negative responses, the full survey responses have been shared with the Superintendent in charge of the Mounted Branch so that any learning can be applied to future events.


Many survey responses commented on matters that relate to stadium safety such as standing in seated areas. Stadium safety certification and inspection is a function carried out by Local Authorities, while Police Scotland along with other organisations participate on Local Authority Safety Advisory Groups. If non-criminal but unsafe issues such as persistent standing or lateral movement are identified, Police Scotland can discuss these with the club(s) concerned.

However if they are not resolved, we can also bring them to the attention of the Local Authority Safety Advisory Group.


## **4.2 Your suggestions to improve engagement**

There were many suggestions for improving police engagement with football supporters and the main themes for these are:

- Let stewards manage football events
- Improved training for officers
- Treating supporters with respect, not suspicion, and appreciating that fans are out to enjoy the game
- Do more to liaise with the clubs, such as having a designated police officers who will regularly meet with fans and can build a rapport/ relationship with them, consulting with Supporter Liaison Officers more regularly and drafting the responsibilities of clubs towards their home and away patrons
- Revised social media strategy / No photos online of confiscated alcohol



Mingle,  
say  
hello!



Community policing  
approach is required

Some people also had suggestions for how we could engage, in addition to those methods we had pre-populated in the survey. These included use of further surveys, better engagement with supporter groups, delivering workshops in schools, using email to communicate with supporters, use of local radio to let people know about travel problems and the potential use of joint press conferences with clubs when there have been safety issues.

Some of this activity, such as schools workshops and engaging with supporter groups, is already underway while other activity will require clubs to take action, such as use of emails and local radio to communicate event-related information.

Throughout these suggestions there is a theme of supporters wanting police to listen to them rather than instruct them. We agree this is the right thing to do and we already expect our officers to adopt this approach whenever possible. Our increased emphasis on a community safety approach, as detailed in our action plan, is intended to help with this, however sometimes we will still need to issue instructions for public safety or other reasons.

### 4.3 What policing issues you want us to engage about

As noted before, 59% of football supporters did not want Police Scotland to engage with them at all. For the remaining 41%, the topics that people wanted us to engage with them about were:

<b>Engagement Issue</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who wanted engagement on this topic</b>
How we are dealing with football-related anti-social behaviour	80
Police policies and powers	63
Changes to travel and access because of football matches	44
How football banning orders work	35
Why Police Scotland is involved in football	33
Inconsiderate parking	21
Other	7

Many of the types of information suggested under 'other' fall under one of the topics above but there were also some different ideas:

- Developing football to benefit everyone
- How we work with supporters and examples of supporters good practice
- How to hold police to account for their actions
- Which games are 'risk' games and why
- Safety assessments
- The costs of policing and policing numbers
- Enquiries into historical sexual abuse in football clubs
- Use of a reporting hotline / app so people can report incidents

These are all things that have been incorporated into our action plan for future engagement which is detailed in section 6. For some of the suggested topics there are limits to how much information we can share (e.g. about enquiries or in relation to intelligence) but we will make as much information as possible available and take on board public feedback.

# Survey Responses - Engagement with Our Communities Who Host Football

## 5.1 Communities' views about football

In many cases local residents and football supporters are the same people, with local people supporting a club in their own town. However, for every 'home' match there is an 'away' team which brings people from other areas and there are also clubs whose supporters travel from across Scotland to attend matches so on any match day there may be thousands of football supporters visiting someone else's community.

Five percent of respondents to our survey were not football supporters and we believe many of these people will be local residents who have participated because football events impact on their daily life. Overall, 57% of respondents, supporters and non-supporters, lived / worked in an area where football takes place so we have been able to capture the views of people whose daily lives are affected by this.

Brings people together, there's nothing more special than walking to a game with a big crowd of fans

## 5.2 Positive impact

Of the survey participants who live or work in an area which hosts football, 68% said football had a positive impact in their community. Comments included things like bringing people to an area to boost the local economy, bringing a positive atmosphere and providing young people with a chance to take exercise, as well as providing jobs for local people,

Local junior football team, always is a positive atmosphere in the whole community

working with dementia support groups and helping to tackle obesity.

It is clear from the survey that many football clubs are anchors within their local communities, bringing together people who would not otherwise meet, providing support for vulnerable groups and providing education and employment opportunities.

These are all benefits that align with Police Scotland's duty to improve community wellbeing and in many areas police officers already participate in the community work being done by clubs. With so much good work going on in so many areas that is not always widely reported, it is clear that there is a huge untapped reservoir of football-related good news which could help to balance out some of the negative coverage which often accompanies

football. While we're conscious that most survey respondents said they didn't want to engage directly with Police Scotland, we shall make sure that our social media channels publicise positive messages.

In terms of match day policing, many people who felt football had a positive impact questioned the level of police resources at matches, with some people commenting on what they thought were very high police numbers for low risk matches, while other people felt there weren't enough police in their communities because too much emphasis was placed on policing football stadiums. In addition, some people felt that the presence of police caused an increase in tension.

We don't want our actions to detract from an otherwise positive experience for people and that is why one of the aims of this strategy is building confidence in policing, with policing operations having the least possible impact on supporters and community life. By better explaining what we do and why and by taking on board community feedback to make improvements, we aim to have our communities' support for how we police football events.

### 5.3 Negative impact

In contrast to the positive views of the majority, 15% of people said football had a negative impact in

I can't even get parked in my own street

their community, with inconsiderate parking by supporters, traffic management problems, anti-social behaviour by supporters and lack of a visible police response common reasons for this negativity. In addition approximately 10% of people who reported a

I had to mop urine from the close.

negative impact from having football in their community mentioned sectarianism or bigotry as a factor.

Responses mentioned other negative experiences such as feeling intimidated on trains, not feeling safe leaving home while matches were taking place, lack of police in the community or officers not dealing with anti-social behaviour as effectively as people would like. Some residents said that they simply left the area when football matches were taking place.

The fans vandalise properties, litter, shout abuse and have attacked members of the public.

However small the minority may be who engage in anti-social behaviour in our communities, it is clear that the impact of repeated bad experiences for local residents can become a serious issue. With improvements in engagement it is hoped that many of these issues can be reduced or even completely eliminated.

#### 5.4 Communities' views about engaging with Police Scotland

We asked those who live or work in an area where football takes place about how we should engage with communities and there was widespread support for:

- Holding local, regional and national meetings (72%)
- Involving communities and supporters when policing policy is being changed (91%)
- A 'no surprises' approach to football policing (91%)

Try and restore mutual respect

More approachable officers on match days alongside the more heavily kitted officers

Many of the suggestions from those in our communities for engagement were pleas for greater police action and it is clear there is a desire to have more police patrolling and stronger enforcement in communities when football matches are taking place.

Give equal priority to the non-footballer communities

However in contrast to some survey participants wanting more proactive policing, others wanted to see a softer side of policing to build a friendlier atmosphere. This balance of meeting opposing desires within communities is a difficult one to achieve but by engaging locally and bringing together all the relevant parties, we hope to achieve local solutions which deal with local issues rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.



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There were also suggestions for initiatives such as:

- Workshops for young people,
- Cooperation with Supporter Liaison Officers, and Community Advisors
- Not allowing matches at times that don't suit community needs
- Online community meetings
- Police to meet with 'ultra' groups
- A more joined up approach with Local Authorities about traffic management, licensed premises and street trading
- Leaflets or 'opt in' email service to let local residents know about when matches are taking place, restrictions etc.
- Independently chaired public meetings with the leagues, clubs and supporters groups all in attendance to allow everyone to have their say
  - A dedicated Police Scotland website / social media accounts for football and appointment of police officers dedicated to working with specific clubs
- Police presence in club fanzones
- Police being in the background until actually needed to deal with incidents
- Publication of safety discussions
- Advertising campaign about the contrasts between how some people act on match days and how they act in their family / working life
- Communities should be empowered to develop policing policy and not just be involved
- Police to not engage at all

The public struggle to understand why ultras groups are tolerated

You need to arrest people chanting sectarian hatred

Police shouldn't be noticed at a game, but should be ready to be called upon

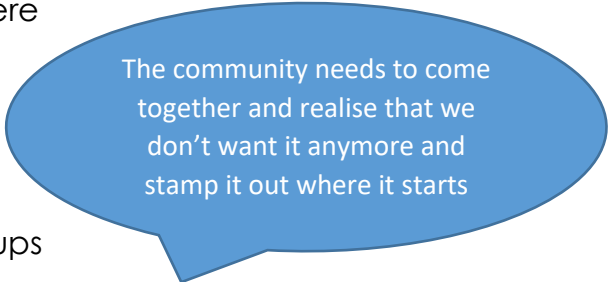
By engaging regularly with supporters and local residents in the more relaxed settings of supporter forums, residents' meetings or online and by being as open as possible about what we do any why, we will reduce the likelihood of issues arising on match day, where conflict is much more likely.

Set the rules out clearly so no excuses on behaviour but also encourage friendlier face to face engagement policing




## 5.5 Your suggestions for engaging in communities

We asked how football supporters and Police Scotland should engage with the wider public to ensure that the impact of football on our communities is a positive one. Many of the suggestions were similar to those detailed above but there were also some new ones and a summary is given below:

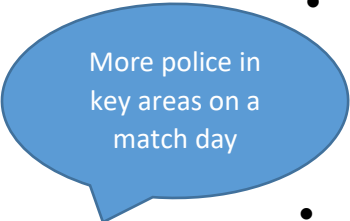


The community needs to come together and realise that we don't want it anymore and stamp it out where it starts



Meetings with supporters and non-supporters

- Show that we are not prioritising the interests of large supporter groups over the interests of local residents
- Understand that community groups do not always reach everyone in the community
  - Engage with schools
  - Looking at how police in other countries work at football
  - Football clubs should publicise the more positive initiatives that they're taking and the work their supporters are undertaking to aid this
- Annual repeat of survey
- Promotions for fans to use public transport and other initiatives to reduce car use
- Articles from Police Scotland inside football programmes
- A public statement giving clarity to fans on what their rights are
- A document showing what police do at a match / Q&A live chats on Facebook
- Should have meetings with shop and pub owners, council etc. about how littering can be reduced and how to manage traffic flow in the community before after games
  - More emphasis on safety of disabled supporters
- Managing the media better
- Holding clubs and football authorities responsible when supporters misbehave
- Setting up focus groups to discuss issues



More police in key areas on a match day



Supporters need to respect the local communities

# 6 |

## Action to improve engagement

### 6.1 Common themes

A number of common themes were identifiable from the survey which have been incorporated into the action we will be taking:

1. The majority of supporters just want to watch their team and have a good day out and do not wish to engage directly with police
2. Communities which host football are frustrated with persistent anti-social behaviour by some supporters when they come into communities and want their area to be respected by football supporters when they visit
3. There are strong opposing views that either police should adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to all bad behaviour or alternatively that police should be much more relaxed than they currently are and only step in when there is serious trouble
4. There is lack of knowledge amongst supporters and wider public of the police role at football and the extent of our powers
5. Many supporters believe police officers don't treat them with an acceptable level of respect and that police regard all supporters as criminals or potential criminals
6. Many supporters believe there is unfairness by police in the way that different groups of supporters are treated

## **6.2 Our response to the survey**

Police Scotland will incorporate the findings from the football engagement survey into our working practices as follows:

- Maintain and build public confidence by engaging regularly in the ways people want us to, listening to what we are being told and acting upon this information
- Engage in a structured way based upon the model detailed in Appendix I of this document to help to ensure there is a strong link between national policy and local delivery, particularly when introducing policy change
- Demonstrate a commitment to open and transparent relationships by operating a 'no surprises' approach to policing operations, by being as open as we can about what we do and why
- Ensure supporters and communities know how they can raise a concern and what Police Scotland will do about it

## **6.3 How we will do this**

Publication of this Football Engagement Strategy is the culmination of over a year of development, public consultation and analysis and provides a clear statement by Police Scotland of our intended action to ensure public engagement about football policing is as effective as it can be.

It is intended that the actions detailed below are sustainable and that this strategy will remain the blueprint for effective engagement in the long term.

There is already a lot of effective engagement taking place which can be built upon in addition to the new learning taken from the football engagement survey. The following actions detail how we will bring old and new practices together to deliver more effective engagement:

1. We will better explain the police role at football

We shall produce a document explaining the role of police at football which will be made publicly available.

We shall complete our review of our social media policy as it relates to football, completing the work begun following the recommendations made in 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland'.

2. We shall more strongly emphasise a 'Community Safety' approach to football policing operations rather than a 'Public Order' approach

As noted above, Police Scotland polices a small minority of the senior football matches that take place in Scotland (17% in season 2018-19) and these tend to be the higher risk categories, where there is the likelihood of disorder or some other identified risk. As an organisation we have a duty to prepare for the risk to manifest itself on match day and officers are therefore predisposed to the likelihood of there being a need for police action.

On occasion officers are severely challenged by the conduct of some football supporters but we accept that an over-emphasis on the potential for trouble can sometimes lead to officers taking a public order approach in situations where a more community safety-based approach could be applied.

The template for our policing Operational Order already contains information on the expectations in terms of integrity, fairness and respect as well as human rights and policing by consent but this change of emphasis is intended to influence the mind set of Event Policing Leads and the officers they command.

At present there is still a minority of football supporters who use football as a vehicle for participating in violence, disorder and anti-social behaviour: officers are regularly sworn at, assaulted (hot drinks, coins, pyrotechnics),

accused of being biased or corrupt and even in some of the responses to this survey a small number of participants engaged in abusive language.

To be successful in building a community safety ethos in football policing we need communities and genuine supporters to play a part by refusing to tolerate this behaviour.

3. Our training will be updated to enhance unconscious bias training specifically for football policing along with an increased focus on a customer service ethos

We know that people, police officers included, can sometimes bring their own previous experiences into encounters with other people and this can lead to a negative interaction. We also know that the way a message is delivered is crucial to achieving a positive outcome. New recruits to Police Scotland and officers being promoted to first line management are already given unconscious bias training but until now there has been no specific training on this in relation to football policing. As such we shall now be:

- Updating our in-house training for working at football to include training on unconscious bias and improved information about having a customer service ethos
- Incorporating the survey findings into a review of the training undertaken by Event Policing Leads to ensure all learning has been captured
- Benchmarking with police forces outside to learn from good practice elsewhere, work which began following the recommendations in 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland'

4. We will continue to make best use of Safety Advisory Group (SAG) structures

The first recommendation in 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland' was that there should be:

*'An urgent multi-agency review is conducted to establish an appropriate governance, consultation and inspection regime for Scottish venues used for football and other events.'*

As well as participating in the normal business of Local Authority Safety Advisory Groups, Police Scotland has also been participating in the work being led by COSLA to fulfil this recommendation and will continue to do so as this work progresses.

This should strengthen safety certification arrangements across Scotland, building upon identified good practice to raise standards everywhere and provide greater national consistency.

5. In line with Recommendation 9 within 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland', we shall continue the work to enhance the role of DFOs to make local engagement as effective as possible and to ensure that DFOs can easily share good practice across different areas.

There have already been improvements to sharing of Dedicated Football Officer (DFO) good practice following 'An Independent Review of Football Policing in Scotland'.

In terms of engaging with the public, we will consider creating dedicated DFO email addresses covering every Local Policing Area in Scotland. We have already identified that there could be upskilling of DFOs with enhanced listening and other communication skills and work is ongoing to develop suitable training. This will help DFOs to create and maintain meaningful dialogue between police, clubs, supporters and communities.

6. We shall continue work to develop good relationships between communities, football clubs, football supporters and police

As well as better explaining our role, we will improve our ability to listen to the views of football supporters and communities:

- We shall work with local communities and football supporters to design local engagement methods that meet local needs.
- We will also explore possibilities for club representatives such as SLOs to attend community meetings along with our DFOs (or other suitable officers such as a local Event Policing Lead) to take community questions or for clubs to invite community representatives to supporter events.
- We will work with representatives of community councils / Housing Associations and other appropriate community groups in every area to give them the opportunity to observe 'behind the scenes' during a football policing operation, should they wish to do so.
- Our officers will continue to participate in football club open days and community events.
- Following on from partnerships already forged in some areas and feedback received during this survey, we will, where appropriate, have officers from local community teams working alongside club stewards in the communities around football stadiums to jointly address local concerns on match day.
- We shall refresh the disability work undertaken with SDSA, clubs and local policing areas.
- We shall work with clubs to ensure all supporters, whether home or away, season ticket holder or one-off visitor, disabled or not, has access to the information they need to make their attendance at the event as problem-free as possible, particularly for disabled supporters. This will involve encouraging clubs to continue taking greater responsibility for communicating event-related information,

with Police Scotland stepping back from pre-match behavioural warnings which many supporters find unnecessary and insulting.

- Regional lead officers will be tasked with ensuring enquiries and reports of crimes / incidents received from the public in their region are dealt with appropriately and that updates are provided to the person making the report.
- We shall repeat the public survey within 2 years of the strategy having been published.

7. We shall continue work to develop structured programmes which provide a crime prevention and public safety message

Structured programmes to deliver a crime prevention message, such as the Pitchin' in Programme, which are often delivered in conjunction with other organisations including football clubs, will be further developed.

We have been working with the Scottish FA to assist with their initiative to develop a discrimination reporting mechanism and will continue to provide assistance with this.

We have also collaborated with the SPFL Trust who were recently awarded Cashback for Communities funding to deliver a programme which will help young people who have become involved in criminal behaviour to get their lives back on track.



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Appendix I: Police Scotland / Football National Engagement Model

Version 1.00

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