

## Community Lives collaboration with Maidenhead Football Club



### Goals! New skills, friendships and exercise

#### The Community Lives team have been working Maidenhead Football Club, Magpies in the Community, to offer football for all!

An exciting new collaboration has given people with a range of support needs, the opportunity to meet outside and enjoy some healthy exercise. Working in partnership with the people we support, Maidenhead FC and the Community Lives Team, have created a fun and lively football session.

There are very few opportunities for those who have additional needs to access 'mainstream' exercise such as going to the gym, keep fit classes and football, and Vicki Holt, Community Development Manager for Community Lives at Optalis is always looking for new ways to offer opportunities to the people we support. Vicki Explains: "The walking football group is slower paced, safer, and less aggressive than the 'full speed' version, but it still provides some powerful benefits. We were really excited to work with Maidenhead FC to establish this activity."

Team member Julian said: "I like scoring goals and I get to see my friends." And Adham, indicated that he likes the coaches and learning football skills.

The 'Walking football' sessions held at the football club have been attended by a regular group of men, supported by men. This has helped instil a sense of comradery, which has had knock on benefits. The rapport between the group members and coaches has given people the opportunity to be themselves. The environment and atmosphere support the group to have fun exercise and enjoy the support and encouragement from each other.

Although football is important to David, another member of the group, it almost comes secondary to the social aspect as this is where David's true personality shines through, with his obvious pleasure seeing and meeting old friends. David says "I like to see my friends, we all laugh."

## Richard's story

Since his stroke, Richard uses a walking frame and has had low confidence. However, this didn't stop him from playing football.

The sessions have really helped his mobility. He can dribble the ball some distance now and with support and encouragement from his peers, he really enjoys taking part. He is much more enthusiastic and is visibly proud of his achievements, his smile says it all. The group's support and encouragement for each other, means so much to him. Staff who support him at home as well as Community Lives have seen an improvement in his confidence and mobility.

Being part of a group has created an environment where people can thrive. The Coaches have built positive relationships with the group members and see each person as an individual. Coach James, who supports the session each week, describes the benefits people are already experiencing : **"A massive improvement over the weeks, not just physically but their social skills. There has also been an improvement in their strength and hand-eye coordination."**

Helen Park Community Development Officer at Maidenhead F.C says: **"This has been a fantastic opportunity for us to develop our partnership with Community Lives and provide the opportunity for individuals to take part in health and wellbeing activities in a safe environment. It's great to see everyone getting involved, developing their skills, and having fun. It's important that activities are available to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds and this is a great example of supporting community groups and making a difference."**

The groups have been inclusive with everyone able to contribute and take part regardless of their ability and support needs.

Vicki Holt concludes: **"The opportunities that Maidenhead F.C. have given us has been amazing. Collaborating has been so positive and motivating for the staff as well as the people we support. The social interaction and being part of the community, being with like-minded people. We all feel the same things regardless of ability and background, that is what we hope to achieve, to share this. Not forgetting, the friendships we have formed."**

This collaboration is one of many projects the Community Lives team have been developing to continue to offer stimulating activities where people can develop skills, improve well-being and play an active part in their communities.

