

# **Chris Mitchell Foundation**

## **Strategic Plan**

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2017 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020**



## Message from the Founding Members

Chris Mitchell was born in Stirling on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1988. He was nine years old when he joined a local youth football team, North Broomage Colts, under the charge of Philip Howarth. Very quickly Chris lived, breathed, slept and ate football and so his passion in life began. Chris was soon invited along to Glasgow Rangers Youth Development and progressed through their Youth Training Academy and after a few years, he followed Bobby Barr to St. Johnstone.



On leaving school at 16, he moved to Livingston Football Club to pursue a career in professional football. During this period, he was selected to represent Scotland at School Boy International level in the Victory Shield competition, sharing the win with England, playing alongside household names including Theo Walcott, Micah Richards and Joe Garner. Chris went on to represent Scotland at all underage levels, gaining seven under 21 caps.

Chris then moved on to Falkirk Football Club where John Hughes gave Chris his debut in a 2-1 victory against Hearts of Midlothian. During this time, he also enjoyed loan spells with Montrose and Ayr United. From here, aged 21, Chris moved to Bradford City with his Falkirk teammate and good friend Mark Stewart. The following season he returned to Scottish Football and joined Alan Johnstone at Queen of the South, where they enjoyed great success over the following two seasons, securing promotion to the Championship and victory in the Ramsden Cup. Amongst the many, many trophies, medals and accolades he won with these teams, one of the most memorable moments of his career was scoring the winning goal for Falkirk against Ajax in a pre-season friendly.

At the beginning of 2015/16 season Chris joined Barry Ferguson at Clyde Football Club on a part-time basis while seeking employment outside football.

Even though Chris had had a great career in professional football, the change in his circumstances from playing full-time football at the highest level to part-time and having to embark on a new career, led Chris to develop mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety. Sadly, all the support from his family and friends could not deter him from ending his own life on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016, he was only 27.

In his honour, the Chris Mitchell Foundation has been established to raise awareness around mental health and wellbeing for players, ex-players and staff working in the Scottish professional football industry, through working with specialised organisations, who understand and provide support in this area.

Great work is already being done within this industry. Professional football clubs are also recognising the importance of the mental health and wellbeing of their players and staff and some have already publically pledged to work with and support a variety of mental health charities. The Chris Mitchell Foundation aims to build on this, by working collaboratively with these organisations and others, to promote mental health and wellbeing on a national scale.

Our three-year strategic plan provides the focus and underpins the groundwork for the inaugural year of the charity and we hope you will join us on our journey to help safeguard the mental health and wellbeing of Scotland's professional footballers and staff.

## Introduction

The Chris Mitchell Foundation was established by Chris' family and his girlfriend, Louise Rooney. They wanted to highlight the need of mental health and wellbeing awareness within Scottish professional football and give it a national platform.

The services and support of the Chris Mitchell Foundation will be available to players, ex-players and staff connected to professional Scottish football clubs; including those clubs within the Scottish Professional Football League, the Scottish Highland League, the Scottish Lowland League, the Scottish Women's Premier League and associated youth academies.

The Foundation will work closely with organisations within the Scottish football industry and specialised organisations to develop its services to ensure they are tailored to meet the relevant individuals' needs.

The Chris Mitchell Foundation began in May 2017 and the current board of trustees includes Philip Mitchell, Laura Mitchell and Louise Rooney. Further trustees will be sought from within the Scottish football industry, as well as the private and public sector, dependant on relevant skills and experience.

This strategic plan sets out our key objectives over the next three years. It outlines how we will look to achieve our vision and mission and will allow us to form partnerships with other organisations who specialise in this area.

## Our Vision

*Our vision is to dispel the stigma associated with mental health in Scottish professional football and for it to be integrated into physical health and fitness training programmes.*

## Our Mission

*The Chris Mitchell Foundation will bring to the forefront the need for the awareness of mental health and wellbeing within the Scottish professional football industry, by sharing knowledge and skills and improve learning, forging cohesive and sustainable partnerships, connecting and supporting service users and campaigning to raise awareness on a national scale.*

## Our Values

### **We convey passion ....**

- We have a vested interest in the cause we represent.
- We want to support people that really need it.

### **We advocate empathy ....**

- We are considerate of the thoughts, feelings, experiences and attitudes of others.
- We want those who need it to feel supported and listened to.

### **We value quality ....**

- We want to provide the right service, as well as understand and respond to individuals' needs.

### **We act with integrity and transparency ....**

- We are open and honest in our work.
- We share and evidence our progress.

### **We respect confidentiality and are non-judgemental ....**

- We treat individuals with dignity and recognise their vulnerability.
- We understand the importance of confidentiality and conduct our work accordingly.

## **Objectives**

### **1. Educating and Enabling**

We will do this by:

- Funding places on accredited mental health and wellbeing training courses for individuals.
- Hosting awareness sessions, by accredited professionals, to promote mental health and wellbeing.

The resulting outcome will be:

- Better knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing and the early warning signs.
- Early intervention for players and staff suffering from poor mental health.
- Prompt treatment and support programmes put in place through the right professional services.

### **2. Connecting and Supporting**

We will do this by:

- Securing funding to launch a 24-hour help line for professional footballers, ex-professional footballers and staff working in the football industry and their extended family to use for support and advice.
- Working collaboratively with the Scottish football industry and specialised organisations to develop a Scottish Football Association Mental Health Charter and encourage clubs to sign up to it.
- Funding private emergency/short-term medical care for individuals on a waiting list(s) for treatment.

The resulting outcome will be:

- Individuals have access to round the clock, confidential support services.
- Football clubs recognise their duty of care and are supportive of mental health and wellbeing.

- Service users in need of emergency treatment are not left waiting extended periods of time.

### **3. Engaging and Influencing**

We will do this by:

- Effective dialogue with governing bodies and key organisations within the Scottish football industry to forge cohesive and sustainable working relationships to the benefit of the cause.
- Delivering a national campaign to raise general public awareness of the importance of mental health and wellbeing.

The resulting outcome will be:

- Raising the profile of the mental health and wellbeing on a national platform.
- Reducing the stigma associated with mental health and wellbeing.

### **4. Supporting Life After Football**

We will do this by:

- Sign posting careers advice and guidance/services on further education and employment, including support for completing application forms and CV writing.

The resulting outcome will be:

- More individuals move to positive destinations following the end of their careers within the football industry.
- Individuals' feel supported throughout the process and this will be less likely to have a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

## **Report Card**

The Chris Mitchell Foundation will publish an annual progress report.