*Critical Research in Football*

# FOOTBALL, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## EVERTON'S 'BLUE FAMILY' AND SPORT AT THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY

Chris Stone

ROUTLEDGE

# Football, Community and Social Responsibility

This book shines a light on the value and effectiveness of football clubs' community engagement work, the cultural value of sport and the position sport plays within people's daily lives.

The book considers the deep historical roots that many football clubs have as charitable institutions within their civic locales. Including original research carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, the book presents an in-depth case study of Everton FC and their associated charitable trust. It takes a close look at the outreach work that they undertook during the pandemic to support vulnerable people in the local community and considers the value of that work more generally for local residents, football fans, club staff and other stakeholders. The book also places the Everton case study in the context of wider debates around the use of sport in the service of humanity, and corporate social responsibility in the sport industry.

This is fascinating reading for any student, researcher, policy maker, practitioner or football fan with an interest in sport (for) development, community work, the relationship between sport consumption and wider society, ethical business or the English Premier League.

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Critical Research in Football



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To family – by fate or choice, whether blue,
red or rainbow

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Chapter 1

# Virtue Ethics, Sport for Development and Corporate Social Responsibility

## Football and the Common Good

### Introduction

On 11 March 2020, the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Arsenal was postponed at short notice. It became the first sporting event in England to be cancelled as a result of the global spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. A week earlier Arsenal FC had played against Greek side Olympiakos, the owner of which, Evangelos Marinakis, subsequently announced he had contracted the virus. Arsenal players went into self-isolation as a precaution and the Arsenal coach, Mikel Arteta, became the first diagnosed case of COVID-19 in British football. It was further reported that three Leicester City players were to go into self-isolation after showing symptoms, and on Friday 13 March, it was announced that all the weekend's football matches in England were being postponed as a result of the health crisis. Initially, no further competitive football match in England was to take place before 3 April. In fact, the next professional football fixture in the UK finally went ahead on 17 June 2020.

Everton FC's response early on that Friday was to contact all staff and tell them not to come into work. This included playing staff, coaching staff, administrative staff and staff working for the club's charitable arm, Everton in the Community (EitC). The club effectively went into lockdown – ten days before the UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, formally announced that British people must stay at home except for very limited purposes and that much of the country's industry and businesses would shut down in order to curb the spread of the virus. This followed similar responses across Europe. Most football matches and leagues across the continent had also already been suspended at this stage.

Everton FC, by this point, had put into operation The Blue Family Campaign. Building on the strength of the football club's existing community engagement through EitC, much of which had to be suspended due to the restrictions brought in, a set of support mechanisms were introduced that targeted local people and supporters most in need during the health crisis. It also provided a purpose for the numerous frontline community staff (and others

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from within the club itself) whose existing work could not take place, none of whom were furloughed or placed at risk of redundancy.

Through the actions and opinions of key stakeholders, namely staff, local community and fans, of a professional English football club, this book documents that period during which so much of the country (and the world) was placed into a state of confusion, concern and, in some cases, (local) conflict by a global pandemic. The significance of so doing is twofold. Firstly, football is a global cultural practice that was affected as much as any other aspect of people's social lives and as much as any other major industry during this period. Secondly, in the contemporary era football has been positioned to be part of the solution to social disadvantage, inequality and division, all of which were exacerbated by the coronavirus crisis.

The crisis occurred at a time when existing research around the impact of EitC was already being undertaken by the author. This text attempts to provide a perspective on such work in light of the restrictions at the time that were imposed by the initial 'lockdown.' It also adds to an emerging body of knowledge into the effects of COVID-19 beyond its immediate threat to life and physical health, early examples of which highlighted the social impacts of social distancing measures in terms of mental wellbeing (Duan & Zhu, 2020; Williams et al., 2020), domestic violence (Ivandić et al., 2020) and educational achievement (Di Pietro et al., 2020; Zancajo, 2020). The evidence was collected within the immediate aftermath of the initial lockdown being enforced (though is also informed by an earlier evidence base[1]) and as such reflects the immanence of the phenomenon without the benefits and/or (un) conscious biases that reflective distance affords. That said, a degree of reflection is possible from the perspective of the author as the lengthening crisis and its consequences on society evolved in parallel with the writing period.

To begin with, this introduction outlines the key academic touchstones within (sport) sociology in order to explore the core theme of 'sport at the service of humanity' and the practical implications of that during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic labelled COVID-19. Chapter 2 provides a timeline following the popular narratives of debates concerning professional football during the pandemic as they emerged from the perspective of the Government and Health Authorities, football's governing bodies, representatives of the clubs themselves, players, journalists and fans. Chapter 3 places the case study football club and its community engagement arm in the context of the historical development of the sport and the city of Liverpool. Chapters 4–6 concentrate on the impact of the pandemic on key stakeholders, namely staff of Everton Football Club and Everton in the Community, participants in various community programmes and the club's supporters. The book concludes with a discussion about the meanings of football in light of the foregoing evidence. In doing so, I draw on the work of Chouliaraki (2013) and Bruni and Zamagni (2016) in order to propose the possibility of football clubs becoming a civilly responsible part of a revolution of solidarity within post-humanitarian society.

This is done in alignment with Everton FC's 'virtuous narrative' (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]) and with respect to how the club and its community trust exist within the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) epitomised by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## A Note on Sociology

> Sociology is waning, if that's what the authors see as their core market.

This was one academic peer's response during the review process for this book to a question about the level of interest in the subject area. It would be remiss of me to ignore this suggestion and therefore feel the need to respond not just to this particular reviewer but to others who may hold similar doubts about the relevance and purpose of sociology as a discipline. If it is waning, it is because its purpose and form is still seen by many through deeply entrenched "nineteenth century ways of doing sociology" (Blackshaw, 2005, p. 139). Such views understand sociology in its 'legislative' form (Bauman, 1989) as an objective science, wedded to the idea that society, as the product of the state, can be studied in order to map human existence, solve social inadequacies and thus improve people's lives. From this perspective, the sociologist, as one of a number of intellectuals, was part of the knowledge/power nexus that impacted upon the public realm. With the rise of neoliberal capitalism, associated individualisation and 'the academy' comprising only one of a number of competing systems of expertise, sociology in its former guise has been challenged, both from within academic circles and beyond.

In responding to this challenge, Bauman (2015, p. 31) suggests that, "Under the new circumstances, the business of sociology is a continuous, unending and indeed two-sided conversation/exchange with… the rank and file practitioners of life." He goes on to say that:

> the crucial objective of such an on-going conversation is in the long run the breaking of the widespread, perhaps nearly universal habit of [individuals] to evade the 'in order to' category of explanation and deploying instead a 'because of' type of argument when it comes to reporting their conduct. Behind that habit there is a tacit, occasionally articulated though mostly un-reflected upon and hardly ever questioned presumption that 'things are as they are', 'nature is what it is – full stop', and a conviction that there is little if not nothing that actors – singly, severally or collectively – can change…

In some small part, this text has been written 'in order to' document without prejudice a football club's commitment to its various stakeholders, in general but particularly at a critical point in our recent history. It is the consequence of numerous critical conversations between the author, a scholar

of football's sociological staging, and the former CEO of the football club who had a belief that the purpose of her role and that of the club for which she was the custodian was 'in order to' make people's lives better. It would be difficult to describe such exchanges as being with 'rank and file' but like all those involved in this research, whether senior management, community engagement staff, EitC participants or fans, it is based on the views provided by 'practitioners of life' connected to Everton Football Club during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

My approach to this work is to see it as a vehicle to reflect upon and widen the debate about professional football clubs as civic institutions, representations of community, purveyors of consumer entertainment and drivers of socio-economic development. In doing so, it will provide an interpretation of a football club's actions at a specific moment in time in order to highlight the ongoing challenges for which it has taken responsibility within a trajectory that has seen the sport develop from "a dying folk ritual… [inherently connected to] the notion of [industrial] civic pride and civic identity," (Goldblatt, 2006, pp. 51–59) to "a booming post-industrial service sector awash with money and hubris…" (Goldblatt, 2006, p. 688).

I believe that through engaging in academic debate, sociological investigation and the constructive use of empirical evidence a 'change' can come about. Operationally, culturally and strategically, changes have been made within the case study club due to an attitude that challenges the dominant understanding within the football industry that 'things are as they are' when it comes to a professional football club's role and purpose in hyper-commodified, late modernity and its relationships with and responsibilities to fans and local communities.[2] Finally, this text has been written 'in order to' open up the discussion about whether a football club should be undertaking such work as that previously provided by the state, the challenges that have been faced and successes achieved in doing so at a particular moment in time and provide an alternative narrative to those predominating the field at present. Moreover, it reflects a prevailing attitude that the purpose of a professional football club's community engagement arm exists 'in order to' contribute to the common good rather than 'because of' an overriding 'environmental determinism' (Anagnostopoulos & Shilbury, 2013) that has shaped the field.

Following Dubet (2009), I believe that,

> …sociologists are not just analysts of society but they are promoters too. Society is not only a social object to be investigated, it is also a moral and modern project that aims to bring into existence a society of individuals, based on the recognition of common values of equality, liberty and solidarity.
>
> (Vandenberghe, 2017, p. 407)

As modernity is progressively reshaped through the posts of digital communication, the late intellectuals of classic sociology being reinterpreted and

the advancing of liquid social identities, the 'project' (of modernity), however one might want to hyphenate it, must be located on such terms that a common good is possible – in relative terms. Perhaps, as Bauman (2015, p. 30) suggests, "No longer is it the question of 'improving society'," but that of "finding/constructing a relatively comfortable niche in a badly discomforting social setting largely beyond repair" (Bauman, 2015, p. 30). Such a perspective seems pessimistic but recognises the 'common-sense' view of many football fans that, in trying to overcome the issues plaguing professional football in the 1970s/1980s (through which much early academic study of football was framed), namely 'hooliganism', the football authorities, clubs and even fans themselves have been complicit in the coproduction of an unwieldy, self-serving behemoth built upon questionable moral values.

The sociological examination of Everton Football Club and the Blue Family, of Sport, Community and Humanity, is an interpretive construction that promotes a particular vision based both upon the situated knowledge of the author as social researcher embedded within community programmes and networks and a systematic qualitative research approach. It is not conclusive. It is the starting point for an ongoing dialogue, informed as it may well be by differing perspectives in the future. It is a dialogue that is informal, open-ended and cooperative (Sennett, 2011) between the author, the social actors implicated by the work – namely staff of Everton FC and EitC, participants in their community programmes and fans of the football club – and the 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) of like-minded 'rank and file' operating across football's intellectual terrain (however that may be conceived).

This project emerged from the desire of an individual who was at the very top of the football industry to engage in academic debate combined with a specific empirical research project that was carried out during the course of the COVID-19 health crisis in 2020. That in itself is the culmination of a working relationship between academia and Everton FC stretching back several years. Thus, the content of this book draws upon various qualitative studies of EitC's engagement work with different groups between 2017 and 2020 (see Corbett et al., 2019; Lucas & Hanson, 2019; Stone, 2018a; Stone & Hough, 2020; Wakefield et al., 2019). Its focus is, however, the consequence of undertaking a specific exploration of the impact of COVID-19 on three key stakeholder groups: staff of Everton FC and EitC, participants in EitC programmes and Everton FC's fanbase. To this end, the findings are based upon in-depth qualitative interviews with 36 staff working for Everton FC or EitC, 20 participants on EitC programmes and a survey completed by 596 Everton supporters – the segmentation for which can be seen in Appendix 3 – which was supplemented by qualitative interviews with 12 respondents randomly selected from those who agreed to discuss their responses in greater detail.

The focus for this book emerged from discussions with the Everton FC CEO who had commissioned research around the work of Everton in the Community aimed at evaluating a football club's contribution to its local community

and at the deepest, philosophical level, its reason for being; its purposeful existence in the lives of numerous stakeholders from dedicated fans to disenfranchised local people. This is important because through successive meetings and interviews between author and CEO during the research period, this text is as much a collaborative product as an independent source of social science.

This work should be seen as part of a dialogical approach to understanding and improving the potential for football clubs and their associated charitable foundations to use their significant position within civic locales and the mindscapes of a dedicated consumer base in the form of their fans and supporters. To date, there has been little academic focus on the connection between a football club's overriding organisational philosophy and the everyday practices that might be included under the rubric of community development or social responsibility. The purpose of this text is not to evaluate what is 'right' or 'wrong' but to explore how a particular philosophy of life was conveyed at a particular moment in time through the operations of a professional football club and its associated charitable activities embodied by EitC.

I am aware of the paradoxical notion that this very publication is part of the, "socially constructed story about the community activities… that can be used to create a social definition of the organisation" (Walters & Panton, 2014, p. 842). It is, therefore, important to point out that the notion of 'sport at the service of humanity' was a strong driving force behind many of the interviews and conversations that took place with Everton FC's CEO during the research period. This itself was the result of both an inspirational event in the Vatican to which she was invited in 2016, the inaugural Papal Conference on Sport (from which the 'Sport for Humanity' movement emerged), and undoubtedly connected to her Catholic upbringing in Liverpool. As such, it was this emergent theme during the long duration of the research that informs the philosophical foundations for this work. With that in mind, the following section outlines the Sport for Humanity movement, that seemed to align with Everton FC's overarching vision of itself, before then reviewing where professional football sits in relation to such ideals and how, sociologically, the practice of football might be reimagined as a prelude to exploring some evidence behind such a perspective.

## Sport for Humanity

During the global pandemic, the Sport for Humanity movement included the following statement on their homepage:

> At a time of unprecedented anxiety around the world, sport at all levels has been affected – and generally brought to a standstill as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The impact at elite and professional levels will be financially damaging, and many clubs may be forced to shut down before the crisis is over. Millions of others are being deprived of their regular

> community activities, will miss meeting up with their friends, competing in their local leagues, and foregoing their regular physical exercise.
>
> And yet, in closing down matches, events, tournaments and even training, Sport as a whole has shown real leadership within our communities. From the United States to Europe, across Asia and the Americas, sports organisations have been prepared to act to protect fans, players and the communities in which they play. They have also been ready to take steps ahead of government demands, as they recognise the importance of protecting their fans as much as their players.
>
> Sport for Humanity is committed to the values of sport and faith, which enhance our societies: greater inclusion and involvement for all, championing the values within sport and faith of respect, joy, love, balance, enlightenment and compassion. This is an occasion where those values are respected in full by sports and faith organisations who genuinely put others before themselves. By restricting or cancelling the very events which they were created for, sports worldwide show their true colours as powerful leaders in our communities.
>
> (Sport for Humanity, 2020a)

They position sport and faith as two core pillars of human life that can reawaken people to the massive power for good they can provide:

> Faith is perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of humankind – the belief that we exist and function for a purpose; and that we can live in a way that enhances not only our lives, but also the lives of those around us… In an age where the focus seems increasingly to be on the final outcome rather than the journey, Sport at the Service of Humanity is a reminder of what really matters in life: compassion, respect, love, enlightenment, balance, joy. Every person, no matter what their faith or background, has the capacity to embrace and live by these core principles, though many have forgotten their importance. By bringing them back to sport and by encouraging all athletes, and sports organizations, whether they be professional or amateur, to embrace these fundamental values, we will begin to shift hearts and minds…
>
> (Sport for Humanity, 2020b)

There is acknowledgement that this holds true no matter what particular faith one holds but it cannot be overlooked that the organisation is rooted in Catholic doctrine. It is also shackled to ideals enshrined in the Olympic movement and has become yet another player in the expanding Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) sector. I raise these points by way of acknowledging that the movement is implicated in the way the case study football club sees itself but also to bring a critical distance between the underlying

religious associations of the movement, humanitarian principles associated with sport through the course of its modern history and the welfare practices of Everton Football Club and Everton in the Community.

> Sport at the Service of Humanity provides an opportunity to combine the emotion of faith and sport into a powerful force that can make a real difference to our world. We want to create a voice for honesty, inclusion and acceptance, and remind people of how incredible it feels to do and be good.
>
> (Sport for Humanity, 2020b)

Fundamentally, the Sport for Humanity movement is linking faith-based ideals to those that have been claimed to be inherent within sport. This is not the place to enter into a discussion about the validity of faith-based beliefs. I am more interested in the sociological and philosophical connections in how sport at the service of humanity is ontologically constructed through fundamental principles and ethical application. Furthermore, through the exploration of Everton Football Club as a case study, this text will examine a sporting institution's role in contributing to the 'common good'. It will also, from the perspective of key stakeholders associated with a football club, document a crucial moment in history when football was suspended and crucial community support services were impacted as a consequence of the global pandemic. This is because, "there is a gap in the literature with regard to how the global 'risk' and 'threat' of COVID-19 was initially responded to by sport governing bodies and other key actors [during this] dramatic period" (Lee Ludvigsen, 2022, p. 501).

The following expands on some fundamentals relating to the relationship between the philosophical foundations for 'being good' and its implications for organisational ethics, the ideals (often uncritically) associated with sport and the history of 'recreation as welfare'. It is these interconnections that lead to the possibility of re-evaluating the role and purpose of a professional football club through an exploration of how the 'Everton Family' operated during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also provides an alternative academic context for framing ongoing discussions around community engagement and elite sport.

## Sporting Ideals and the Challenge of Football

The history of modern sport is interconnected with the promotion of certain ideals. The ultimate global celebration of sport is arguably the Olympic Games. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) plays the role of 'promoting Olympism throughout the world'. In doing so, it will, "endeavour to place sport at the service of humanity" (International Olympic Committee, 2020, p. 16). The exact meaning of such a statement is contested. There is

much reference to the Olympic spirit, values and principles as having some inherently understood meaning. Parry et al. (2005, p. 135) offer a concise summary of Olympism as,

> an ethical commitment to competitive sporting activity under universal principles and conditions of mutual respect, fairness, justice and equality, with a view to creating lasting personal friendships and international relationships of peace, toleration and mutual understanding.

That does not mean that the history of the Olympic Games and the IOC itself has not been found wanting when it comes to their own moralities; not least the IOC bribery scandal in the late 1990s (Jennings, 2012), the dominance of racist ideologies from explicit prejudice in the early part of the 20th century (Lunt & Dyreson, 2012) to homogenising rhetoric associated with more recent Olympic campaigns (Giardina et al., 2012), urban regeneration (Blunden, 2012) and questions of public freedom and human rights (Byrne & Lee Ludvigsen, 2024; James & Osborn, 2024).

The Olympic ideal is built on fundamental, yet highly contested principles of sport as character building and contains intrinsic characteristics for the development of morally robust, physically competent and mentally sharp individuals and communities. Such values are imbued in the development of modern sport and how it can be utilised as a force for good. What I take issue with is the notion that sport is intrinsically associated with such a quality. There is plenty of evidence that sport is also 'bad'. Such value-laden statements will be explored further in this book and particularly in analysing the philosophical roots of interpreting 'sport at the service of humanity'. Suffice to say, sport as an institution, a business and a cultural practice is imbued with values defined by its socio-historical context and by the means through which the actors involved decide to convey those values upon it – in as much as they have such power to do so. Thus, the history of sport is one of struggle between agents of culture: administrators, educators, politicians, skilled athletes, fans, consumers and social commentators. And so, we turn to association football and its relationship with sporting ideals.

The modern version of football (as opposed to its disorganised folk antecedents) as it is most well known throughout the world developed in the public schools of Victorian England as a way of channelling young men's exuberance and energy. Enjoyed by pupils as a release from the restrictive and controlling demands of the classroom, for teachers and headmasters the power of the sport to instil values of discipline and character is well historicised by Thomas Hughes in the book Tom Brown's School Days. Part of the 'muscular Christian' movement, the early development of football by moralising educationalists was a reflection of the concerns about the decreasing influence of the Anglican church on, and the physical and moral health of, an increasingly urban population (Holt, 1989). In particular, then as now,

football was seen as a solution to the 'social problem' of inner-city working-class boys whose values and behaviour were seen to be in need of attention. And so, socio-religious institutions such as the Boys' Brigade and the Young Men's Christian Association, "were drawn into the use of sport as an instrument of social discipline and source of recruits" (Holt, 1989, p. 138). In Liverpool, as the number of football clubs rose dramatically in the latter part of the 19th century, 22% of those in existence in 1885 were linked to religious associations (Kennedy, 2011) including Everton FC as it coalesced from various church-based teams in 1879. Kennedy (2011, p. 483) maintains that the specific roots of the football club in any one particular church (often seen to be St Domingo's) are debatable but notes distinctly that, "the impulse for the rise of Everton FC came from the missionary zeal of the muscular Christian movement."

Regarding the impact of 'Muscular Christians and middle-class moralists', however, Holt (1989, p. 346) observes that, "Their ideals had only limited influence on the way games were played and understood by the mass of manual workers." Embedded in local communities, professional football clubs came to represent a specific white, male, working-class identity. Changes in those local communities and changes to the structure of the sport mean that the relationship between football clubs, their local communities and their fan bases have changed considerably over the years (Bale, 1993; Brooks, 2019; Critcher, 1979; Dixon, 2013; King, 1998; Nash, 2000; Redhead, 1997; Sandvoss, 2003; Taylor, 1971; Taylor, 1982; Wagg, 2004). Moralising ideals about the benefits of sporting participation gave way to football spectating through the combination of Saturday afternoons free from work, a relative rise in disposable income, and increasing commercial opportunities and motivations for business men to involve themselves with the local football club (Walvin, 1975). The commodification of the sport, from associated products such as cigarette cards and the Football Pools to the onset of live broadcasts initially on the radio and then on television increased its appeal across different strata in society but primarily cemented football as an embedded part of (possibly mythical) working-class culture.

As a result, the culture surrounding the consumption of and participation in football was imbued by 'traditionally working-class' values. It was an (artisan) trade through which players sold their labour but whose working lives were at the whim of the (bourgeois) owners of the clubs. It was part of (localised) entertainment and leisure culture – both a distraction from industrial hardship and the cause of work absenteeism. Professionalism and partisanship became defining features. The two together provided the perfect conditions for the commodification of the sport (Critcher, 1979). 'Traditional' working-class values and interconnections were eroded away, which in association with other deindustrialising factors and underinvestment in football infrastructure arguably led to ever-increasing violence in and around football stadia on match days (Taylor, 1971, 1982). The problem of 'hooliganism' reached a point in

the late 1970s whereby the Government put pressure on football clubs themselves to provide solutions, from which the Football in the Community (FitC) schemes were born. Still based on the perceptions of sport's inherent capacities for social development, such a scheme was the genus for Everton in the Community (EitC) and every other professional football club's community foundation/trust across the country.

At the same time, the structures of football were being reshaped. Accelerated by the Taylor Report's recommendations surrounding the need to regenerate the physical infrastructures of football stadia, the formation of the Premier League and its significant broadcasting deal with BskyB left many football supporters feeling disenfranchised and heightened the symbolic understandings of supporters' relationships with their football clubs and with each other (Brooks, 2019; King, 1998; Nash, 2000). The concept of 'community' was simultaneously being invoked within political discourse and its symbolic loss being redefined within the support base of clubs across the country as the increasingly hyperreal, hyper-commodified experience of live football was textually challenged and intellectually explored (Redhead, 1993, 1997). Moreover, the real consequences of unregulated governance were beginning to have an effect on the very existence of clubs, an issue that has continued well into the 21st century.

## Community Sport Development

From the origins of sport's perceived inherently positive qualities, there emerged a critique that questioned the foundations of such claims. There is no doubt that certain communities and individuals benefitted to lesser or greater extents through sporting provision and involvement. Critically, the Wolfenden Report commissioned by the CCPR in 1960 examined, "the factors affecting the development of games, sports and outdoor activities in the United Kingdom," and made recommendations around, "practical measures which should be taken by statutory or voluntary bodies in order that these activities may play their full part in promoting the general welfare of the community." And, thus, a more formal relationship between sport and community welfare began to develop. This was still predominantly through a 'mythopoeic' belief in the value of sport (Coalter, 2007) that meant opportunities for sporting participation must be widened to overcome identified demographic barriers that were preventing some people from benefitting from what was believed to be the inherent ideals associated with sport. Inner cities suffering from high levels of deprivation were targeted with funding to develop and build new sport facilities as part of the 'Sport for All' campaign. In 1978, the Football and Community Development Programme directed Sports Council funds to professional football clubs to assist with the development of their grounds for use by the community. The aims were to more directly connect fans with their clubs and reduce the escalating

violence surrounding football matches (Coghlan & Webb, 1990). These objectives were further developed with the introduction of the 'Football in the Community' (FitC) programmes in the 1980s (McGuire, 2008; Stone, 2018b; Watson, 2000; Williams & Taylor, 1994). Initially, still rooted in the sporting ideals mythology of sport as a distraction the programmes expanded through the 1990s to include 'sport-plus' (Coalter, 2007) delivery models[3] alongside more conventional sport development in the mode of 'Sport for All'. This can summarily be described as a move from 'sport-*as*-development' to 'sport-*for*-development'.

Through these programmes, football was being used to combat numerous forms of 'anti-social behaviour', and when New Labour came to power in 1997, sport was identified as a crucial element in tackling social exclusion as part of their Third Way thinking (Mellor, 2002, 2008). Football provided a perfect vehicle for the incoming Government's middle ground politics that could attract mass appeal. Their 'Charter for Football' and subsequent Football Task Force represented a welcome break with previous administrations' hostile attitudes towards the sport but there were concerns:

> Football, like New Labour, is now 'cool', cosmopolitan and utterly modern. But both the game and the party have achieved this new-found preeminence by moving away from their roots in local communities, by depending heavily on a media image to broaden their appeal, and by striking up unprecedented friendships with the movers and shakers of corporate business and high finance.
>
> (Brown, 1999, p. 59)

The two main outcomes of the Football Task Force's (1999) Investing in the Community report were the formation of the Football Foundation and Supporters' Direct. The former took responsibility for administrating funds that had been negotiated as part of the original deal between the Premier League and BskyB that would see 5% of broadcasting rights monies redistributed for community purposes.[4] Primarily, this has meant the development of facilities for those wanting to participate in football at a recreational level. The latter had the aim of aiding more democratic, supporter-based ownership models of professional football clubs through the formation of supporter trusts (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2007).

Part of the Football Foundation's original remit was also to finance social inclusion projects as well as facilities development but over time much of this work has begun to be funded directly by the Premier League through their Charitable Fund – arguably further exposing the brand to the very people disenfranchised by the structural and economic changes brought about by the Premier League's formation in the first place whilst increasing their (financial) control over clubs' relationships with various communities and consolidating 'friendly' relations with National Government. Supporters Direct remains

more independent, though its representational capacity has been questioned (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2007; Porter, 2019).

Most provocatively, this arguably enshrines the division between – or differing relationship to – what might be termed football's 'communities of need' and its (flawed) consumer base. A distinction which had begun (possibly unintentionally) with the earlier signification of problem populations that football clubs were tasked with tackling through FitC schemes and the desire to attract a more affluent fanbase. Southern (2011, p. 12) points out that, "While [FitC] initiatives are welcome they should be seen in the context of ever-increasing ticket prices and the actual exclusion of many young and old people who in a bygone generation have expected access to top flight English football."

'Third Way' thinking (Giddens, 1998) influenced how football clubs engaged with local communities, morally, practically and institutionally. To the more direct interrelations between the football club and local people as a two-way process (or one-way between two generic entities: the football club and the fan base/local neighbourhood community) was added a third way in the form of the 'community department' (more latterly an independent community foundation or trust). Initially, part of football clubs' structures themselves, around the turn of the millennium, FitC departments began to be reconstituted as independent charitable organisations, less reliant on but still benefitting from connections with the football club itself (the details of which are explored in Chapter 3 in the case of Everton FC and the early development of Everton in the Community). This was a major recommendation made by Brown et al. (2006) in their work commissioned by the Football Foundation. According to Walters and Panton (2014, p. 829), the influences for this change are twofold:

> [It] can be explained in part by institutional pressures; the perceived success of the conversion to this model by early adopters encouraged imitation across the sector, whilst more recently coercive pressures exist due to the fact that this form of organisational structure is required in order to receive central funding from the Premier League or the Football League.

Operationally, it placed football clubs' community work within the Third Sector, in competition for funds with other charitable organisations working with the broad remit of 'social cohesion' and symbolically separated certain groups for targeted interventionist work based upon the 'sport for good' model, ignoring the 'social exclusion' being felt by members of the 'traditional' fanbase whose cultural citizenship was arguably linked to their (financial) ability to attend matches.[5] Within the politics of social justice, equality of access to the cultural assets of the local community through economic policies that made them open to all was reinvented as the provision of opportunities to encourage greater participation in society through the labour market

and programmes rooted in some moral crusade to educate, raise expectations and integrate 'excluded' populations. The meanings associated with 'social exclusion' took a discursive shift in this 'age of inclusion' that emerged with New Labour's ascendancy (Levitas, 2005).

In relation to community sport, Kelly (2011, p. 127) suggests that the concept of 'social inclusion' within New Labour policy should be understood as reflecting a movement from the pursuit of 'equality' (through the redistribution of wealth – as defined by the original ideals inherent in the welfare state) to the redistribution of 'opportunity', and as an attempt to reconcile social democratic values with the neoliberal economic agenda. She notes that, "within a contractual welfare state, 'based on rights and responsibilities', the importance of paid work to the relationship of state and citizen is underlined, alongside a communitarian social agenda, where communities are understood as both 'object of policy' and 'policy instrument'." Kelly's research on the Positive Futures programme[6] makes use of Levitas's (2005) framework in which she distinguishes three discourses of social exclusion operating within New Labour politics:

- Redistributionist discourse (RED)
  - Social exclusion is related to poverty, understood as a multi-dimensional concept which includes material poverty, but also exclusion from social, political and cultural citizenship.
  - Inclusion is tied to the redistribution of resources.
- Moral underclass discourse (MUD)
  - exclusion is linked to the moral inadequacy of the 'excluded'
  - inclusion is believed to result from changing behaviour.
- Social integrationist discourse (SID)
  - where inclusion/exclusion are related to labour market attachment and participation/non-participation in paid employment.

Kelly points out that these competing discourses may be simultaneously articulated and that according to Levitas (2005, p. 28) the dominant discourse within New Labour politics tended to reflect, "an inconsistent combination of SID and MUD." Such discourses could similarly be applied to the work undertaken by football clubs through their community engagement teams. Sanders et al. (2014, p. 415) suggest that, "FitC embodied the notion that access to appropriate learning resources in a familiar environment could help people make 'better choices' as citizens." This is a familiar refrain within neoliberal politics encapsulated by the New Labour Government's adoption of Giddens's (1998) 'Third Way'.

If community development practice is rooted in the community itself defining its own needs and making provision to meet those needs in a

non-prescriptive way (Glen, 1993), much of the work at the time was criticised for failing to really offer a bottom-up approach (Henderson & Glen, 2006). Football could similarly be criticised for adopting a top-down approach because, as Taylor (2004) points out, very few 'community' initiatives came directly from football clubs themselves or the constituents whom they were directly targeting. Rather, they were encouraged or enforced by central government, local authorities or organisations such as the Football Foundation, Premier League or the PFA. This leads Mellor (2008, p. 322) to suggest that, "the socially responsible activities in which clubs are involved through their 'community' activities are seen as a 'pay off' for the arguably socially 'irresponsible' ways in which they conduct other forms of business."

## Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

'Sport for Good' and the community engagement programmes undertaken by football clubs are often couched within the broad discourse of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (e.g. Anagnostopoulos & Shilbury, 2013; Breitbarth & Harris, 2008; Kolyperas et al., 2015; Walters & Panton, 2014). Whilst such a position is understandable the proposition in this book is that CSR as a tool for analysis is both hampered by its 'sociogenesis' as a reaction to 'irresponsible actions' on the part of businesses (Waddington et al., 2013) and the 'preoccupation with instrumental consequences,' (Margolis & Walsh, 2003) from the perspective of businesses themselves rather than the intended beneficiaries and actors entrusted with operationalising said responsibilities.

The sociogenesis of football clubs as socially responsible commercial agents is rooted in the fabric of football's historical development as a modern professional sport. For clubs like Everton FC, their very existence is arguably the result of a perceived act of social responsibility. That is not to say that 'irresponsible actions' relating to the football industry as a whole and football clubs themselves have not led to CSR-like activity on the part of clubs but that is arguably as a consequence of 'environmental determinism' (Anagnostopoulos & Shilbury, 2013) on the part of governing authorities and the interconnectedness amongst professional football clubs leading to diffusion and adoption of such practices (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Walters & Panton, 2014). The 'irresponsible actions' within the football industry range from financial irregularity to issues of racism and other prejudices. The case study club is certainly not immune from accusations of such irresponsibility. However, the discussion that will be developed here is that of a football club's ethical responsibility by virtue of it being in a preeminent position to challenge the environment in which it is operating and take a lead on socially responsible practices, not because of instrumental consequences for the business but because it is a good thing to do.

As discussed, Community Sport Development within professional football emerged as a response to a number of social factors that were affecting the sport and society in the 1970s and 1980s. Clubs themselves were imposed upon by governing bodies, and ultimately the Government at the time, through the adoption of Football in the Community (FitC) schemes (Stone, 2018b). Whilst arguably this can be seen as part of a 'political approach' to CSR (Breitbarth & Harris, 2008) whereby the football industry as a collective gain favour in return for reduced government regulation (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009) at the level of individual clubs their understandings of their communities and rationale for continuing to develop their community programmes has been piecemeal and rarely part of any corporate strategy (Brown et al., 2006). Though never a requirement, FitC schemes became a significant part of football clubs' business across the sector at a time that CSR began to play a significant role in sport (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; 2013; Walters & Panton, 2014), an exploration of which is developed further in Chapter 3 with regard to Everton in the Community. The majority of studies around CSR focus on the impact of such policies on corporations themselves rather than on wider society or any intended beneficiaries. According to Waddington et al. (2013, p. 42), this is indicative of the underpinning values and ideologies through which analyses are conducted. In trying to address the question of CSR efficacy, they divide sport-related CSR policies into three broad categories:

1 Sports organisations who simply make charitable donations or help raise funds for good causes
2 The use of sport in local community projects relating to education, health or wider community development issues
3 CSR policies directed at international development (particularly aimed at the Global South by multi-national sports organisations)

The authors cite 'FitC' as an example of category two but whilst these schemes might well fit contemporary criteria for CSR their emergence in the 1980s was more the result of direct Governmental intervention than any strategic responsibility taking on the part of football clubs (Stone, 2018b). This is important because schemes such as that represented by EitC arguably predate the preponderance of interest in CSR as a categorisation for such work. They are in fact legacies; legacies of an initial top-down Government funded scheme that are now arguably indispensable, though their impact on intended beneficiaries is still under-researched whether regarded as part of a CSR strategy or not.

Nonetheless, as the operations related to football clubs' community engagement work have developed and increasingly become independent from, structurally at least, other elements of a football club's business, it is worth

reflecting on the Community Sports Trust model and the relationship between a Trust, its management and the football club (Anagnostopoulos & Shilbury, 2013; Walters, 2009; Walters & Panton, 2014).

The development of independent community organisations was one of the main recommendations, alongside spreading the responsibility of community engagement across all areas of football clubs' work, emerging from the work of Brown et al. (2006) on behalf of the Football Foundation. The principles behind and advantages for doing so were seen to be manifold:

- protection from fluctuations in clubs' performance and success on the field,
- freedom to develop their own ways of working and develop appropriate delivery partnerships,
- overcome some of the tensions between 'commercial' and 'community' motivations,
- develop greater credibility in the work they undertake,
- share responsibility for some areas of 'community work' which by their very nature are commercially fragile or politically sensitive,
- nomenclature that clearly connects with the football clubs will be beneficial due to the 'kudos' attached to the professional game,
- through local partnerships and real commitment to tackling social problems football clubs themselves can benefit from positive publicity and better relations with local authorities, regeneration companies and service providers.

However, Brown et al. (2006, p. 26) recognised that, "community responsibilities do not end for football clubs with social intervention work." Echoed by Jenkins and James (2011, p. 39) who recommended, "A more strategic approach to CSR by football clubs will help to embed a culture of community engagement throughout every aspect of the clubs' work," Brown et al. (2006, p. 26) called for a more holistic perspective because, "If football clubs are to continue to claim to be community-focused organisations, then they must recognise that all their decisions and activities have potential repercussions for 'their' communities." How football clubs conceive their communities is a matter for debate. The Community Sports Trust (CST) model prioritises 'communities of need' as their primary responsibility (Jenkins & James, 2011) as opposed to Brown et al.'s (2006) more holistic conceptualisation.

Walters and Panton (2014) draw on the work of Selski and Parker (2005, 2011) in analysing how the motivations for community engagement work are viewed from different sides of the 'social partnership' between professional football clubs and the Community Sports Trusts (CST) with whom they partner to deliver on what might be called CSR objectives. Accordingly, Selski and

Parker identify three theoretical platforms underpinning social partnerships which are summarised by Walters and Panton (2014, pp. 830–831) as follows:

1 The social issues platform – in which a social partnership exists primarily to address a particular social concern. It is the *issue* that is the prominent reason for the partnership and those involved are, "motivated by the desire to address a particular social concern [in order] to be a good citizen and adhere to ethical values." It is considered purely philanthropic, "which benefits the recipient only and demonstrates the donor's social conscience."
2 The societal sector platform – this is related to the blurring of the responsibilities of government, business and civil society. There has become an increasing reliance on business and the third sector to deliver services as well as increasing concern for business organisations to be more accountable and contribute to addressing societal problems with, "social partnerships [becoming] central to New Labour policy in the UK with the continued recognition of the voluntary sector and collaboration across sectors to address welfare and social inclusion issues."
3 The resources dependence platform – in which a social partnership can be viewed as a way to enhance reputation, to gain legitimacy, to improve corporate image and competitive advantage, and to manage reputational risk. "The underlying principle of this third platform is that organisations partner firstly for self-interest and secondly to address a social concern."

Walters and Panton (2014) concluded that partnerships are perceived in different ways across the sector in which professional football clubs and football community trusts operate and perspectives emanating from those in charge of the trusts and those running the clubs are not necessarily in concordance. This supports Anagnostopoulos and Shilbury's (2013, p. 278) testament of 'dysfunctional affiliation' between 'parent' club and its charitable foundation whereby "some CSR managers believe that 'parent' clubs view their foundations as 'an extension of the marketing department'." Using Selski and Parker's (2005, 2011) theoretical framework, Walters and Panton (2014, p. 841) suggested that football clubs tend to align more with the resource-dependent platform whilst the CST, "conceives of the partnership as a way for them to address social issues first and foremost," highlighting an ethical disjunction between the two sides of the social partnership.

## Virtue Ethics, Humanity and the Good Life

Other than Walters and Panton's (2014) study as a reference point for understanding differing moral intentions across football clubs in how any social responsibility is perceived and operationalised, what has been missed in analyses of football clubs' community engagement is the degree to which it

is undertaken because it is a good thing to do. This brings us into the realm of virtue ethics. In popular parlance, the concept of virtue has become indicative of self-satisfaction; 'virtue signalling' and 'moral grandstanding' weaponised forms of distinction within contemporary 'culture wars'. How virtue is defined, however, has a long history and it is necessary to take a brief philosophical detour from the applied social history of sport and its moral and communal effects in order to explore, by way of introduction, the possibility of an alternative paradigm for framing a football club's social responsibilities and reputation.

To do so is to focus not on any sort of business case at the level of the football club (or indeed their governing body) for undertaking such work but to analyse what the engagement processes are, their consequences on those involved and to suggest that achieving some progress is the consequence of a specific kind of 'service' culture and 'virtuous' attitude embedded within the organisation and its personnel. In this way, there is a recognition that contemporary uses of sport as a tool for social engagement and community development are not led by intrinsic sporting values and the notion that sport is inherently good, nor that the impact on the club of carrying out such work is of great (instrumental) significance with claims of external benefits but that because of sport's popularity and a football club's historical position there is the recognition of a need to do something good and it is inherent in the definition of what the football club is and thus who they employ.

It is to see responsibility as a character trait in Aristotelian terms that is internal to a football club's very existence rather than a dutiful act the reward for which focuses on some notion of external goods. That does not mean, and I am not denying, that socially responsible acts do not result in external goods, such as reputational, commercial or political benefits. What the content of this book attempts to evidence is that during a particular period of social upheaval, the role of a football club for various communities was of great value as part of its teleological narrative for doing good. Other football clubs may be able to make similar claims and together power should be exerted on authorities and other less 'virtuous' organisations for the benefit of local communities, staff, fans and the sport itself. I would also encourage other football clubs to engage with and undertake transparent, independent research that combines sociological analysis with moral philosophy in order to develop a full picture of the types of relationships that football clubs have, historically and contemporaneously, with different communities and stakeholders in helping to define the good in the sport as well as the structural barriers that continue to obstruct achieving the internal goods for which sporting institutions have aspired in varying degrees throughout their modern histories.

MacIntyre (2007 [1981]) possibly pre-empts the 'culture wars' through his discussion of the 'interminable character' of contemporary moral debates. He also reflects the dissatisfaction with modernist morality through which any corporate social responsibility might be defined, justified or operationalised.

His thesis suggests that virtues are, "those qualities of character that support human agency and make us better and more effective practical reasoners and human agents, and they are to be discovered and identified by examining the conditions in which human agents act" (Lutz, 2012, p. 173). His argument develops from an Aristotelian perspective that human existence is an active process that drives each and every one of us towards a purpose. That our agency, that is our will to undertake any action, restricted as it may be by societal structures, is made meaningful only as it moves us towards the end goal of what it is to be human. It also recognises that 'humanity' is a cooperative process and a means towards achieving those ends which are made purposeful by the actions of moving towards that end goal. Moreover, virtues can only be enacted within communities defined by, and working towards, common goods.

Through an expansive historical analysis, he shows how 'virtue' has shifted in meaning as notions of what is 'good' were utilised by religious teachings and enlightenment thinkers to become legislative rather than implicitly indicative. The consequence is rule-bound morality to which various arguments appeal as though proven, factual results but end up being vacuous, rhetorical and manipulative. This is the argument laid at the door of CSR: that football clubs' community engagement work is the consequence of irresponsibility leading to a set of norms more for the benefit of 'comms' teams than the good of society. I would argue that whilst each football club must take some responsibility for being complicit in structural changes affecting their relationships with fans, local communities and their workforce, a more studied understanding of a club's 'teleological' journey, the intention to 'do good' and the 'practical wisdom' acquired in pursuit of that end is missing from the literature.

Consequently, the position taken in this book is to follow MacIntyre's argument for a return to more classical understandings of 'virtue' that are connected with the 'common good' and 'human action', particularly in terms of the 'practices' through which this is 'habitualised' over time. In doing so, 'sport at the service of humanity' can be framed by a philosophical outlook beyond its papal roots (Edmonds, 2018) and in countenance to the cynicism implicit in and instrumental approach to much of the critique of sport CSR (Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Waddington et al., 2013). This is not, though, a discussion about what is right or wrong – it is not a catalogue of virtues, the provision of which distinguishes the football club as good against those that do not possess such virtues as bad. It must be recognised that whilst there are commonly defined virtues across historical and geographically diverse cultures (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), the values through which Everton Football Club have tried to operate have a specific meaning to the teleological journey of the organisation in relation to its communities and their common goods. What I hope to explicate through the rest of this book is how the internal goods attached to the practice of a football club's community engagement work during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate an alternative approach

to understanding such a service from a philosophically and sociologically holistic perspective.

Let me summarise the defining aspects of the argument. MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 183) draws out descriptions of virtues across time from the Classical writings of Homer and Aristotle, through The New Testament, to the 18th-century thoughts of Jane Austen and Benjamin Franklin in order to highlight the changing views of morality leading him to question: "If different writers in different times and places, but all within the history of Western culture, include such different sets and types of items in their lists, what grounds have we for supposing … that there is any shared concept at all?" As he seeks 'conceptual unity' for a (post)modern understanding of 'virtue', he provides three key premises that are useful in analysing football clubs' community engagement: practices, narrative and tradition.

For MacIntyre, it is through practices, and the intended actions taken in order to excel in achieving the ends of those practices, that morality is exposed. Any intention and subsequent action adds to, and is the consequence of, an ongoing narrative that unites an agent's sense of purpose. That purpose is to live the best life they can and the best life is a morally good life. What counts as excellence in pursuit of internal goods in any practice is embodied in the traditions specific to, and commonly upheld by, the social contexts and communities in which any practice exists. MacIntyre shows that, "The tradition of the virtues celebrated the excellent character of agents whose pursuit of their personal good was inextricably linked to their service to the common goods of their communities" (Lutz, 2012, p. 131).

A practice, for MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 187), is defined as follows:

> …any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially constitutive of, that form of activity…

He uses chess as an allegorical example to explain the significance of internal and external goods. For our purposes, let us transpose his explanation to a definition of football as a practice.[7] Excellence in football is defined by an embodied knowledge and aesthetic execution of the skills and tactics appropriate to defeating an opponent within the rules of the sport. These are the internal goods constitutive of the activity that, though possibly similar in type to those defined through other activities, are unique to football itself. Beyond this, though, the 'common goods' associated with the football 'community' include the 'reflected glory' and social connectivity felt by the fans (Stone, 2007, 2017; Wann & Branscombe, 1990, 1993), civic pride and forms of topophilic association within a club's locale (Bale, 1993; Edensor et al., 2023) and the professional unity across the sport and within its institutions (Roderick, 2006).

The rewards for achievement within the practice of football are, for the elite few, enormous in terms of fame and fortune. These are external goods that result from excellent performance but could be achieved through other means. For many, external goods have become dominant as a consequence of the hypercommodification of professional football at the expense of internal goods, and form part of the irresponsibility that Waddington et al. (2013) suggest has necessitated and defines sport CSR. Whilst there is much testimony within football players' autobiographical accounts and journalistic reflections highlighting the internal goods gained from the profession, there is little in the way of systematic evidence that explores the interrelationship between football as a practice, how it is experienced by different actors within the industry and who have a stake in the consequences of that practice.

For MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 195), "The ability of a practice to retain its integrity will depend on the way in which the virtues can be and are exercised in sustaining the institutional forms which are the social bearers of the practice." In other words, professional football clubs, alongside their governing bodies, have a moral responsibility to uphold the integrity of football as an activity through their organisational practices – including traditions inherent to the sport as a 'socially established cooperative human activity'. Ultimate responsibility rests with the actors – players, administrators, executives, fans[8] – in the decision-making processes both at an individual level and institutionally, who cooperatively define the social practice.

Reflecting Bauman's (2015) distinction discussed earlier in this chapter, the actors involved in defining the social practice may do so 'because of' the traditions attached to said practice. They may also do so 'in order to' exercise the virtues necessary for the common good and in pursuit of their personal good as part of their *telos*. However, as MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 205 emphasis added) points out, "…a virtue is not a disposition that makes for success only in some *one particular* type of situation… Someone [or some entity] who genuinely possesses a virtue can be expected to manifest it in *very different* types of situation…" There is a consistency that unites the self across fragmented and fluid social identities.[9] However, as with post-structural understandings of selfhood, MacIntyre proposes that our sense of self is subject to the narratives and (hi)stories we construct to explain ourselves and our actions.[10] In a similar vein to Butler's (1990) contemplation of the performative self with regard to the immutability of gendered identities, he remarks that, "we enter human society… with one or more imputed characters – roles into which we have been drafted – and we have to learn what they are…" (MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 216). Alongside the texts produced in, for example, children's books, popular culture, the media and oral histories (family stories, ancient myths, heroic legends), we learn through the 'enacted narratives' that others perform and their reactions to our own presentations. Thus, these narratives are formed through both conscious reflection and exposition as well as embodied actions and responses in any given situation. Situations are made meaningful, as are the actions and intentions attached to

them, in relation to what has gone before and what is hoped for afterwards as an outcome of the situation – placing our moral decision-making within a 'narrative quest'. As with any quest, some 'at least partly determinate conception' of the final destination or purpose is necessary. However, "it is in the course of the quest and only through encountering and coping with the various particular harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which provide any quest with its episodes and incidents that the goal of the quest is understood" (MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 219). In other words, in seeking the internal goods that form a professional football club's purpose, and the purpose of those 'agents of virtue' involved, is to have some notion of those goods, formed as they are over time, but the process of moving towards them exposes the virtues necessary in achieving them.

> The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good… and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good.
>
> (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981], p. 219)

This book is part of Everton Football Club's 'narrative quest'. Not in any self-serving way. The discussion presented in the following chapters is informed by the stories narrated through specific qualitative research interviews carried out during the initial period of lockdown in the UK between March and July 2020. It is also a reflection on the 'enacted narratives' through which EitC's embodied actions have consistently tried to uphold the 'virtues' of the football club and its charitable foundation during a longer period of engaged research and historiographic study. As MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 219) observes, "Quests sometimes fail, are frustrated, abandoned or dissipated into distractions…" and at different points during the history of professional football, including Everton FC more specifically, the goods internal to the practices in which the club have engaged have seemed less relevant than the external goods or even the bad associations within the sport: racism, homophobia, gender inequality, economic dissonance.

The contribution of this text is the outcome of a particular 'episode' and one particular club's response within a 'narrative quest' towards the common good for which sport has been traditionally held responsible. As noted above, that common good has arguably been left wanting when it comes to engaging with, exploring the sociological reasons for and effectively enacting challenges to the more 'vicious' (as defined in opposition to the 'virtuous') aspects of the sport. Consequently, in seeking 'narrative unity', we must also acknowledge the social and historical contexts that have guided, and continue to guide, the pursuit of the goods internal to the social practice that defines a professional football club's existence. MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 221) writes that, "the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from

which I derive my identity." Hence, this is the reason for the importance of the foregoing outline of football's history in terms of community development and social responsibility. MacIntyre's human agency approach to the pursuit of that which is 'good' acknowledges the structures impacting upon the intended actions taken in doing so. We are all historically located and each and every one of us could say how, "[I] inherit from the past my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations" (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981], p. 220). The traditions that locate us within our contemporary culture provide individuals with their 'moral starting point' that gives each and everyone their own 'moral particularity'. Everton Football Club, and the actors of which it is and has been comprised, is bound to its own history and that of the traditions associated with professional football as it has developed since the mid-19th century. That moral narrative can be questionable in relation to the protection of football's common goods. However, MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 221) suggests, "the fact that the self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities such as those of the family, the neighbourhood, the city and the tribe does not entail that the self has to accept the moral *limitations* of the particularity of those forms of community." The search for the good is in 'moving forward from such particularity', though we cannot and should not obliterate or leave behind the morality associated with those traditions through which we are formed. Whilst we are not responsible for 'the sins of our forefathers', the social context in which we operate as a consequence of historical actions places us in a relative position to what our intended actions mean and can achieve for any notion of common good. MacIntyre's argument is that the moral intentions that seek internal goods are driven by virtues that will inevitably lead to achieving those goods. It is how such goods are continually sought, and the explanations for such intentions, that is crucial to understanding the moral grounds for any social practice. As Lutz (2012, p. 128) points out, "A living tradition, for MacIntyre, is the property of a community engaged in practices that continues to seek new and better ways to pursue the goods internal to those practices."

> Moral action, free human action, involves decisions to do things in pursuit of goals, and it involves the understanding of the implications of one's actions for the whole variety of goals that human agents seek. In this sense, 'To act morally is to know how to act.' Morality is not a 'knowing that' but a 'knowing how'. If human action is a 'knowing how,' then ethics must also consider how one learns 'how'. Like other forms of 'knowing how,' MacIntyre finds that one learns how to act morally within a community whose language and shared standards shape our judgment.
>
> (Lutz, 2021, online)

Fundamentally, the argument is that through knowing how to act in pursuit of excellence and achieve self-fulfilment is to benefit from internalised

virtues, not through external reward or incentive (though these may be also present). So, doing the right thing is actually about being good. Being good is not about values but 'practical wisdom' and the conditions that enable the accumulation and expression thereof. Rather than abstractly located in philosophical discourse, we can argue that virtue is located historically and sociologically in the football club (or football industry more widely) and exposed through the embodied actions and decision-making of the incumbent CEO and the community of actors whose agency affects change and whose everyday lives benefit from *eudaimonic* exposure.[11]

This is not to claim that Everton FC (or any other professional football club) is an agent of virtue but to suggest that the MacIntyrean definition of the 'practice of football' would lead them to operate in a way that Everton FC aspired to do during the pandemic; operations undertaken by the club and its community arm that were built upon values intrinsic to the organisation and embodied by its staff and their relationships with different communities over a number of years as part of their 'narrative quest'. It also recognises that virtues guide an ongoing process of achieving what is good and faces challenges within a football 'tradition' that has regularly had to adapt as a consequence of external threats, whether it be 'hooliganism', institutionalised racism or a European Super League, some the inevitable consequence of internal socio-economic influences, others external to the 'practice' of football.

Very briefly then, to move beyond the instrumental, management focused analyses of football clubs' community engagement to a more (micro)sociological determined understanding of the meanings and motivations attached to such work as well as the various ways in which the notion of 'community' is operationalised by a football club, has been to examine the response at a particular moment in time that social interaction was being tested and the future of football as a social practice faced unforeseen challenges.

In some ways, this study may prove to be premature because, "…the unity of a virtue in someone's [or some entity's] life is intelligible only as a characteristic of a unitary life, a life that can be conceived and evaluated as a whole" (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981], p. 205). However, if sociology continues to serve a purpose and intellectual engagement with our terms of existence remains part of an interpretive portfolio of resources for reflecting upon our levels of consistency in response to the challenges facing society, then this interim report will at least provide a baseline from which others may benefit.

## Notes

1 See Corbett et al. (2019), Lucas and Hanson (2019), Stone (2018a), Stone and Hough (2020).

2 Towards the end of the writing period of this book, Everton FC has been found guilty of being in breach of the Premier League's Profit and Sustainability Regulations, opening up the question of how responsible they have been. Whilst it is impossible to ignore such questions, especially in light of the conceptual tools

associated with virtues that form the basis of the work presented, the recency of this situation was not a focus of the research.

3 Coalter (2007) distinguishes between traditional sport development models which had the aim of developing the sport for its own sake, sport-plus development which attached to the development of sport for its own sake other explicit social outcomes from which participants could benefit and plus-sport which focuses more fundamentally on social welfare using sport as a 'hook' to attract appropriately targeted populations.

4 There have been questions raised about the integrity and veracity of the Premier League's commitment to this agreement (Conn, 2011; Stone 2018b). The broadcast rights for the period 2019–2022 were sold for £4.8 billion which aggregates out to approximately £1.6 billion per year. Donations made by the Premier League to the Premier League Charitable Fund (which has taken over much of the responsibility from the Football Foundation with regards to funding community projects) in 2020 equate to £30.4 million (Premier League, 2020a). Donations made by the Premier League to the Football Foundation itself equate to £15.4 million (Football Foundation, 2020). These donations amount to less than 3% of the total annual income aggregated over the duration of the equivalent broadcasting rights period.

5 Social exclusion linked to disability, ethnicity and to some extents gender was being addressed in football, as it was in other areas of society. However, economic inequalities were increasingly becoming linked to changing discourses of social exclusion (see Levitas, 2005; Porter, 2019).

6 Positive Futures was a sports-based social inclusion programme primarily aimed at reconnecting marginalised young people with local services and opportunities.

7 Playing football as a practice would mean more than simply kicking a ball. More than even just kicking a ball excellently. It would mean learning tactical and positional skills necessary to excel at the sport. MacIntyre distinguishes between the skills needed to become competent at an activity and the practices from which such skills are to benefit. He suggests, for example, that bricklaying is a skill to which one might aspire to be proficient but excellence can only be understood within the broader practice of architecture. Some of his examples have proved controversial, especially his suggestion that teaching is a skill that serves wider practices related to the subject matter: "Teaching itself is not a practice, but a set of skills and habits put to the service of a variety of practices. The teacher should think of her or himself as a mathematician, a reader of poetry, an historian or whatever, engaged in communicating craft and knowledge to apprentices… All teaching is for the sake of something else and so teaching does not have its own goods." (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2002, p. 5).

8 Dunning (1999, p. 126) suggests that, "fans are, individually, the least powerful person in the football figuration," but as Cleland et al. (2018, p. 183) highlight, "they are deeply part of the effective and storied dimensions of a football club's social world." The recent fan-led review goes some way to redressing the balance.

9 'Unity of life' is problematic for MacIntyre, whose sociological philosophy battles against positivist, 'bureaucratised' and 'emotivist' versions of moral activity that post-enlightenment modernity had promoted. He notes that, "…modernity partitions each human life into a variety of segments, each with its own norms and modes of behaviour. So work is divided from leisure, private life from public, the corporate from the personal…" (2007 [1981], p. 204). The consequence of all these separations is that we are taught to think and feel in terms of the distinctiveness of each rather than the unity of the individuals' lives that are formed and developed across different practices and social settings.

10 MacIntyre (2007 [1981], pp. 205–219) goes to some length in explaining his understanding of the 'narrative self' due its unfamiliarity at the time of his original thesis and due to the 'behaviourism' at which his critique is targeted.
11 Western morality is grounded in Greek philosophy but owes much of its contemporary meaning to religious teaching leading to embedded cultural mores that have endured increasing secularisation. In Aristotelian terms, the virtues are what need to be present within us in order to achieve what it is to be human; that which he defined as *eudamonia*. In order to flourish, to excel, is to act in accordance with certain virtues. Consistency in acting in such ways defines what it is to be a good person – in terms of achieving your end goal successfully and to the benefit of all (as much as that is possible).

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Chapter 2

# Sport, COVID-19 and Lockdown

## How the Football Industry Reacted to the Pandemic

### Introduction

This chapter provides a timeline following the popular narratives of debates concerning professional football during the COVID-19 pandemic as they emerged from the perspective of the Government and Health Authorities, football's governing bodies, representatives of the clubs themselves, players, journalists and fans. It provides the socio-political backdrop against which Everton FC's Blue Family campaign emerged – details of which are provided in the final sections of this chapter. It recounts a period in which football became a very apparent political tool for driving particular narratives and obscuring others. This began with early calls from senior Government officials for playing staff to take pay cuts due to their perceived wealth in order to support the retention of less well-paid staff whose salaries clubs shorn of their income may not be able to meet. As the cost to the football industry became clearer, this seemingly socialist agenda was submerged beneath the emerging narrative that resuming professional football would aid the country's morale. These debates can be placed within classic industrial relations terms as economics, social good, the health of the nation and blurred moralities fight for supremacy and the dominant discourse arguably serves the controlling elite more than the working men and women at the (relatively) lower end of the economy (the minority of extremely well remunerated footballers plying their trade in the Premier League notwithstanding).

The first half of this chapter is focused on a grounded thematic content analysis of two sources: Guardian Sport (online) and BBC Sport (online). The timespan is from Monday 9 March 2020, when the first impact of the coronavirus pandemic on football is mentioned within these sources, until Sunday 21 June 2020, which marks the end of the week when professional football in England returned following 100 days of suspension as a consequence of precautions relating to the pandemic. Appendix 1 shows in detail the stories that were dominating the football media in chronological order. They can be categorised into the following broad themes:

1 Notifications of and effects on players, managers and club staff contracting the virus

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2 Political intervention (or lack thereof) – from politicians and governing bodies
3 Football clubs and community support/fan engagement
4 Precautions taken to protect the players – i.e. suspension/cancellation of matches and leagues
5 Self-interest of football(ers) – clubs furlough staff, players in breach of lockdown
6 Reaction of footballers – self-concern for health, charity work/donations
7 Economic impact of the pandemic – wage cuts, furlough, support package, TV rights
8 Project Restart – structural changes to rules, health concerns

Figure 2.1 illustrates the changing attention by the media over the time span described above. Unsurprisingly, the first couple of weeks are dominated by stories relating to the postponement of matches and leagues in

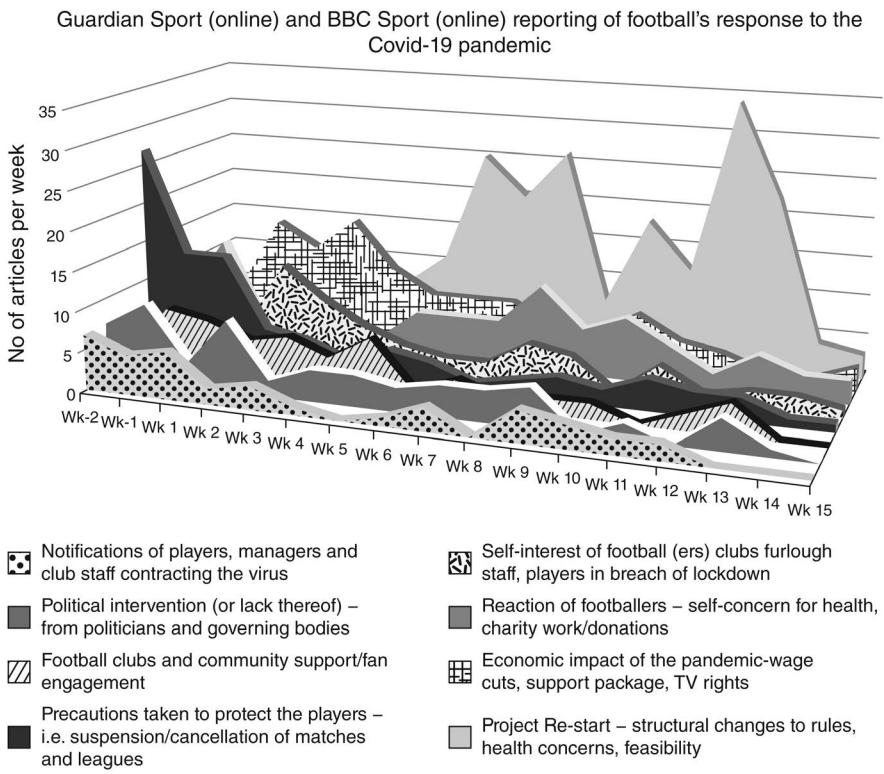


*Figure 2.1* The Guardian and BBC Sport (online) reporting of football's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

the UK and throughout the world as the pandemic spreads quickly. This is accompanied by details of players contracting the virus and the reaction of the football authorities. An initial interest in the welfare of players and the effects of contracting the virus is soon replaced by debates about the long-term economic consequences of suspending leagues indefinitely. There is an underlying counternarrative that persists until Week 5 that focuses on what football clubs are doing in support of their local communities and by way of engaging fans who find themselves with little to fill their increased spare time (which is the topic of Chapter 6 of this book). The peak associated with the self-interest of football in Week 2 of lockdown is due to debates around football clubs making use of the Government's furlough scheme (discussed in more detail in the next section). From Week 6 onwards, the overwhelming focus is the possibilities, challenges and risks of getting football leagues up and running again. Project Restart as it was labelled is discussed in further depth later in this chapter and became a moral and economic debate.

## The Politics of Football in a Pandemic

During the second week of lockdown, much of the debate revolved around comments from senior politicians about the responsibility of footballers and the industry more widely, initially being framed in very economically stark (and arguably prejudiced) terms:

> Given the sacrifices that many people are making, including some of my colleagues in the NHS who have made the ultimate sacrifice of going into work and have caught the disease and have sadly died, I think the first thing that Premier League footballers can do is make a contribution, take a pay cut and play their part.
>
> (10 Downing Street, 2020)

These comments from Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, during the Government's daily press conference (2 April 2020) were in response to a question asked by journalist Mike Settle from the Herald newspaper about whether it is, "moral for Premier League clubs to refuse to cut the salaries of highly paid star players while cutting the wages of non-playing staff" (10 Downing Street, 2020).

The line of questioning was likely prompted by comments from the chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) committee, Julian Knight, and Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, who were critical of Premier League football clubs making use of the Government's furlough scheme (BBC Sport, 2020a). Clubs such as Tottenham Hotspur, Newcastle United, AFC Bournemouth and Norwich City had announced at the start of the week (followed later in the week by Liverpool FC) that they would be furloughing non-playing staff.

Knight reportedly said that, "It sticks in the throat… This exposes the crazy economics in English football and the moral vacuum at its centre" (BBC Sport, 2020a).

This was something that football businesses were entitled to do in a similar way to other much larger highly profitable entities in the retail, legal, banking and finance sectors in which many support staff were also furloughed despite highly paid staff continuing to work and profits unlikely to be dramatically affected (Butcher, 2020; O'Dwyer, 2020; Tingle, 2020). Such comparisons were highlighted by sport journalists:

> British Airways' owner, International Airlines Group, is costing the government many, many millions, having furloughed 30,000 staff. IAG last year had a £23bn turnover, made a £2bn post-tax profit and paid shareholders £251m in dividends… No government minister scorned this vast corporation for using the scheme, or complained at so much UK government money being advanced to pay its staff.
>
> (Conn, 2020a)

For Barbara Ellen (2020) writing in the Guardian it, "reek[ed] of deep-rooted class prejudice." She suggested that Hancock was exploiting an archaic resentment towards players, morally shaming them into action to, "deflect attention from the government's own failings." This was reinforced by (former) professional football players such as Andros Townsend, Gary Neville, Gary Lineker and Wayne Rooney (PA Media, 2020a; 2020b). Ellen's (2020) argument was that, "footballers tend to come from poorer backgrounds, often extremely poor in the case of overseas players… [and] as much as the players are idolised, they also find themselves routinely attacked for being greedy, arrogant and 'jumped up'." The levels of remuneration for elite-level football players are enormous but are fundamentally linked to free market economics favoured by the incumbent Government and that of those who were in power when the Premier League was introduced in 1992. The inflated salaries are the result of increased hypercommodification and the consequent interest in football as a major form of mass entertainment. The players themselves have become part of celebrity culture, itself the product of and desire for increased individualisation, consumption as a defining feature of social existence and widened exposure through various forms of mass media (Marshall, 2014; Turner, 2014). As a result, they are venerated as part of a multi-billion pound entertainment industry and held to account for having the audacity to accept such exorbitant fiscal rewards. This is interpreted by fans in various ways from light-hearted (yet still meaningful) quips such as questioning how much a player has earned for just missing a penalty (Ellen, 2020) to more active forms of protest such as the Against Modern Football movement (Hill et al., 2018; Webber, 2017). However, for those representing the political elite, it seems that the very public discussions of football finance

(that seem to have become an essential part of the contemporary football narrative) provide a legitimate critique of players' moral obligations that are rooted in class distinctions between new money and inherited status as well as perceptions informed by the Protestant work ethic about legitimate demonstrations of worthiness.

The affective power of the system of celebrity (Marshall, 2014) allowed politicians to frame professional footballers as 'undeserving rich' (Korom, 2023; Prasad et al., 2009; Rowlingson & Connor, 2011). Although such labels are more usually associated with 'inherited wealth' (Korom, 2023; Sussman et al., 2014), the way that elite-level footballers are constructed as 'larger than life' in a similar way to the production of film celebrities (Marshall, 2014) means that for many people, there is a lack of 'shared identity' (Korom, 2023) in moderating judgements of deservingness. That the public personae of footballers are also constructed as 'everyday heroes' more akin to the production of television celebrities (Marshall, 2014) made them even more culpable. Consequently, Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden (2020a), was able to suggest that: "Leaving the public purse to pick up the cost of furloughing low-paid workers, whilst players earn millions and billionaire owners go untouched, is something I know the public will rightly take a very dim view of." Footballers, rather than IAG shareholders (or for that matter members of the Conservative party that formed the Government at the time), provided a generalisable symbol of 'excess' that simultaneously relied on their familiarity, their distance and the tension between artifice and authenticity (see Marshall's (2014) analysis of film, television and music celebrity) in relation to discursive understandings of football amongst the public.

The fourth party in this debate is of course the fan base who, judging by evidence garnered from Everton fan website, ToffeeWeb (2020a), and a Government poll (Ibbetson, 2020; Rumsby, 2020) at the time, were in agreement with the Government's perspective. An analysis of the comments provided by readers of the site about the situation reveals that the vast majority viewed football players as overpaid, entitled and too slow to react in committing financial support for the benefit of others. This is though reflective of a long-standing view amongst football fans and the wider public that professional football players are overpaid. Such a view does not though in general reduce the popularity of the sport amongst spectators – it just adds an extra layer of discourse to the multifaceted narrative sustaining football culture beyond the matches themselves. Of the 352 comments in the thread, 65% fundamentally agreed with the stance of the politicians, though 10% provided more nuanced commentary, focusing on the need for players to make the decision due to the contractual obligations and precedents that enforced wage cuts or deferrals might set (25% of the comments in the thread were neutral or not relevant to this discussion). Some of these debates are discussed further in Chapter 6 through the analysis of a more rigorously designed survey of Everton supporters but a poll carried out by ToffeeWeb (2020b) highlights

the overall attitude at the time. In response to the question, 'As the coronavirus pandemic threatens the season and severe financial implications, should Everton players take a voluntary pay cut?' 89% of the 3,967 votes cast answered, 'Yes'.

The football authorities understandably defended their key stakeholders. The chief executive of the Premier League, Richard Masters, wrote to Julian Night, chair of the DCMS parliamentary select committee to defend the right of Premier League clubs to furlough staff. He warned of a 'very real threat' that some top-flight sides could go bust because of the coronavirus crisis and claimed that if the 2019–2020 season was to be abandoned the potential losses would exceed £1bn (MacInnes & Steinberg, 2020). FA chairman, Greg Clarke, suggested clubs and leagues could fold further down the pyramid and sought solidarity across the football industry:

> We face the danger of losing clubs and leagues as finances collapse. Many communities could lose the clubs at their heart with little chance of resurrection. In the face of this unprecedented adversity, all the stakeholders within the game from players, fans, clubs, owners and administrators need to step up and share the pain to keep the game alive.
>
> (cited by MacInnes & Steinberg, 2020)

At the time of writing, four years on from the initial lockdown period, such concerns do not seem to have been justified and the football industry's recovery in the UK has led to record amounts of spending and attendances at stadia as high as they were prior to the health crisis. However, part of the reason for producing this text is to document the dramatic concerns that were being expressed at the time.

Responding to such calls for unity, the Premier League advanced £125m to the EFL and National League and recommended its member clubs cut player wages by 30% – to which all 20 Premier League clubs agreed. The players, seemingly identified by politicians as the chief villains at the time for not digging in their pockets in support of less well-paid staff within the companies for which they worked, were defended by the Players' Football Association (PFA) and, in the words of chief sports writer for BBC Sport, "[went] on the offensive against not only their own clubs, but also their critics, including even the government" (Roan & Stone, 2020). The PFA pointed out that such a pay cut would equate to a loss to the UK Government of more than £200 million in taxes.

For the likes of Ben Mee (Club Captain of Burnley FC at the time) and Danny Rose (on loan at Newcastle United at the time), the criticism of footballers ignored the unpublicised philanthropy and charitable engagements undertaken by players; it was seen as unwarranted public shaming by ill-informed protagonists who were keen to distract attention from their own questionable moralities. Furthermore, it had the potential to hinder discussions and

processes already underway amongst playing staff across the leagues. Ben Mee wrote that:

> The criticism of footballers from those in the media and government has been unhelpful, to say the least. Bad press comes with the territory of being in a high-profile profession – these things make for easier headlines than the constant community and charitable work we do all over the globe. But as we have worked hard to do our part, those headlines have created a distraction, needlessly trying to make villains out of footballers, rather than focusing on praising the great work of those key workers who are putting themselves at risk to help others. They are the ones grafting to keep this country on its feet when it needs it most. We are just doing our part to support them.
>
> (Mee, 2020)

This is a respected professional, who would certainly be well remunerated but was no superstar – a celebrity figure within Burnley Football Club's support base (and possibly that of other clubs for which he has plied his trade) who was in some ways attempting to challenge the 'undeserving' epithet by realigning footballers with the public through a shared identity that was concerned about those working on the frontline – the Health Secretary's NHS colleagues making the ultimate sacrifice in Matt Hancock's words. Senior professional Danny Rose similarly spoke up on behalf of his playing colleagues on BBC Five Live:

> We sort of feel that our backs are against the wall. Conversations were being had before people outside of football were commenting… I've been on the phone to Jordan Henderson [Club captain of Liverpool FC at the time] and he's working so hard to come up with something… It was just not needed for people who are not involved in football to tell footballers what they should do with their money. I found that so bizarre.
>
> (Fletcher & Jenas, 2020)

Former professional player, Dean Ashton, provided a more reasoned perspective saying he would, "hate to think Matt Hancock, the health secretary, was trying to deflect the blame when he said that footballers should play their part. I think he was just answering a question." However, having earned 'crazy money', as he puts it, and been the subject of media attention himself, he was surprised by the tardiness in responding to the situation, by players themselves, their clubs and their representative bodies. He suggests that they should have seen the accusations of greed coming but as highlighted in Chapter 4 of this book, playing staff were fearful and confused just like everyone else. Part of the problem is, "…that players generally follow the crowd. There's a team mentality: if we do it, we all have to do it. Players tend not

to speak out individually…" and thus rely on the PFA in matters concerning Industrial Relations (Ashton, 2020).

There was a three-way standoff between the Government, the football authorities and the workers. The Premier League wanting to maintain the 'friendly' relationship with the Government (see Chapter 1) made recommendations in line with the political narrative being created. Backed by the PFA, players defended their position in not wanting to agree a unilateral pay cut – though powerful voices within the media in the form of ex-players turned pundits accused PFA Chief Executive, Gordon Taylor, of being 'out of touch' and 'too slow to react' (Stone, 2020). Taylor had been the subject of controversy for several years, his leadership having been challenged two years earlier with then PFA Chairman, Ben Purkiss, calling for an independent review of the organisation – which was widely supported by (former) PFA members (Conn, 2018; Wilson, 2018).

As we approached the third week of lockdown and discussions between the Premier League and its member clubs failed to reach an agreement about wage cuts, political figures looked to broaden their assault through drawing attention to the lack of leadership and coordination from the key agencies within the sport. Oliver Dowden tweeted that he was, "Concerned about the turn football talks have taken tonight. People do not want to see infighting in our national sport at a time of crisis." (Dowden, 2020b). This coincided with the launch of the #PlayersTogether initiative (Henderson, 2020), a fund to which players from all Premier League clubs volunteered contributions to be distributed by NHS Charities Together (NHSCT) to where they are needed most. Acknowledging that players at the elite level had been collectively organising an appropriate way of financially contributing meant adjusting the political deflection shields. As discussed in Chapter 6 of this book, football fans were generally supportive of their clubs and playing staff, being more scornful of the football authorities and the Government itself. Perhaps recognising this, Dowden tried to demonstrate both compassion and invoke a connection with the people and the nation. The 'infighting' referred to the PFA disputing the Premier League's recommendation for clubs to cut player wages by 30%.

The Conservative Government of the time were not renowned for collective bargaining – a result of the neoliberal programme of reform widely adopted across Europe over the past four decades and introduced in the UK with the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 (Waddington, 2019; Waddington et al., 2019). Yet, as Dobbins et al. (2023, p. 120) pointed out, the state's furlough scheme represents a relatively unique, for the UK, tripartite approach to negotiating a collective intervention:

> … after 40 years of neoliberalism, collectivist social institutions have severely atrophied: trade unions have declined, while public services and the welfare state have been eroded by austerity policies imposed by

> Conservative governments… The UK also has limited institutional history of national-level tripartite bargaining… Despite these institutional weaknesses, in a national crisis, it was noteworthy that the then UK chancellor of the exchequer, Rishi Sunak, held discussions about COVID-19 with unions and employer groups, resulting in a new Job Retention Scheme… The COVID-19 crisis compelled the UK's populist right-of-centre conservative government to belatedly introduce collective interventions (to protect jobs and incomes) not normally associated with the party.

What this highlights, as much as anything, in terms of football is that despite being extremely well paid (at the top end of the sport) and benefiting (in many cases) from privileged celebrity status, professional footballers are relatively powerless (as a collective) within the football industry – though not as a self-organising group of professional colleagues. In his analysis of the Professional Footballers' Association, Walters (2004) describes membership of the PFA as a 'social norm' within the football industry – 'players generally follow the crowd', as Dean Ashton puts it. He highlights how membership in the players' 'union' remained consistent or increased during the 1980s and 1990s when overall trade union membership and influence was on the decline. He attributes this mainly to the extensive range of services that the PFA offers its members. It would seem that the precarity of football players' careers is what drives membership through the extent of the PFA's educational activity and support for players when their relatively short playing careers are over, rather than the need for collective bargaining.

## Project Restart

By Week 6 of lockdown, attention moved to getting football restarted. It was initially announced on 13 March 2020 that football across England, Scotland and Wales would be suspended until at least 3 April 2020. A further joint statement on 19 March from the Premier League, English Football Leagues and FA, the Professional Footballers' Association and League Managers Association stated that football would not resume earlier than 30 April 2020 (Conn, 2020b). A commitment to completing the remaining fixtures of the league was regularly restated but only, "when it was safe and appropriate to do so" (Premier League, 2020a; 2020b).

The return of regular football following its suspension due to lockdown protocols became known as 'Project Restart'. The announcement that fixtures were being initially planned to resume on 8 June 2020 sparked a debate that encompassed the morality of such plans when deaths connected to COVID-19 were still averaging over 1,000 per day in the UK (Mathieu et al., 2020) and frontline staff from the health professions and other arguably more necessary industries were unable to receive the appropriate infrastructural support to protect and test staff. There was a strong feeling that

economic motives were dominating the push to complete the suspended league seasons at the elite level. Whilst public discourse revolved around these moralities, the political framing of Project Restart was in terms of what the return of football and sport more widely would do for the country's collective morale. Politicians took it in turns to take credit for helping the nation get back on its feet through football's return, arguably in the absence of strategic plans for more crucial services and a collective lack of personal responsibility within Whitehall itself. On 27 April (Wk 6) Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, speaking at a parliamentary questions session for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said: "I personally have been in talks with the Premier League with a view to getting football up and running as soon as possible in order to support the whole football community." (Roan & Scott, 2020). The political motivations for doing so and how Project Restart reflected the 'whole football community' are best summed up by Guardian journalist, Jonathan Liew, who penned the following:

> An hour before kick-off, speaking at the government's daily coronavirus briefing from Downing Street, the culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, was eager to associate himself with what he described as this "hugely symbolic moment" in the country's return to normality… trumpeting its resumption as "a boost for our football-loving nation".
>
> And yet, for me and so many others in our "football-loving nation", Wednesday night usually has a subtly different connotation. It's five-a-side night. Of all the small graces we have been denied over the last few months, five-a-side is probably the one I miss most. It's sport as ritual, from the inevitable late dash through rush-hour traffic to the post-match debrief over pints and breaded chicken strips. But as the Premier League rumbles back into gear and pundits breathlessly declare that "football is back", our local five-a-side pitch – like most of this country's grassroots sporting apparatus – currently lies dormant, and will do so until July at the very earliest.
>
> The stark juxtaposition of public sport facilities lying empty while one of the world's richest sporting leagues beats a path to restart offers some insight into how the government sees sport…
>
> Despite being perfectly willing to use football to score cheap political points early in the pandemic … the government has nevertheless pushed for the Premier League to resume as soon as possible. Why? Perhaps Dowden's words offered a clue. "All but five countries," would be airing Wednesday night's games, he beamed, "underlining football's global reach and the soft power of UK sport." And in this quietly revealing statement we glimpsed how the government really conceives of sport: not as a barometer of the

> nation's physical or mental health, not as a genuine public good, but first and foremost as an asset, a source of soft power, a luxury good to be flaunted.
>
> (Liew, 2020)

Once again, the motives for restarting football were being questioned and the distinctions between football at the elite level and that of the grassroots game were being highlighted.

Within the football industry, there were health concerns from players, but there was also a politico-economic dimension as contracts between the leagues and the broadcasters could have left clubs repaying millions of pounds. The harshness of this, in the face of the moral concerns explained above, was tempered by a narrative around sporting integrity as debates within the football fanbase and amongst other key stakeholders became concerned with how promotion and relegation would be resolved – especially as there would be economic consequences for those clubs involved. In other words, from a sporting perspective, it would be unethical not to complete the remaining fixtures.

> The emerging resolve to finish the season is not only due to it being the best option for 'sporting integrity' and morale, but also to resolve the blackout being suffered by broadcasters who may need to recoup money lost from subscribers. In discussions with Sky and BT Sport, the leagues have stressed the intention to somehow give the broadcasters the remaining matches to show, give people some live sport to watch, and also not leave a major financial problem to be resolved.
>
> (Conn, 2020b)

The focus on Project Restart coincides with (Wks 8–10) profile pieces concerning the welfare of players and the health protocols that were being put in place. Sergio Aguero, Glenn Murray, Raheem Sterling and Troy Deeney (respectively playing for Manchester City, Brighton & Hove Albion, Manchester City and Watford at the time) were amongst a number of players that spoke out (BBC Sport, 2020b; 2020c; Sterling 2020). There were more general concerns about the medical protocols that were explained at this point in proceedings in a conference call between club captains, league officials and the deputy chief medical officer, Jonathan van Tam. Of particular concern was testing accuracy and the possibility of infected players suffering long-term damage (Unwin, 2020). Troy Deeney was particularly outspoken and actively challenged the resumption of football by refusing to return to training in light of the evidence showing increased vulnerability amongst black and Asian communities and at the time a lack of understanding as to why. Furthermore, he also had concerns about the impact of the virus on vulnerable family members should he bring it home as a consequence of greater social contact through returning to work.

At the meeting, Deeney reportedly questioned whether there was any extra screening for black, Asian and mixed ethnicities as they are four times more likely to get the illness and twice as likely to have long-lasting illnesses, noting that, "I can't get a haircut until mid-July but I can go and get in a box with 19 people and go and jump for a header." Crucially, nobody could answer his questions, "not because they didn't want to, just because they don't know the information." (BBC Sport, 2020c). The director of player welfare at the PFA, Michael Bennett responded by saying, "I'm not sure how significant [the risk] is in that particular area… [but] I want to put on record that from a PFA welfare point of view the health and safety of players has to come first before anything else." (BBC Sport, 2020c) Once more, it is questionable as to whether the PFA and the players were well enough informed to make fully considered decisions at that time, demonstrating where power lay within the decision-making process.

The initial Premier League training protocols involved disinfecting corner-flags, balls, cones, goalposts and even playing surfaces after each session, twice-weekly testing and a daily pre-training questionnaire and temperature check (Roan, 2020). Consequently, on the 18 May 2020 (Wk 9), Premier League clubs voted unanimously to restart training in small groups as part of Project Restart – Phase One. The first round of testing returned six positive tests for coronavirus from a total of 748 players and staff across 19 clubs. Players and staff who tested positive were required to self-isolate for seven days. Table 2.1 shows the results from the first 10 rounds of testing (Premier League, 2020c).

The interest in Project Restart peaks, unsurprisingly, in Weeks 12–13 of the initial lockdown period as the Premier League, its member clubs, the broadcasters and fans prepare for the first matches of the 2019/2020 season's resumption to take place on 17 June 2020 (Wk 13). A YouGov poll carried out two weeks prior to this recorded that 48% of British adults surveyed thought it was too soon to resume (YouGov, 2020).

*Table 2.1* Results of COVID-19 tests (rounds 1–10)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Round 1 | 17–18 May | 748 tested, with six testing positives from three clubs. |
| Round 2 | 19–22 May | 996 tested, with two testing positives from two clubs. |
| Round 3 | 25–26 May | 1,008 tested, with four testing positives from two clubs. |
| Round 4 | 28–29 May | 1,130 tested, with zero testing positive. |
| Round 5 | 1–2 June | 1,197 tested, with one testing positive. |
| Round 6 | 4–5 June | 1,195 tested, with zero testing positive. |
| Round 7 | 8–9 June | 1,213 tested, with one testing positive. |
| Round 8 | 11–12 June | 1,200 tested, with two testing positives from two clubs. |
| Round 9 | 15–16 June | 1,541 tested, with one testing positive. |
| Round 10 | 17–21 June | 1,829 tested, with one testing positive. |

## The Blue Family Campaign

Everton FC's response to the pandemic was immediate and clearly defined, though its implementation was not without challenges. This section briefly explains the structure of the programme that was initiated as a response to the pandemic and the consequent implications of lockdown. It is informed by interviews with frontline staff who were involved in its development, management and application. Deeper analysis of the challenges faced by staff during this period is provided in Chapter 4.

Within 24 hours of the football club going into lockdown on the 13 March 2020, discussions at the level of senior management had taken place around the challenges facing the club's community and EitC participants, many of whom were on programmes with a very specific aim of combatting social isolation prior to the conditions enforced upon them by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was decided straight away that the club needed to develop a campaign that was "accessible for everybody" with the message that "Everton Football Club will be there to help." The issues that people in the community would likely be facing were discussed across the various EitC teams and within a week the Blue Family Campaign was launched on the 19 March 2020, before even the formal national lockdown had started. It was designed as, "a coordinated outreach and engagement campaign to maintain contact with fans and provide vital support and assistance to some of the most vulnerable, socially isolated and at-risk members of the community in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic" (Internal Document). Following the temporary closure of all Everton FC's workspaces, suspension of football fixtures and postponement of their community programme delivery, the initial aim was to maintain and extend the reach of the football club and the charity. This started even before the official launch with welfare calls to those identified by the club and EitC as being at risk – elderly members on the fan database and highly vulnerable EitC participants. It soon became clear that the provision needed further development with people they were contacting saying such things as, "I'm all right and I'm not too worried about this but you might want to speak to so-and-so down the road because I'm worried about them" (Staff interview). As the campaign took shape, it centred on, 1) a referral process which could be accessed by anyone (Blue Family Universal) and, 2) a more tailored scheme for families and individuals already supported in some way by EitC (Blue Family Targeted). The former was an innovative approach to a need that was identified during unique and unprecedented circumstances. Consequently, it was subject to difficulties as the campaign attempted to meet unprepared for demand. The latter was an informed adaptation of existing community engagement work in recognition of ongoing requirements of programme participants that could not be met through the usual mechanisms due to social distancing requirements (this will be explored further in Chapters 4 and 5).

Between 20 March 2020 and 20 March 2021, a total of 3,600 referrals were received. During this period, the campaign provided support for more than 26,450 vulnerable and at-risk families and individuals across Liverpool through

- Making more than 24,200 check-in and welfare phone calls made by staff, players and Club Ambassadors
- Delivering more than 14,050 emergency food parcels and food vouchers
- Providing support for more than 2,300 families with utilities, mobile phone credit and essential household items
- Delivering COVID-19 testing kits to more than 400 households across Liverpool City Region.

These are significant numbers when considering that a football club and its community trust have no formal connection with or require staff to have any experience of the welfare services of the state that one would expect to be the primary source for such provision.

***Blue Family Universal***

The Club provided £50,000 to support the launch of the campaign and its initial outreach activities which involved EitC staff contacting fans and members of the community in greatest need to deliver tailored and focused support, assistance and guidance, including:

- Essential food parcels distribution, including breakfast packs for young children
- Financial assistance for prescription purchases and delivery
- Mobile phone credit for those living alone and with limited support networks
- Support with gas and/or electricity vouchers for those facing increased fuel bills
- Mental health support and advice
- A referral service for access to Everton in the Community's support provision
- Calls from the Everton Fan Centre to thousands of fans to maintain contact and provide a friendly voice to talk to, prioritising the elderly and isolated
- Increased communication through the Club's email, social media and web platforms to share important public information and deliver engaging content for those in isolation
- Exercise and mindfulness videos provided by trained staff from the Club and Everton in the Community

Some of these processes had begun already as elderly and vulnerable fans known to Everton FC were contacted by players and other representatives of the club. The other services were provided through a referral service whereby

those in need of support could self-refer or would be referred by a neighbour, family member or other concerned individual.[1] In essence, the Blue Family support at the outset focused on food, financial assistance (fuel/phone credit), general welfare and mental health. Whilst the very practical solutions of providing food packages and fuel or phone top-up vouchers were logistically challenging but manageable, the offer for mental health support was overreaching the capacity of the club at the time. One member of staff received three calls in a row where the caller expressed wanting to take their own life. As someone involved with the initial phase explained,

> You don't know what you're getting until you speak to the person – you don't get a lot of information prior to the call. A question like, 'How are you?' opens up a whole can of worms but how else do you start a call?
>
> (Staff interview)

The effects of this on staff members will be explored in more depth in Chapter 4.

In its initial phase, referrals were being managed by a team of four people whose backgrounds and roles within Everton FC or EitC ranged from hospitality and reception/PA duties to education and volunteer management. They were not specialists in welfare support and were learning on the job about Universal Credit and other aspects of the UK benefits system. What started as general welfare calls to identified vulnerable people turned into welfare management. The four-person team split into two, half managing general welfare and the other two employees dealing with between 10 and 20 referrals each day requesting support with food/fuel or mental health issues. This rose to as many as 80 referrals per day – at which point the support team had increased in number to six.

To begin with requests for food resulted in existing volunteers and staff from EitC doing a £20 food shop that they delivered to the address of those referred. As the scheme expanded, this became logistically unfeasible. It also raised ethical questions for those involved. The logistics were managed by signing up as a customer to Morrisons and ordering food box deliveries – though this led to security issues as the supermarket queried numerous orders in a day from the same account being sent to multiple addresses. This was resolved by a formal partnership between Morrisons and Everton FC to supply healthy food boxes. The ethical dilemma concerned the legitimacy of callers' needs and the number of times the same request should be accommodated.

Audit trails were set up, in-house training developed around the sensibilities of their processes and the consistency of responses. What could be provided remained subjective but the extent of support was based on existing food bank models. Support was offered on the basis of a maximum of four requests and geographically restricted to Merseyside with the focus being on Liverpool postcodes L4 and L5 and Bootle (though see Figure 2.2

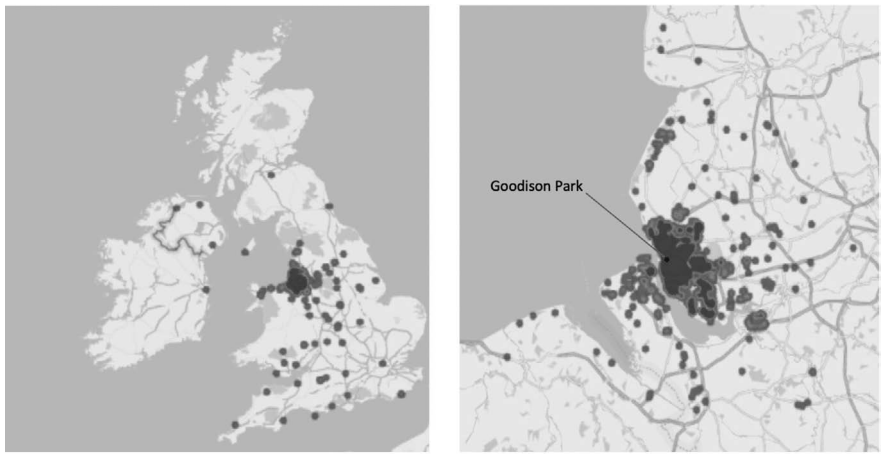


*Figure 2.2* Heat maps showing location of Blue Family referrals received.
Source: Everton FC internal document.

for a full geographical distribution of referrals received in the first full year of the campaign) – an area corresponding to within two miles of Goodison Park where Everton FC are based and the location of some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country (see Chapter 5 for more information). The difficulty for those staff, untrained and inexperienced in such 'means-testing', was knowing what questions to ask and then interpreting the information they were getting: "We struggled with knowing whether people are genuine or not. We'll never know." (Staff interview). Whilst they may have had experience of working with local people and a good understanding of their needs, they felt they were being trusted by fans and the club ownership, who had directly donated a considerable amount of money, to make decisions about who should benefit. Despite a subtle sense of trying to establish a distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor (Bauman, 1998), "We gathered information as best we could… always erred on the side of caution and always offered a food box – for the sake of £30," because, fundamentally, "It would've been worse to have got it wrong" (Staff interview).

### *Blue Family Targeted*

Whilst the Universal programme was open to anyone to refer or be referred, it was becoming clear through existing relationships with local people attached to various EitC programmes that a separate referral process and needs analysis was required that was able to maintain (and extend) their existing

offer to participants. Welfare calls were made to the families of as many as 1,500 young people who EitC had supported, and continued to support, during the 18 months leading up to the initial lockdown period in March 2020. Alongside the existing concerns around isolation, abuse and exploitation, a strong theme that emerged from these calls was the lack of basic requirements needed for prolonged periods of time at home. Requirements that the majority of people take for granted.

Staff began to realise that they did not realise the extent of the issues that many of the young EitC participants were facing. Through having more conversations with the parents of young people with whom they already engaged, a clearer picture emerged about their personal troubles, whether related to domestic violence or ongoing battles with life-threatening illness. The efforts that parents would go to in order to ensure that their children were well turned out for school or attendance at EitC programmes whilst they themselves had not left the house or eaten for a week prior to lockdown ironically became exposed by a situation that prevented anyone from leaving the house. The simple act of showing compassion for their situation and the welfare of their children, asking them, "What do you need? How can we help?" revealed the reliance of so many on the school system (breakfast clubs and school dinners) for their only substantial meals of the day. Many households were lacking basic cooking facilities or even cutlery – often relying on nothing other than sandwiches for meals at home. Following such welfare calls, staff were approaching their managers asking to make referrals to Blue Family on their participants' behalf, requesting such items as microwave ovens alongside food deliveries and help with the electricity bills. So, the Blue Family Targeted programme was initiated with its own tailored processes as a way of diverting existing funds – with permission from programme funders, of which there are many (see note 38; also Appendix 2) – alongside the extra monies raised to maintain an appropriate service for the local community because, "Now more than ever we need to respond to the current needs of our participants and support those deemed most vulnerable." (Internal document)

The response was to pool EitC staff into one team and reallocate resource under three workstreams:

1 **Digital/Resource Development** – developing tools and resources with Club staff to educate and provide engagement platforms for existing participants as well as the general public.
2 **Blue Family Targeted Support** – provide support and mentoring for young people and their families who have been engaged/supported by EitC since September 2018.
3 **Blue Family Targeted Schools** – work closely with 60 partner schools to identify their priority families in need of support as well as sending out a universal message to all pupils of the schools about accessing help or advice.

It is important to remember that these processes were being planned and developed within the first few days and weeks following the arrival of a previously unencountered situation the future of which was unknown and provoked anxiety for people at all levels of society (as will be further explored in subsequent chapters of this publication).

The first workstream was a relatively straightforward solution that made good use of existing expertise within the IT and Marketing teams as everyone's social worlds rapidly shifted even further into the digital realm than they already were. That is not to say that challenges did not exist as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this book, but as an immediate solution to what was being faced it attempted to meet the changing needs of various stakeholders whilst also making use of existing knowledge and skills in a productive way. The second workstream emerged from the initial welfare calls made to EitC participants and their families, as explained above. The third workstream was part of a longer-term strategy, in part due to a relatively new EitC programme centred on building stronger partnerships with local schools that was being expanded at the time that COVID-19 emerged. This stream was designed to ensure that EitC could provide appropriate support as and when schools reopened and was not a focus during the research period, other than as a way of maintaining the partnerships that had begun to be developed and to ensure the offer provided through stream two was reaching prospective participants as well as existing ones.

#### *Summary – The Blue Family as Teleological Extension*

The challenges that the Blue Family campaign posed for staff are explored in Chapter 4. The wider impact of lockdown on EitC programme participants is discussed in Chapter 5. Fans' views about the Blue Family Campaign and their club's responsibilities are developed in Chapter 6. For now, this section has provided a short introduction and description of Everton Football Club's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The consequence of the pandemic was that many people found themselves in circumstances they were not used to – struggling financially and/or psychologically. The Blue Family campaign was a provision that supported different kinds of people for different reasons. For those that were not used to relying on charity or external support services, seeking such help can be uncomfortable, as feedback from people who were supported shows:

> In April and May at the beginning of the pandemic I with others joined in the community support systems. I cooked for my neighbors [sic] and did a few food parcels. As like thousands of others, my income dramatically changed, and I found myself struggling for ten days this month while my new income (benefit) was being sorted. A friend's daughter nominated me

> for support and within 24 hours I had received a lovely call from a very nice lady and a food parcel from Morrisons. I was slightly embarrassed but realised how we are all fallible.
>
> (Blue Family Campaign Feedback – internal monitoring form)

There is existing evidence of the importance of football clubs as intermediaries for engaging people when other services have failed to reach them. For example, it has been shown that football clubs can be a useful medium through which to encourage men to discuss mental health issues (Curran et al., 2014; Magee et al., 2015; Pringle et al., 2011). Whilst, as discussed already, trying to provide the level of mental health support required during such trying times was overreaching their capacity, feedback from The Blue Family Campaign shows the importance of such an offer:

> I am really grateful for the help I received. I spoke to a lovely chap, he was amazing with me as I suffer with mental health. He explained all details to me and was very patient with me and my anxiety was so bad I felt ashamed also and he reassured me.
>
> (Blue Family Campaign Feedback – internal monitoring form)

This was extended further during the pandemic as more general support was on offer and (self)referrals could be made to an organisation that was seen to be giving support unconnected to the stigma associated with food banks (Fitzpatrick & Hoey, 2022; Garthwaite, 2016; Purdam et al., 2016) or the Benefits Agency (Baumberg, 2016; Patrick, 2016):

> The support I received was lovely. Both times the lads I spoke to were understanding and non-judgmental. I was so embarrassed asking for help but they put me at ease. Thank you so much.
>
> (Blue Family Campaign Feedback – internal monitoring form)

The role that a football club can play was summed up by a member of the support team as follows: "I think sometimes it's easier to associate with a football club than local services. So, I think [Everton] have probably got that advantage really. People are probably more likely to connect with the football club than with the Council, kinda thing." (Staff Interview). Interestingly, though, from the feedback that the club sought about the Blue Family campaign from those that had been supported, there were many responses that did not make any reference to the connection with Everton Football Club and simply saw the service as filling a well-needed gap that was not being addressed by other charities or social services.

Overall, the Blue Family Campaign was driven by three aspects related to Everton's virtuous approach. There was an internal realisation of the problem and desire to not just do what was necessary but to go above and beyond

what might be expected – to show practical wisdom and excellence in Aristotelian terms. Secondly, the Blue Family campaign illustrates two sides of Everton FC's narrative quest as a purveyor of civic responsibility and community engagement; of being the 'People's Club'. Chapter 3 will expand on the history and development of the football club's charitable foundations to show that the response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as part of the club's teleological pursuit of virtue. It was also an opportunity to promote the virtue of seeing football as a resource for the 'common good' and counter the dominant narrative around the irresponsibility of the football industry that is discussed earlier in this chapter. The nuances of and challenges of such a perspective are more thoroughly explored in chapters that follow.

To even consider such a perspective relies on the tradition that EitC has established over recent years in trying to put football at the service of the 'common good' in the local area which lent authenticity to the Blue Family campaign. This meant that those in a position to help out financially put their trust in Everton FC and EitC to use their money responsibly and provide an appropriate service. In different ways, staff and fans became intermediaries in the process of support (as will be further discussed in Chapters 4 and 6), respectively, putting their trust in the club and its community arm to help those that needed it and provide themselves with a purpose when the primary role of the football club was removed. Whilst the campaign was initially supported by a donation from the club itself, this was boosted by an injection of funds resulting from fans' generosity, further matched by that of the football club's owner and its chairman. It also, however, relied on reassigning existing funding that had been provided for the various intervention programmes that had had to be put on pause during lockdown.

> [Funders] have been very supportive of what we're doing at the moment and I think what we've been trying to show to them is that though we're having to work in a different way, the impact we're having is still as big as it would've been, if not maybe greater… They've been very supportive, I think – giving us a little bit of flexibility and room to try something new and say, 'Look, we can't work like this and work to maybe these outcomes that you funded us for but what we can do is deliver this and deliver that.' I think they've really put the trust in us for that.
>
> (Staff interview)

Such trust is based upon the organisation's reputation in meeting outcomes and successfully delivering community programmes over three decades and particularly their ambition in recent years to match interventions to the needs of local people.

> we've been in touch with [funders], told them how we're doing things… They're pleased that we're still engaging with [participants]… A couple of families that we were concerned about, we've been giving them additional

> support… we're still connecting with the vast majority of the organisations and people that we've done in the past. The funders have been fine… on the whole they were just really pleased that we were still trying to engage and connect with those people.
>
> (Staff interview)

## Conclusion

During a period of 17 weeks between Monday 9 March 2020, when the first impact of the coronavirus pandemic on football was noted in the UK, and Sunday 21 June 2020, which marked the end of the week when professional football in England returned after being suspended as a consequence of COVID-19, the national sport and its key stakeholders became the subject of moral debate and political propaganda. Nothing much out of the ordinary there but the absence of having player performances and team results to distract us and the sports journalists meant that other stories were needed to fill the back pages.

Whilst there was a consistent interest in the charitable work of football clubs and players alongside well-placed stories from various football clubs' community foundations and trusts, the dominant narrative that emerged was the result of a number of high-profile football clubs making use of the Government's furlough scheme. This provoked a response from politicians that was rooted in class prejudice through a thesis of what might be described as football players as 'underserving rich'. It was a narrative that gained favour with the football fanbase, furthering a long-standing discourse that simmers beneath the surface of fan resentment about the economics of football at the elite level.

The strong media–sport interconnection meant that high-profile football players had a platform to challenge such perspectives and the professional camaraderie that exists within the profession was mobilised to find a solution through informal communication networks rather than by way of the players' union of the PFA. As the crisis continued and the Government's actions became increasingly scrutinised, football became less of a scapegoat and more a saviour – politicians keen to get elite-level sport restarted as a means for distracting the public, or 'raising morale' as they would have it.

Project Restart laid bare the economic parameters that guided resistance and recovery during the pandemic. It showed the realities of elite football as televisual sport. Its economics are thoroughly tied to broadcasting, and with such economic power comes the ability to pay for the necessary resources that other, arguably far more important industries were unable to afford or unable to logistically acquire.

Meanwhile, Everton Football Club and Everton in the Community, like many other football clubs and their community foundations or trusts, were finding ways to provide support for local communities. Everton FC launched

their Blue Family Campaign within a week of the club making the decision to go into lockdown itself and a full 72 hours before the British Prime Minister announced the national lockdown. The consequences of lockdown on the staff of Everton FC and EitC, participants in their community programmes and Everton fans will be explored in detail throughout the rest of this book, framed by MacIntyre's (2007 [1981]) conception of virtue and the common good. Before that, the following chapter provides some historical context for seeing the response of case study club, Everton FC, as part of its virtuous teleology.

## Note

1 At the time of writing, the Blue Family campaign continues to, "offer a crisis service for those who do not have the financial resources to meet their (or their family's) essential short-term needs," as a consequence of, "the long-term after-effects of the pandemic, coupled with the impact of the current cost-of-living-crisis" (EitC, 2023) but some of the processes have been changed. For example, referrals will only be accepted from 'trusted individuals or organisations' such as EitC staff, EFC staff, GPs, schools, children's centres, churches, third-sector organisations, support workers, social workers and link workers, probation services and housing associations.

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Chapter 3

# Football, Charity and Tradition

## The Socio-Historical Context of Everton FC and Everton in the Community

*Co-authored by Jake Madgwick Lawton and Emily Liles*

### Introduction

> "Everton is saddened and disappointed to see proposals of a breakaway league pushed forward by six clubs. Six clubs acting entirely in their own interests… At this time of national and international crisis - and a defining period for our game - clubs should be working together collaboratively with the ideals of our game and its supporters uppermost… we would ask the owners, chairmen, and Board members of the six clubs to remember the privileged position they hold – not only as custodians of their clubs but also custodians of the game. The responsibility they carry should be taken seriously. We urge them all to consider what they wish their legacy to be."
>
> (EFC, 2021)

This was the public response from Everton FC to the attempt by a select few Premier League football clubs to form an independent European Super League just one year on from the situation caused by COVID-19 at a time when the football industry was still coming to terms with the uncertainty that the pandemic had caused for a multitude of stakeholders. The 'breakaway league' was criticised from many directions. Football fans held demonstrations, and the UK Government was willing to explore preventative legislation (Walker et al., 2021). The significance of the statement from Everton FC is how the club positions itself (alongside other clubs) as a 'custodian of the game' and therefore responsible for the 'common good'. 'Clubs should be working together collaboratively with the ideals of our game and its supporters uppermost…' is an implicit value judgement and continues a virtuous narrative, in MacIntyre's (2007 [1981]) understanding, that the club has arguably tried to promote throughout its history.

This chapter will position Everton FC as an institution within the social history of the city of Liverpool and explore its tradition of providing charitable welfare in accordance with and as response to prevailing footballing

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conventions and social conditions over time. As MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 222) notes,

> …when an institution – a university, say or a farm or a hospital – is the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices, its common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict.

Likewise, the institution that is Everton Football Club and its practices must be located within its historical context and the traditions associated with what a football club ought to be. As noted in Chapter 1, the 'tradition' of football in both academic and popular discourse is informed by its roots as a pre-industrial folk pastime which became codified and adopted as a form of 'rational recreation'. In the burgeoning cities of industrial society, it provided a form of social and civic identity to swelling numbers of urbanites for whom the more direct communal and kinship connections were being lost. The sport became identified with a predominantly white, male, working-class audience who during socially turbulent times arguably expressed their dissatisfactions (with changing social relations more widely and specifically ever-increasing commodification of football itself) through existing physicality associated with the sport. Thus, in the latter decades of the 20th century, 'hooliganism' became the *leit motif* of (British) football. Responses varied but arguably the most durable legacy from this period is the presence of football clubs' community engagement programmes as a consequence of Football in the Community (FitC) and the prevailing 'environmental determinism' (Anagnostopoulos & Shilbury, 2013) that encouraged its adoption.

Before exploring, in subsequent chapters, the contemporary context for Everton FC in the service of humanity, an historical perspective is given because MacIntyre's definition of virtue is only complete when the individuals, institutions and practices, "are considered in relation to their social setting in the histories of the communities to which human agents belong." (Lutz, 2012, p. 129). What follows is an historical narrative associated with the case study club in terms of its virtuous tradition and the continuities of conflict through which its common life is constituted.

## The Church and Everton FC's Moral Foundations

In comparison with other large cities in England, Liverpool has an exceptional history in part due to the influence of Irish–Catholic settlement (Belchem, 2007). Yet, it was the Methodists that were responsible for the early growth of football. Everton FC's formation can be traced to its early incarnation in 1878 at St Domingo's Methodist Church by Reverend Ben Swift Chambers. Kennedy (2011, p. 483) has argued that, "the impulse for the rise of Everton

FC came from the missionary zeal of the muscular Christian movement," with the foundations of the team, "underlining in microcosm the type of hands-on approach to pastoral care in urban areas that muscular Christian intervention was all about." Kennedy suggests Chambers, a supporter of the Band of Hope temperance movement, sought to, "improve the physical condition of his young charges and to encourage a team spirit that would help combat individual thoughts of pursuing the vices of gambling and drink." Churches of different denominations across Britain were similarly forming football teams at this time due to the, "relative lack of violence," associated with the sport and to discourage young men interested in playing football from, "stripping at public houses and playing on public house grounds" (Mason, 1981, p. 41).

Thus, Everton Football Club, like many others, was initially formed not with the view of being the most competitively successful but to instil Victorian Christian ethics. In doing so, it reflects MacIntyre's (2007 [1981], p. 219) thesis that, "virtues are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good." It would seem that, in MacIntyre's terms, the internal goods were more important than the external goods. Though, of course, goods owing to Christian virtue are externalised within MacIntyre's conception. Nevertheless, such virtue would be shaped over the next century, reflecting societal shifts and the management of the club.

As the club grew throughout the 1880s, responsibility for running the club increasingly fell to men, "from professional and business backgrounds with no experience of having played for the club" (Kennedy, 2011, p. 484). The transition from religious to commercial leaders created tension amongst the club's committee members, with contrasting visions of the purpose and potential of the growing sport. Demands for better facilities for players and supporters led to an early defining moment in the history of Everton Football Club (and Liverpool Football Club) as moral arguments were pitted against commercial ambitions. Everton FC had initially played at Anfield on land provided by the brewer and Conservative councillor John Houlding, who donated the rental income to a local hospital. In 1891, Houlding requested a rent increase and suggested floating shares in the club to raise the money. Other members of the club committee, consisting of several Liberal politicians and temperance society members, accused Houlding of engaging in, "a policy of shylock," (Liverpool Echo, 1891, p. 5) and feared Houlding's intentions, especially his proposal to own exclusive rights to sell refreshments at the ground, which could lead to the selling of alcohol and tobacco at games (Kennedy & Collins, 2006, p. 779). The committee resisted Houlding's efforts to acquire a larger stake of the club and instead moved to a new site at Goodison Park in 1892, preserving a more democratic share structure, and maintaining the club's status as a symbol of Christian behaviour and sobriety.

The professionalisation of football during the 1880s created a 'win-at-all-costs' culture leading to, "increasingly violent play, the intimidation of referees and intense rivalries between neighbouring teams including fights between rival groups" (McLeod, 2013, p. 123). Though Everton's formal ties to the church had been all but cut, the club maintained clear moral commitments in opposing the vices of alcohol, gambling and violence. At a committee meeting in December 1889, the club agreed to contact the Burnley club's committee to raise concerns over the "language of a very disgusting character that was shouted at our men and at our Umpire by some of the spectators" and requested the "provision of efficient and vigilant police protection for our men against the possible violent usage and abusive language of a rowdy element amongst the spectators" (EFC committee, 1889, p. 187). Such 'civilising processes' have been seen by many scholars as an inherent part of how sporting cultures have developed over the course of their histories (Elias & Dunning, 1986).

Regarding recreational drinking, whilst the club did not demand players abstain from alcohol – in 1892 the Secretary even arranged, "for Eggs & Sherry for Players at training" (EFC directors, 1892a, p. 42) – in keeping with its early temperance players would be held to account if breaking a promise not to drink to excess. In 1907, forward Alex Young was called before the directors for "drinking an excessive quantity of stout" and threatened that his pay would be withheld if he did not stay teetotal (EFC directors, 1907, p. 78). The activities for which players are held to account may be somewhat different in contemporary times but the moral standards by which they should abide and the repercussions for not doing so remain, as Moise Keen discovered during the COVID-19 lockdown period. That particular incident, which was dealt with internally through the most severe punishment that the club is able to administer (two-week wage deduction – though his involvement with Everton's first team became minor in the aftermath of the incident and he ultimately ended up leaving the club the following year), was highlighted by supporters (see Chapter 6) as the only blight on Everton FC's exemplary response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Gambling amongst players and staff was also openly opposed. In 1914, the board were informed that "excessive gambling on horse racing and cards was becoming very prevalent amongst some of our players and that coupon gambling also existed" (EFC directors, 1914a, p. 106). The response was to summon the players to, "attend a meeting at which the Chairman warned them that the growing habit of gambling on cards, horses and coupons … must at once cease, otherwise drastic measures for its suppression would have to be taken" (EFC directors, 1914b, p. 110). A few years afterwards though, the emergence of the Football Pools in Liverpool during the 1920s led to, "rising expenditure on gambling," as the pools became, "embedded in the routines of family life" (Porter, 2011, p. 180). In 1936, the Everton board met to discuss the Football League's action against the Pools reporting that

the Football League, "is of the opinion that Football Pool Betting is a menace to the game of Association Football and pledges itself to make every effort possible to suppress the evil" (EFC directors, 1936, p. 180). Two years later, Everton played a charity game in aid of the Football League Jubilee Trust Fund which supported young footballers, trained professionals for post-playing work and assisted incapacitated players (Football League, 1938). The Football League and Everton agreed, "in favor of accepting contributions to the Fund from Football Pool promoters," demonstrating how football administrators' moral stance against gambling had softened, and would continue to do so, with charitable ventures offering a bridge between the two industries (EFC directors, 1938, p. 166). In recent years, sport gaming company, SportPesa, became the first ever African-based company to be the primary sponsor of a Premier League football club as gambling once again became a dominant part of the football landscape. Concerns about the prevalence of such companies and their effects have led to calls for greater restrictions around the promotion of gambling and its association with contemporary football (CMS Committee, 2023; Crafton, 2020; Jones et al., 2019). The SportPesa contract with Everton FC was curtailed a year early. Though the explicit reasons for doing so were not made public, it was reported that, "A range of factors were assessed, from economic viability to whether sponsors shared the same values as the club…" (Boyland, 2020). These values have shifted over time but owe much to the founding virtues of upholding a concern for the welfare of local people, of their (playing) staff and for supporting a moral ideal.

## Everton FC – The Source of Charity

As well as advocating for moral issues, Everton's early connection with the church also saw the club donate to local causes. This is perhaps unsurprising due to charity and giving – originally most prominently through alms for the poor – being core elements of the Christian faith (Bubb, 2017). The club played in a series of charity matches from the late 1880s onwards. In December 1892, a match was arranged for 'waifs & strays', with "proceeds of the match distributed … to provide breakfasts for poor" (EFC directors, 1892b, p. 92). An 1892, Liverpool Echo column detailed two separate charitable activities with which Everton was engaged, both indicating how ingrained Everton FC was within the charity landscape of Victorian Liverpool. The first was an annual charity match between representatives of the Liverpool Echo and Express newspapers in aid of the Newsboys' Home for Friendless and Destitute Boys on Everton Road which took place at Goodison Park (Liverpool Echo, 1892, p. 4). The second describes Everton fixing small 'cages' inside the entrances of Goodison Park on match days to receive donations towards the Liverpool Hotpot Fund. The club, local press, local charities and supporters were engaged in practices that saw interest in football support the city's poor. The club's support for local foodbanks in the 21st century continues this

tradition with EitC launching their own project in May 2022 to help fight food poverty (EitC, 2024a).

The football club also offered support at moments of crisis to victims of industrial disaster. In May 1888, the club's committee agreed for the ground to be used for a, "benefit match for St. Helens Colliery accident fund," following an explosion that had killed 30 miners (EFC committee, 1888, p. 31) and, "a donation of Twenty five pounds be made to the Lord Mayor's Fund for the relief of the sufferers through the Wigan Colliery disaster" (EFC directors, 1908a, p. 280). Contributions were also made to those suffering from disaster further afield. Following the 1908 SS Sardinia Disaster, in which a ship carrying Moroccan pilgrims to Mecca caught fire off the coast of Malta, local Reverend Stanley Rogers requested a donation from Everton in aid of the disaster. The response was that, "if a Towns fund were organised we would favourably consider his suggestion" (EFC directors, 1908b, p. 47).

Kay and Vamplew's (2010, p. 184) study of British football's relationship with charity prior to WWI describes how, "in 1893 Everton played a match to raise money for the destitute families of cotton trade operatives thrown out of work, leading the Athletic News to comment that 'it is pleasing to know that football can be devoted to charitable purposes'." They emphasise that though "these were local initiatives the response to many tragedies was on a nationwide scale," indicating that football's centrality in national culture was reflected not only by mass spectatorship but also through growing networks of charitable support. Kay and Vamplew (2010, p. 190) also reported that in 1892 'petty politics' led to, "Everton's refusal to participate in an annual charitable fixture between professional footballers and pantomime artistes in support of local hospitals because it was to be held at Anfield," with a local paper suggesting that, "charity is to be ridden over for Jealousy's sake." This demonstrates how aware of and focused on Everton's engagement with local causes both the press and the public were as far back as the 19th century. The case indicates the two football clubs' historical reluctance to collaborate on charity projects due to their enmity, as well as the media's inclination to focus on the club's charity work through the lens of that local rivalry. In more recent times, there has been better co-operation between Everton in the Community and the Liverpool FC Foundation – though much of that is the informal agreement not to encroach on each other's targeted 'communities of need'. Within fan discourse, however, there is a tendency from both Everton and Liverpool fans to view Everton in the Community as having a more local and authentic engagement with those communities than that of the LFC Foundation (see Chapter 6).

Alongside support to counter the effects brought about by tragedy and poor living conditions, the requests Everton received also reflected industrial struggles in Liverpool and across Britain during the early 20th century. The club was frequently contacted by striking workers seeking financial support during times of industrial dispute, but all of these requests were refused. Local

dockers asked to arrange collections on a matchday during a 1905 strike but were declined, and Everton also refused to permit local ship joiners on strike to play matches at Goodison in 1921 (EFC directors, 1905, p. 266; 1921, p. 313). In 1926, "an application for permission to take a collection on the ground," for the Skelmersdale Miners Fund was refused and Everton rejected, "permission for a Welsh Miners' Choir to sing at one of our matches," in aid of the Miners' Family Relief Fund (EFC directors, 1926a, p. 252; 1926b, p. 255). This reflects an ongoing distinction between what might be considered charitable support and political support.

This distinction is of course enshrined in the legal regulations concerning registered charities involvement with political activity (Charity Commission, 2022). Such regulations, in their legal form, have been subject to change over time and are reflective of cultural changes regarding notions of welfare, charity, philanthropy, solidarity, justice and the role of the church, the state and commerce throughout history. There is not space in this text to fully explore such changes, but it is pertinent to note that the professionalisation of football and growth of modern sport in the second half of the 19th century coincides with considerable growth in the 'charity sector' within Britain and consequently greater categorisation and debate about the purposes of philanthropy.

In 1891, Lord McNaughten identified four categories of charity as part of the legal case, 'Commissioners for Special Purposes of Income Tax v. Pemsel': (1) trusts for the relief of poverty; (2) trusts for the advancement of education; (3) trusts for the advancement of religion; (4) trusts for other purposes considered beneficial to the community (Nightingale, 1973) which formed the basis for the constitution of charitable entities up until the introduction of the Charities Act 2006. Also, the Charitable Organisation Society (COS), founded in 1869, aimed to provide a 'scientific' approach to 'systematising the benevolence of the public' to overcome the problems of poverty, debt and homelessness. However, "many would argue that what it actually did was to pursue a crusade against mendacity, indiscriminate giving and laxity in Poor Law administration. It viewed poverty as a failing of the individual rather than something that arose from the wider failings of society." (Bubb, 2017). For Nightingale (1973), COS signalled a distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor and precedes what Levitas (2005) would suggest is part of the longstanding 'Moral Underclass Discourse' which arguably underpins contemporary community football approaches (see Chapter 1). This scepticism about the purposes of charity and its social consequences at the time is encapsulated by comments made by Hugh Simmons, MP for Liverpool, in 1861:

> The most fashionable amusement of the present is philanthropy. We would not have the working man suppose that all the gentleman and ladies of Liverpool really do care about their condition, it is the fashion to do so because it brings them into passing contact with this Bishop or that Earl.
>
> (cited by Bubb, 2017)

A parallel debate of the era concerned the widening remit of charitable organisations that went beyond funding support for citizens' economic, educational and spiritual welfare. Modelled on the abolitionist movement against slavery (from the 1780s onwards), the late 19th century saw a growth in working class movements, friendly societies and cooperatives, many explicitly set up as charities. Bubb (2017) suggests that, "They played an important role in political agitations like the land reform campaigns of the 1880s [and] were also key in establishing the new political movement, the Labour Representation Committee [which] became the Labour Party in 1906."

The relevance of this is as a backdrop to the way in which the football industry, and Everton FC, might be positioned at a time when understandings of philanthropy fell into one of two broad camps: a continuation of 'conservative' views about support for the (deserving) poor which retained its liturgical roots and filled the gaps left by the state; and 'politically' motivated movements that challenged illiberal ideas through political lobbying and agitation for the advancement of ideas and the uptake of practical solutions (Bubb, 2017). It is clear that Everton FC followed the paternalistic approach in the late 1800s and arguably still does as Everton in the Community (EitC) has flourished as a great example of meeting Third Way political demands introduced by New Labour in the 1990s (see Chapter 1). The final chapter of this book proposes that in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an opportunity to reimagine the solidarity that football clubs and their charitable trusts could provide that is more in line with the agonism that might be associated with more 'political' motives behind charitable practice similar to those that blossomed in the 19th century (see Chapter 7).

## The Crisis of War and Solidarity amongst the Football Establishment

Upon the outbreak of WWI Liverpool FC Chairman John McKenna chaired a meeting of the Football League Management Committee at which he proclaimed that,

> football could minimise the grief, help the nation to bear its sorrows, relieve the oppression of continuous strain, and save the people at home from panic and under depression, is a great national asset which can render lasting service to the people.

Not dissimilar to the political narrative that emerged in support of Project Restart which attempted to emphasise how the return of elite-level football would provide a morale boost for the British population (see Chapter 2).

McKenna also called upon, "every club to do all in its power to assist the war funds." He suggested that whilst,

> we unreservedly authorise the due fulfilment of the League programme, we must all accept to the full every obligation that we can individually and collectively discharge for our beloved country and our comrades in arms, who in this fight for righteousness and justice at the risk of their lives have answered to duty's call,
>
> (Dundee Courier, 1914, p. 5)

Everton first collected in aid of the War Fund in November 1914, donating £36:6:7 to the Lord Mayor's Fund (EFC directors, 1914a, p. 106), and by January 1915, eleven Everton players had enlisted, as part of Lord Derby's football census scheme (Sunderland Daily Echo & Shipping Gazette, 1915, p. 2). In September 1915, Everton received several requests from chaplains seeking donations of football equipment for troops and so the club arranged collections and donated footballs to be sent to the Western Front (EFC directors, 1915a, p. 286; 1915b, p. 301).

A century before the COVID-19 pandemic upended the football season and ceased match day income, football clubs suffered similarly due to falling attendances at games following the outbreak of WWI. By 1917, clubs were in such serious financial struggles that the pooling of gate receipts was proposed by the Football League. The League recognised that, "the clubs that would lose by such 'pooling' scheme will be Birmingham, Sheffield United, Sheffield Wednesday, Leeds City, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester City, and Stoke, and all these have assented to the proposal" (Charnley, 1917). Everton initially objected to the proposal but eventually compromised reporting that,

> unless a system of gate sharing was instituted, as a war scheme, there would be small probability of League football next season. That as such system would entail some financial sacrifice by ourselves and five or six other Lancashire section members a conference of such clubs would be advisable in the near future,
>
> (EFC directors, 1917, p. 124)

The scheme allowed the season to be completed with Everton claiming their second First Division title. In an irony perhaps only recognised by the most devout historians of the sport, the eventual completion of the 2019/20 season that was suspended as a result of COVID-19 led to Everton FC's neighbours and rivals, Liverpool FC claiming their first ever Premier League title.

As noted in the previous chapter, debates around football finances came to dominate public and political discourse during the first few weeks of the COVID-19 crisis. Similar discussions were being had during the crises brought about by war in the first half of the 20th century. Tom Charnley, Secretary of

the Football League at the outbreak of WWI, called upon clubs to save money on players' wages and pay into a 'financial assistance scheme' to support squads from teams unable to pay wages. Charnley pleaded with the clubs that at this,

> critical period in the history of the game devotion to the League is of paramount importance. Our personal and individual interests must be sacrificed to the common good… The players must show that spirit of brotherhood which immediately compels the rich to help the poor. The strong Clubs must come to the help of the weak,
>
> (McKenna & Charnley, 1914)

Whilst this might seem like a call for solidarity, the intent behind such charitable responses to war may be early evidence of CSR like activity as a response to 'irresponsible actions' (Waddington et al., 2013). This is because the continuation of the football season after the outbreak of war was met with public and Government outrage, leading to professional football, "attempting to rehabilitate its public image … by donating significant amounts of money to charities and the war effort, a practice that was extended after the war to include donations to disaster appeals" (Taylor, 2005, p. xiii). As evidenced elsewhere in this book, whilst the cessation of the football season as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was somewhat inevitable, Project Restart was accompanied by mixed messages and greeted with ambivalence (Chapter 2).

The period following the First World War is often referred to as a Golden Age for Everton FC as the club lived up to its popular moniker as footballing aristocrats. This was achieved under the stewardship of chairman Will Cuff who went on to become President of the Football League and also served as a Vice Chairman of the Football Association. The relevance of this is the relationship of the football club with the arbiters of the sport, the historical claim to being a custodian of the game and in MacIntyre's (2007 [1981], p. 222) terms, "the bearer of a tradition of practice." In upholding certain ideals of what football ought to be, Cuff is reported to have told clubs that, "While League points are vitally important, match-winning expedients do not bring lasting success. In catering for the support of the public it is your responsibility to provide entertainment in which the highest ideals of sportsmanship are preserved," and his advice to players was that, "[He who] steers clear of pitfalls and many temptations, gets most out it. You must practise the highest code of moral discipline and never forget that only the success that is fairly won is worthwhile" (Liverpool Echo, 1957).

In the aftermath of WWI, scientific management thinker Henry Gantt suggested that, "any reward or profit that business arbitrarily takes, over and above that to which it is justly entitled for service rendered, is just as much the exercise of autocratic power and a menace to the industrial peace of the

world, as the autocratic military power of the Kaiser was a menace to international peace" (Husted, 2015, p. 125). Pre-empting ideas around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Gantt proposed that, "the business system must accept its social responsibility and devote itself primarily to service, or the community will ultimately make the attempt to take it over in order to operate it in its own interest" (Husted, 2015, p. 125). Gantt's observations resonate with the reflections of Sir Frederick Wall, Secretary of the FA from 1895 to 1934. Wall (2006[1935], p62) claimed that, "money is never invested in football for the purpose of dividends. It is put into it for the sake of sport," explaining that, "no sane person would ever dream of hoping to make a fortune out of football" (Wall, 2006 [1935], p. 107). He goes on to note how important it is that, "professional football clubs and their players help others and the community at large," (Wall, 2006[1935], p. 123) whilst also challenging the notion that clubs should be seen as charities explaining that, "only one who has been concerned with the administration of the FA has the remotest idea of the daily requests for grants and for aid, not only institutions and agencies of repute, but by cranks who appear to think that football is the universal provider of funds" (Wall, 2006 [1935], p. 106). This is reflected in the wide variety of charities to which Everton made donations. Receipts from a summer practice match in 1928 raised a total of £928.10.0 which was shared between 31 different organisations, most of which were hospitals, but also included donations to Dr Barnados Homes, the Liverpool Child Welfare Association, and the Mersey Mission to Seaman (EFC Directors, 1928, p. 238). Such small donations to a wide range of causes confirm Kay and Vamplew's (2010, p. 194) conclusion that,

> Football probably raised more money for charity than any other sport but no charity was dependent upon the game for more than a small proportion of its income. Football provided regular, but relatively minor, revenue to some hospitals and homes, and one-off contributions, again relatively small, to victims of tragedies and economic depression.

This contrasts with the more recent role of football clubs, or at least their community trusts or foundations, as arguably indispensable sources of support to certain 'client groups' as charities themselves (see Chapter 5) and as beneficiaries of multiple sources of charitable funding needed to provide such provision (see Appendix 1).

The threat of WWII can be seen in Everton's charitable engagement. In March of 1939, Everton granted five guineas to Lord Baldwin's Fund for Refugees which had been established by former Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin to help bring and settle Jewish children from Nazi Germany to Britain (EFC directors, 1939a, p. 267). Support for people seeking asylum or who are refugees living in the city remains part of EitC's contemporary programming for some of the most vulnerable members of the local community (EitC, 2024b).

In the month leading up to the declaration of war, the club committed to supplementing the wages of players who enlisted to maintain their income, and within two days of the war being declared on Germany, the Everton Chairman "reported that our ground had been commandeered as an Anti-Aircraft (Balloon Barrage Section), post" (EFC directors, 1939b, p. 315).

The suspension of the Football League during wartime hit Everton's income, but they remained committed to contributing to the war effort where possible. At the Shareholders AGM in July 1940, the Everton Chairman declared that,

> everything possible had been done to support National aims, although financially we were not able to provide material comforts for the Forces as during 1914-18. But the Troops Comforts Collections at the ground had been instrumental in providing thousands of cigarettes, books &c, which had been highly appreciated by the City Authorities,
>
> (EFC directors, 1940, p. 340)

The payment of dividends was also deferred until the war's end, the justification for this being, "in the interest of National Economy" (EFC directors, 1944, p. 139).

## Everton in the Post-War Period

When the Football League restarted following WWII, Everton struggled on the pitch. The club was relegated at the end of the 1950–1951 season, spent three seasons in the second division and would have to wait until 1963 to win a major honour. However, the club maintained its commitment to charity, particularly in response to disasters. In 1952, Everton donated to the victims of flooding in Devon, and again in 1953, a proposal was made to raise money for those suffering from the 1953 North Sea flood but was then rescinded, "In view of the fact that the Lord Mayor of Liverpool was not sponsoring a special week" (EFC directors, 1952, p. 326; 1953, p. 399). Everton continued to support victims of seafaring tragedy, paying a donation of £5.5.0 to the 1960 Applegarth Disaster Dependents Fund, following a ship crash in the Mersey which saw eight local men die (EFC Directors, 1960, p. 148).

The post-war period also saw Everton support other football clubs struggling at this time. For decades, Everton had received requests for financial assistance from lower division sides but only began to grant a significant number of requests in the 1950s. Everton sent Ellesmere Port Town £75 in financial assistance, £10 was donated to Barnoldswick Town F.C. and another £50 to Haydock C&B in, "an appeal for financial assistance, to aid in Ground improvements" (EFC directors, 1950, p. 94; 1952, pp. 256–257). Everton's contributions to smaller football clubs as opposed to funding schools and hospitals are indicative of two shifts in post-war British society. Firstly, the struggles of these smaller clubs were partly the outcome of Everton's growth.

Bale (1993, p. 63) notes that, "data for the year 1951 indicated that about two-fifths of the total number of spectators in Lancashire watched Liverpool, Everton or the two premier Manchester clubs. By 1971 the proportion had risen to two-thirds." The consolidation of support amongst the major clubs indicates Everton's responsibility for the decline of many clubs further down the footballing pyramid. Secondly, the support offered by Everton illustrates the evolving needs of wider society. Breeze and Mohan's (2016, p. 4) history of the third sector in Britain emphasises an understanding of, "the relationship between philanthropy and public service reform," suggesting that during the immediate post-war period the British charity landscape was transformed following the Attlee administration's sweeping reform of health, education, housing and industry. A 1948 poll showed that, "98 per cent of the British public felt there was no ongoing role for philanthropy because the new institutions of the welfare state had made charity superfluous" (Breeze & Mohan, 2016, p. 4). In 1948, William Beveridge articulated the role of charity as simply being, "to do things which the State is most unlikely to do" (Breeze & Mohan, 2016, p. 5). Financially supporting small football clubs fulfils this criterion as their preservation was not a priority for government at a time of post-war austerity, yet Everton demonstrated commitments to the wider footballing family.

Everton's ability to contribute money to clubs in difficulty may have been bolstered by the increasing interest of John Moores in the club. The founder of the Littlewoods betting and retail empire began acquiring shares from 1950, offering interest-free loans to help Everton succeed. Furthermore, Moores held the opinion that football had an important role to play in maintaining social order, explaining that, "I know there's a certain amount of hooliganism at the moment, and a lot of ill-temper, but I feel this is far better than having race riots and having political riots. I think a lot of people do like to let the steam off and shout at a football match" (The Golden Vision, 1968). This statement also indicates how elites saw football as possessing the potential to do social good without engaging in charity, but rather by itself being a form of mitigation against social and political crises. This articulation of football's potential to ease social problems resonates with some of Everton's early directors who saw the club as a means to improve church attendance and reduce violence and drunkenness. The intervention of John Moores in the club thus represents to some degree a reversal, with Everton no longer simply a large business which donated to charitable causes but once again an institution which itself benefitted from the funds of local elites. However, his interests were not purely philanthropic. They were also to protect the status of his economic class and guarantee the continued co-operation between football and the gambling industry.

Throughout its history, Everton Football Club has supported communities in need, but was mostly reactive to crisis events, responding to appeals for donations from charities and taking part in schemes devised by the Football

League and government. As state welfare provision increased throughout the 20th century, the need for Everton to donate to local schools and hospitals diminished. In 1947, the Mass Observation research programme considered the meaning people attach to the term 'charity'. Their report found that, "charity was often simply defined as the transfer of money to organizations helping others" (Breeze & Mohan, 2016, p. 4). This reflects the charitable role Everton played post-war, donating money to causes and clubs in need. However, the economic crises that were to strike the city of Liverpool from the 1970s transformed the needs of local people and the role of Everton Football Club. For the first century of its history, Everton had responded charitably following tragic events, but during the 1980s as a series of more permanent crises developed, Everton FC gradually introduced a more permanent means of response. The creation of Everton in the Community (EitC) represented a fundamental shift in the club's strategy towards charitable giving, its relationship with the wider community, and the changing third sector landscape.

## A City on the Brink and the Crisis of Football

Everton in the Community (EitC) emerged from the Football in the Community (FitC) programme that was widely adopted by professional football clubs throughout the 1980s. Initially piloted at six clubs across the Northwest of England in 1986, FitC began as a partnership between the Football League and the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) with funding from the Manpower Services Commission.[1] Its initial aims were to provide employment and training for unemployed people, promote close links between professional football clubs and the community, involve minority ethnic groups in social and recreational activities, attempt to prevent acts of hooliganism and vandalism and maximise the use of the facilities of the football clubs (Stone, 2018b). The emergence of FitC was against a backdrop of and reaction to urban unrest – not least as it was manifest within football crowds.[2] This is apparent in the aims of the programme as football clubs' influence on local youth culture is recognised. However, the wider socio-economic picture is arguably ignored, none more so than in Liverpool. Despite being piloted in the northwest, neither Everton nor Liverpool football clubs were part of the initial programme even though the issues it was introduced to tackle were very much part of the social landscape on Merseyside. In fact, as Marren (2016, p. 8) points out, "No other city portrays the economic malaise and industrial unrest troubling Britain in the last quarter of the 20th century more poignantly than Liverpool." The city's exclusion from the initial FitC pilot may have reflected wider political prejudices of the time. A combination of the political landscape in the city and the recent disaster at the European Cup Final involving Liverpool FC and Juventus in Heysel meant that the city region and the significance of the two football clubs therein became negatively conflated within wider public discourse and political decision making.

The city of Liverpool was by no means alone in facing the turmoil associated with the economic malaise of the time. Working-class struggle driven by deindustrialisation, mass unemployment and declining trade unionism in the face of neoliberal politics was prevalent in many urban centres during this period. It was Liverpool, though, that became a focal point for resistance – in reality and in the eyes of the Third Estate and Thatcher-led Government (Marren, 2016). There is a long history of Liverpool's distinct character that sets the city's culture and politics apart from other industrial heartlands of the UK. This 'exceptionalism' is variously and interconnectedly attributed to a socio-economic reliance on seafaring (and associated industries), the significant Irish immigration into the city, local political and electoral abnormalities and the persistent presence of high unemployment and poverty (Belchem, 1992; 2007; Davies, 1996; Marren, 2016; Parkinson, 1985; 2019). The latter was particularly prevalent in the north of the city around the docks amongst the neighbourhoods buttressing Everton FC's stadium, Goodison Park.

Marren (2016) attributes this to the unique role that the docks played in creating a 'working class' that was familiar with periods of joblessness, underemployment and poverty across multiple generations. As post-war prosperity provided relief in the rest of the UK, however, Liverpool's failure to diversify left the city's economy over reliant on a port diminishing in importance and needing less manpower due to technological and logistical advancement. Whilst unemployment numbers across the UK fell to record lows in the 1950s, they remained consistently high in Merseyside. Subsequent initiatives that brought car manufacturing plants to the region in the 1960s provided alternative employment for tens of thousands of low-skilled workers, but it was a short-lived solution. Between 1966 and 1978, employment fell by 20%. In the following three-year period from 1978 to 1981, the figure fell by a further 18% (Meegan, 2004). In deindustrialising Britain, Liverpool's unemployment situation was chronic. The overall unemployment rate in Merseyside reached 21.5% by the beginning of 1986 and throughout the 1980s was always 5–10% higher than the national average (Marren, 2016). Long-term unemployment was double that of the rest of the UK and was especially problematic for older workers. Yet, it was young males between the ages of 16 and 24 that were finding opportunities hardest to come by. In 1980, Merseyside Job Centres listed just 49 jobs available for 13,505 school leavers and by 1986 unemployment for males under 24 was 45% (Hayes, 1987; Lane, 1981).

The sense of alienation amongst young people with such little hope for their future violently manifested itself in the summer of 1981 with riots throughout Britain's inner-cities – Brixton and Southall in London, Birmingham's Handsworth area, Chapeltown in Leeds, Moss Side in Manchester and previously in St. Paul's, Bristol. In July that year, Liverpool's Toxteth also witnessed civil unrest that led to one young man's death, hundreds of injured civilians and police, and millions of pounds worth of damage. Various causes have been suggested: racial tension coupled with over-aggressive policing and/or selective law enforcement; criminal

opportunism or political exploitation by outside radicals. It is likely that several factors combined but Marren's (2016, p. 138) study concludes that, "while racial tensions with police may have initiated this civil unrest, it was other more determining factors such as long-term unemployment and societal alienation amongst Liverpool's mainly jobless youth which fuelled the rampage and looting." This view was supported at the time in both Lord Scarman's (1981) report on behalf of the Government and Lord Gifford's (1989) subsequent investigation, both of which stated that the roots of the disturbances lay in economic deprivation and marginalisation of the working class as a consequence of Thatcher's policies. The Prime Minister's response was unsympathetic to such views:

> Welfare arrangements encouraged dependency and discouraged a sense of responsibility, and television undermined common moral values that would have once united working-class communities. The results were a steadily increasing rise in crime (among young men) and illegitimacy (among young women) … Authority of all kinds… had been in decline for most of the post-war years. Hence the rise in football hooliganism, race riots and delinquency over that period.
>
> (Thatcher, 1993)

The 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative Government in the midst of this recession exacerbated the consequences of Britain's industrial demise. A proponent of free-market liberalism, the outdated forms of industrial operations were, for her, restricting progress in a more competitive global economy. As Marren (2016, p. 18) puts it:

> The rise of Thatcherism brought a change in political priorities. Maintaining low inflation coupled with reduced public spending – particularly for revenues earmarked for social welfare programmes, public housing and education – was deemed more important than job creation. The consequences of Thatcher's election in May 1979 finally ended the cross-party consensus based on Keynesian economic solutions. Thatcher inherited a nation which she saw as bloated, inefficient and suffocating private industry to death with burdensome taxes.

Not least, though, Thatcher considered the trade unions to be responsible for low levels of worker productivity. Whilst her most public battles were waged on the coalfields of South Yorkshire, Liverpool's Militant-led City Council provided a challenge that stemmed from a political history that again set the city apart from similar industrial cities of northern England. Sectarian divide within the Liverpool working classes meant that local Labour Party politics had a conservative Catholic influence in the first half of the 20th century. Frustrated by the parochialism and right-wing nature of Liverpool's Labour politics based on a 'system of bossism ruled by patronage and corruption'

(Marren, 2016, p. 147), young, working-class left wingers and trade unionists were attracted to the revolutionary Marxism espoused by the Militant newspaper started in the 1960s. As those controlling access to work based on Sectarianism and familial ties were usurped, the Liverpool District Labour Party came under the leadership of Militant supporters from within the local trade union movement. In an age of increasing cuts from Westminster, the three primary concerns amongst the Liverpool electorate in the early 1980s were jobs, housing and education. In the local council elections of 1983, Militant Labour pledged to tackle these concerns for Liverpudlians. In doing so, they set a city budget in excess of Government funding and in direct opposition to Thatcher's neoliberal principles. A deal was struck in the first instance and an enormous housing scheme was initiated as part of a new 'Urban Regeneration Strategy'. Not wishing to be dictated to, however, Westminster was not prepared to exempt Liverpool from ongoing cuts the following year. The defiant council leaders submitted what was deemed to be an illegal budget, eventually leading to 31,000 council redundancies further exacerbating the issues associated with high unemployment (Marren, 2016; Parkinson, 1985).

The consequences of structural inequalities and political impotence had become manifest amongst football crowds during the 1970s and 1980s. A combination of increasing commodification of the sport itself alongside disenfranchising factors attached to wider social identifications central to masculinity and working-class life are highlighted as significant aspects in the 'hooliganism' phenomenon (Armstrong, 1998; Frosdick & Marsh, 2005; Stott & Pearson, 2007; Taylor, 1971; 1982). Whilst the 'friendly derby' between Everton and Liverpool was not always so amicable as popular discourse likes to make out, violence at matches involving the city's clubs was certainly not as bad as or any worse than elsewhere. The 'moral panic' that surrounded the phenomenon, however, reached its political conclusion following the tragic scenes at the 1985 European Cup Final between Liverpool and Juventus in Heysel.[3] For the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, the events on that evening added further resolve to her 'war' on football hooliganism and deep antipathy for football culture, which itself was part of a wider conflict between the Government and the industrial working classes (Campbell, 2022). Her immediate response was legislation that arguably criminalised all football fans attending matches by supporting increased securitisation and providing the police with greater powers to enforce restrictions (Thatcher, 1985). In contrast, the Labour Party leader, Neil Kinnock (cited in Evans, 2019), spoke the day after the Heysel disaster and highlighted that,

> the problem of football crowd violence is deep-rooted and it has many causes of which one of the most important is long-term unemployment, especially among the young. We cannot hope to tackle this problem so long as we have a government which gives no priority whatsoever to tackling unemployment.

As Evans (2019) notes regarding the Heysel disaster, "It confirmed two Establishment biases: the city of Liverpool and football were both toxic environments that, when mixed, proved explosive and deadly. The game and the region were in their violent death throes in the view of the Conservative Government."

## The Community Programme

Though there is no explicit connection, 'Football in the Community' (FitC) was piloted the year following the Heysel disaster at six clubs in the North West of England – however none of these were based in Merseyside. Deemed a success, it was rolled out to the wider football league with Everton FC starting their own 'Community Programme' in 1988. Developed in partnership with the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) through their Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Scheme (FFE&VTS), part of the initial attraction was that FitC provided a career opportunity for professional players coming to the end of their playing contracts. In Everton's case, former players Duncan McKenzie and Alan Whittle were asked to lead the programme with a plan to foster closer links between the football club and its local community. The early focus for the duo and their team of part-time activity organisers was local school football provision with programmes for disabled participants and underprivileged groups being developed later.

McKenzie and Whittle visited schools and led coaching sessions but with an additional task of promoting Everton in the local area. There was little in the way of specific training for the pair around issues seen as important nowadays such as child protection or youth engagement. It was the presence of ex-professional footballers and their attached cultural capital that was important. When interviewed, a senior journalist at the Liverpool Echo who has been covering Merseyside's clubs for over 30 years noted, "Duncan is quite a sociable individual and Alan Whittle quite a lively character so maybe it was their personalities that were most relevant" (personal interview).

Compared with contemporary community sport programmes, early attempts at utilising the cultural capital of a football club's identity and the celebrity with which they were associated was rooted in a sport development ethos and the combination of the everyman status of footballers with their local hero identity in reaching out to targeted groups. In some ways that remains the case as evidence in this book attests regarding the involvement of playing staff in the Blue Family Campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, community sport development has gradually become more sophisticated than development of sport for sport's sake, as explained in Chapter 1. A former member of the schools coaching team sums up how the work was viewed at the time: "Here's your bag of balls and here's your tracksuit. Go and be a community coach."

The remit was influenced by the PFA's specific target groups, one of which was 'underprivileged children'. The early work was underdeveloped, informal and more casual compared to today. Local children were invited to watch the team train. A treat and a release from their day-to-day struggles, no doubt, but such activities had little long-term measurable benefit.

> There was a brief from the PFA and they had target groups. There would have been school visits in areas of Liverpool that we were to target. Gwladys Street School and other local schools – underprivileged children at the time. In terms of visits to come and watch the first team train, they would come and stand on the side and watch the players and we'd sign autographs and so on.
>
> (Personal interview)

Whilst it's hard to measure if stronger links to the community were forged in those early days, at a time when the reputation of football was at a nadir, the scheme at least enabled the football club to establish a visible presence away from matchdays, particularly within the immediate community. Something with which the current Neighbourhood team is tasked through their concentration on The Blue Mile, an area approximating to a mile around Goodison Park, EFC's home stadium (see Figure 5.2) at the time of the research.

For the first decade of the club's more instrumental community engagement there was tension between the purpose of such schemes, as highlighted by a former community manager of the club:

> Everton's commercial manager at the time was a big player involved on the club side and was appointed by the club to kind of oversee the [community] scheme so he was always the one pushing me to do more and more soccer schools – which made a fortune, by the way for the club. I don't think we were supposed to make any money and we made about £26,000 because they were so successful.

This model is not unique to EFC.[4] At the time, Football in the Community often meant little more than football coaching (soccer schools) provided by former players and affiliated football coaches for which attendees were charged to attend alongside school-based training sessions that attempted to meet the aims set out by the PFA.

In fact, the provision was utilised creatively in order to fulfil other requirements. One of Whittle's successors, well known for unearthing some of Merseyside's greatest football talent, explains that the Everton Academy Manager who recruited him to manage the community programme was, "looking to find a way of getting me to be involved in the centre of excellence as head coach, if you like, and dare I say it cutely getting somebody else to pay for that position." He was asked if he was interested on the basis that he would be

Everton's Community Manager and the brief would be to take responsibility for that post, plus coach the boys in the Centre of Excellence during the evening.

> What I quickly realised was it was a post paid for by the PFA at the time through a scheme called 'Footballers Further Education and Vocational Training Society' (FFE+VTS). I was under constraints, quite rightly by the way, of fulfilling those obligations, which looked like organising tea parties and dances at Goodison in the local community, soccer schools all over the place, all over Merseyside. But the kind of camouflage was I was coaching the Academy/Centre of Excellence boys on an evening which was, if I'm really honest, the big attraction.

The conflict between community schemes and football development at the time is clear and the focus on elite development of future footballers is a common theme. This echoes the widely held view that the FitC scheme was designed to be a development programme to provide talent for clubs' academies (Watson, 2000). There was also a focus on the Soccer Camps as revenue providers. This is evident even when the community targeted work was transitioning from a sub department of Everton Football Club into its own charitable entity (EitC, 2006a):

> FITC is a commercial business that has the potential to become a leader in the industry and an example of best practice from its core operating policies to its innovative partnership agreements that will ensure the growth and impact of The Charity across all sectors.
>
> Clearly FITC is a recognised identity within Merseyside and fits within the current club set up across the FA whereby all community divisions operate as FITC brands.

The problem that was identified though was that the programme, "projected an image… typically associated with simply soccer related initiatives i.e. schools soccer camps… If we market the camp under the title FITC you could generally assume the camp will be soccer focused and may alienate children who have little or no interest in soccer." Changing the title of the charity, "allows for the option of marketing the camps under general title and highlighting the multi discipline approach and access funding from either sector [sport or community]."

## Partnerships and Professionalism

For Everton FC, then, community engagement was formalised through the FitC programme which can be summarised as providing football coaching sessions in schools and summer camps, with invitations to participants to watch the

first team train and get a few autographs. There were, though, early signs of what was to develop once the community work became more professionalised and sophisticated. An innovative partnership with Age Concern led to the modestly-resourced community team inviting local pensioners to Goodison Park. Clearly, this was not about talent identification and did not draw on the community staff's football coaching or playing backgrounds. A team member from the time recalls: "The tea parties were great, they were brilliant… I was out of my comfort zone but it was rewarding." Not necessarily targeting the demographic group arguably most affected by the circumstances at the time (young, unemployed men and those most likely to make up the fan base), there was a focus to ensure the club offered support for the whole of its community. It was a relatively simple offering (compared to the contemporary programme) but forging independent partnerships separate to the PFA and other football governing bodies demonstrated independent and forward-thinking, for which football clubs like Charlton Athletic and Leighton Orient were being commended (Crabbe & Slaughter, 2004; Taylor, 2004). Everton's lack of recognition for such work is identified by a trustee: "no-one knows of EFITC and we need more time to show people what we do to draw new interest in to EFITC" (EitC, 2006a). This would be rectified in years to come but where Everton differed, at the time, was in the kind of partnerships being formed and a focus on leveraging the CSR of their corporate partners. Still based in a portacabin in the Park End car park of the football stadium, the small community department expanded through the 1990s with staff who were originally employed because of their background in coaching having to take on other roles. One recalls his remit, partly prescribed and partly self-initiated, involved searching for sponsorship before becoming a key player and advocate in the community team's bid to become an official charity in its own right. He highlights how, "Sponsors that were directly connected to the club played a key role. [Thai brewing company] Chang demonstrated an interest on their arrival as did [Communications company] One2One." It was, however, the Premier League that he remembers being the main driver of change:

> [They] had these template programmes such as reading schemes and their own football tournaments… It went from FitC officers as individuals, turning up with the trophy and doing the photos of the kids doing the soccer camps to then the Premier League creating a replica template for each club to use… financially driven by individual sponsors and whatever set of values or CSR values they had or the Premier League had.

Interestingly, the distinction being highlighted is the move from 'soccer camps' as the dominant 'community' engagement format to a social responsibility led approach. The soccer schools and camps remained a significant part of the work and source of income, consistently generating well in excess of £100,000 per year during the 2010s. However, at a time when Third Way

politics was requiring the charitable sector (and to some extent commercial entities) to fill the gaps left by Government provision, it was through the creation of EitC as an independent charity that the increasingly diverse work could draw on greater funding sources and help develop appropriate delivery partnerships. The growing complexity of FitC operations across the sector is discussed by McGuire (2008).

Everton Football in the Community (EFITC)[5] obtained official charitable status in 2003. The charity's first annual report (EitC, 2006b) highlighted partnerships with Highfield Care in providing football and physical activities for local disabled people as well as training disability aware coaches, Coca Cola and DCMS to develop female football, Kellogs in promoting healthy lifestyles, Weston Spirit and the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme in supporting young people's personal development, alongside funding from The Football Foundation to establish and develop their relationship with local schools.

Objects of the charity are stated as follows:

1 Further and assist in the education (on a physical and social basis) of children living in Merseyside and surrounding areas through the use of the game of football (including its history and rules) and other sporting activities as educational tools in furtherance of that object to provide Merseyside and surrounding areas, facilities for training, meetings, lectures and classes.
2 Provide facilities for recreational and other leisure time occupation of the people of Merseyside irrespective of ethnic origin, gender or religious belief in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life of the said persons.

The user groups are local schools, colleges and disability organisations.

The aims and focus of the work were thus conscious of the identity politics that had been emerging over the previous decade and was underpinned by a focus on children and young people through education and opportunity. There was, however, still a preoccupation with facilities, reflecting the funding focus of the Football Foundation and the 'Sport-for-All' legacy that dominated sport related funding from previous decades. Nonetheless, at a time when recession and the Coalition Government's austerity programme was hitting the voluntary sector with far reaching consequences (Milbourne, 2013), EitC was able to both diversify its funding streams and consolidate existing partnerships through the success it was having in achieving its targets. As national Government funding for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) fell by £1.3 billion (8.8%) between 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 and Liverpool's VCS faced a 30% cut in funding over the subsequent five years (Jones et al., 2014), EitC's income increased 163% in a similar period. Significantly, in 2009/2010 charitable grants received from seven significant funders amounted to £566,012. In 2014/2015, this had risen to £1,640,385 from a total of thirteen significant funding sources.

One of the first tasks undertaken by Denise Barrett–Baxendale when she took over the management of EitC in 2010 was a complete review of its organisational structure. This led to four significant advances. Firstly, the development of the new Business Plan 2013–2016 which arranged the various projects and work streams into thematic pillars:

1 Youth Engagement – including projects such as PL Kicks and Safe Hands
2 Education, Employment and Training – including the Everton Free School and Everton4Employment
3 Sport Development – which included a number of projects aimed at women and girls as well as the 26 disability teams that formed a bedrock of the work over the years
4 Health and Wellbeing – which included various programmes around mental health and wellbeing
5 Community and Business Development – which was set up to incorporate fundraising, grant writing, partnership development and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Secondly, and in relation to pillar number five cited above, a concern about measuring and analysing the impact of the organisation was addressed because it was recognised that, "not all data for all projects is uploaded to Views [monitoring system developed by Substance]," meaning that, "when the PL Annual Audit comes around the statistics can often be misguided" (EitC, 2014, p. 8).

> …looking ahead it is paramount that information being inputted in Substance Views is accurate for the management team to effectively use this data as an actual 'management tool'… It is imperative moving forward that as a management team we all better understand what the system can actually do after project information has been inputted…

Thirdly, the work of EitC began to receive external recognition with numerous awards at the local and national level. Finally, and arguably most significantly, in November 2011 the Government gave its approval to the Everton Free School, which opened in September 2012, and a concerted effort was made to develop a 'community campus'. This culminated in the opening of the Community Hub in 2016, housing a multi-purpose community centre and the Everton Free School.

## Education and Life-Long Learning

A significant element of many football clubs' community-based work has been educational. Everton is no different and arguably leads the way with the development of the Everton Free School. A project that for the former CEO,

Denise Barrett–Baxendale, was extremely important since arriving at the club in 2010. Her commitment to serving the city, despite other opportunities, was enacted prior to this through various academic and leadership roles within higher education and involvement in the Learning City initiative of which the city of Liverpool was a forerunner in the 1990s (Ben-Tovim, 1992; Hamilton & Jordon, 2011; Learning Cities Network, 1998; Longworth, 2006; Yang, 2012).

The development of the City Learning Centres centred around working with young people who found traditional schooling a challenge. A similar theme emerged from an initial mapping exercise which was conducted as part of EitC's organisational review. Speaking to participants across the employment programme, the mental health programme, the BTEC programme as well as the young offenders 'positive futures' initiative, it quickly became apparent that every person had a poor relationship with education and said things like, 'I took this route because I wasn't comfortable at school', or 'I didn't enjoy this at school. Education let me down. No-one in my family has a strong grip on education'. Consequently, part of the overarching philosophy of EitC became focused on early intervention and 'drilling down' to the route cause earlier and helping to provide a safety net for these young people. This was seen as being able to reduce issues such as criminality, self-harming or poor mental health. What's more, there was a clear focus on a pastoral approach.

> If we are in front of people and we can have that care and compassion at an early age and have fantastic success rates in education which we were achieving at that time with our BTEC programme, that was something I wanted to us to do. I wanted us to be community champions in education because it was the one factor that went across every single programme as being a deficit.
>
> (Interview with CEO)

Such a commitment is part of the long history of Everton's interest in education. In the 1880s, Everton's committee members included a schoolteacher, school governor and school master (Kennedy, 2011, p. 484). In 1910, the club even helped defender John Maconnachie to begin night classes for his fellow players. A report at the time described how "everybody has need of education" and "it is the duty of those who happen to be better educated than most of their fellows to join in the movement… let the footballer read, write, learn, and study" (Aberdeen Evening Express, 1910, p. 4). The work of EitC may be pioneering, but builds on the generations of Evertonians who have always sought to harness the potential of their community.

The development of the Everton Free School was the result of the Taylor Review into alternative educational provision aimed at meeting the needs of pupils who were being failed by mainstream schooling (Taylor, 2012). Free Schools were introduced as part of the subsequent programme of educational reform that aimed to raise attainment levels and reduce inequalities. The Free

Schools programme increased the opportunity for different educational providers to apply for state-funding to enter the 'school market'. This included groups of parents, businesses and charities, like EitC. It was an opportunity that the EitC Board of Trustees were willing to explore, though not without disagreement:

> …I was getting the response, 'we're a football club, what are you talking about?' I was saying, 'but when we have the power of the crest that we have to move a young person along, why would you not?' It's not whether you're meant to do it or not – you can do it so why would you not?
>
> (Interview with CEO)

Initially, the school began with one single student, but soon began to grow as more students were recruited through the commissioning process. This involves a detailed meeting with a prospective student and their parents or guardian, and explaining the offer that the school can make for them. In its early incarnation it operated across several sites, including a period at the Learning Exchange (LEX) at Liverpool Community College, with sports lessons run at Everton Football Club's training ground, Finch Farm. Operationally, this involved collecting students first thing in the morning from across the city in a minibus and transporting them between sites for different classes. This was a common enough practice for other EitC programmes aimed at young people and, in this case, had the advantage of encouraging school attendance, because as one teacher put it:

> a lot of the students were not coming in, the attendance wasn't very good at the time… so I started my day at 6.30am, and I'd go and pick up in a minibus with a colleague and we'd pick kids up from County Road to Oran Park, to Kirby, to Croxteth, Moss Green, Tuebrook, Toxteth. Bring the kids in, give them their breakfast… then teach.
>
> (cited in Corbett et al., 2019)

In 2015, the school moved to a purpose-built site on Spellow Lane, just around the corner from Everton FC's home stadium, Goodison Park. At the time of writing, Everton Free School and Football College caters for up to 120 pupils aged 13- to 16- and 200 16- to 19-year-old students. The School will form a key part of the legacy project when Everton Football Club move to a new stadium at Bramley Moor Dock.

## Conclusion: Charitable Legacies

Everton FC, not unlike numerous other professional football clubs, has a history of charitable giving. For the first 100 years or so of the club's existence, it responded, as many other businesses would have done, to requests for

financial support from those in need following unexpected disasters. This was though a legacy of the club's foundation in the Methodist church and the 'muscular Christianity' of the time. Throughout the club's history, there has been an underlying paternalism towards the local community. At times of major crisis, the club's metaphorically expressed origins as part of football's aristocracy has expanded that paternalistic role in voicing views about football clubs' collective responsibilities.

As the role of charity changed through the 20th century and the socio-economic profile of the city of Liverpool suffered due to increasing deindustrialisation alongside wider dissatisfaction amongst football's primary audience of young, working class males, Everton FC became early pioneers of pushing the boundaries first implemented through the introduction of Football in the Community (FitC) schemes in the 1980s. Charitable giving in terms of financial support was replaced by welfare support as various programmes were introduced. Initially, these were very much in the form of sport development initiatives driven by the 'Sport-for-All' agenda. Increasingly, though, more sophisticated programmes were introduced using the sport-plus and plus-sport (Coalter, 2007; 2013) modes of delivery.

This chapter has outlined the history of Everton Football Club's relationship with charity and what MacIntyre (2007 [1981]) might refer to as its 'virtuous tradition'. It has shown an ongoing paternalism which will be explored further in subsequent chapters that focus on research carried out with key stakeholders of the football club and its charitable trust, Everton in the Community (EitC), during the first COVID-19-induced lockdown in March–April 2020. It has highlighted continuities in the 'virtuous narrative' (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]) as a prelude to deeper contemporary analysis in subsequent chapters and provided a uniquely in-depth consideration of how a professional football club's community engagement work emerged and in relation to its earlier charitable approach to supporting 'communities of need'. As with any historical analysis, there is only so much that can be included with the aim of providing context to other elements of this work. There is a much wider history of the football industry's social responsibilities to be explored, to which, hopefully, this chapter can also contribute.

## Notes

1 Created in 1973, the Manpower Services Commission was a public body operating within the Department of Employment with a remit to co-ordinate employment and training services across the UK. They were most closely associated with the management of the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) intended to help alleviate high levels of unemployment in the 1980s.
2 Theories of 'football hooliganism' abound (Armstrong, 1998; Dunning et al., 1987; Frosdick & Marsh, 2005; Ingham, 1978; Stott & Pearson, 2007; Taylor, 1971; 1982) even if, according to Armstrong (1998), early work was sometimes spuriously evidenced.

3 The Hillsborough disaster might be seen as signifying more a cultural conclusion to the 'hooligan phenomenon' as preconceived understandings by the police of how to manage football crowds were inadequate because ongoing misunderstandings and attempts to curb behaviour were misinformed by predominating attitudes by the authorities towards football supporters.
4 Stone (2018b) provides a similar picture of Sheffield United's early community development strategy.
5 The name was changed to Everton in the Community in 2006. It then became the Everton Foundation in 2008 before returning to Everton in the Community in 2010.

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Chapter 4

# Emotional Labour and Authenticity in Sport for Development Work

## Everton FC and Its Employees

### Introduction

> [Normally] we have a formal [team] meeting, on like, a Monday or a Tuesday, where we talk about any issues with young people and stuff like that… But we were having a catch up on a Friday, and it was kind of, like, "So, what are you having for your tea?" "Where did you go for a walk?" Because there's nothing to talk about.
>
> (EitC employee)

> …at the very start, we were all just, kind of, uncertain. Nobody had a time frame as to how long it was going to be, we didn't know if it was going to be two weeks, if it was going to be two months, nobody knew. So initially we were just trying to do what we could to try and reassure our participants…
>
> (EitC employee)

Fisher et al. (2020, p. 247) noted that, "Vulnerable communities face significant risks in times of COVID-19. Communities with deeply entrenched poverty, overcrowded housing, and limited employment flexibility … face greater immediate risk." They go on to highlight that communities face increasing social inequalities without the vital support of extremely stretched local services many of which came to a standstill during the crisis. Furthermore, families were forced to try to maintain work–family balance at the same time as being put under increased pressure due to the closure of schools and other child care facilities, parents being responsible for home-schooling whilst also working from home or facing insecurity around the ongoing existence of their work (Fisher et al., 2020).

This chapter and the following one will consider some of these issues with respect to the work of Everton in the Community (EitC) and Everton Football Club (EFC). Here, the focus is on employees of the club at varying levels whilst Chapter 5 examines the experiences of participants with whom the EitC programmes engage. Like many sectors, the pandemic and its associated restrictions forced the football club to reorganise its working practices. As with other industries, some elements of the organisation were easier to undertake by

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working from home than others. Some operations were of course impossible to do remotely. The main business of EFC is to compete with other football clubs on the field of play. This was not possible with all professional and amateur sporting contests cancelled during lockdown. Similarly, the work undertaken by the club's charitable foundation Everton in the Community (EitC) relies heavily on face-to-face engagement with vulnerable members of the local community. Programmes such as those that work around mental wellbeing rely on building relationships slowly and developing confidence in people who may experience isolation outside of COVID-19 enforced conditions due to social anxiety and depression. Such ties can be quickly undone so maintaining contact was crucial. Likewise, youth engagement work relies on building trusting relationships. What emerged from staff interviews is detailed below with respect to a number of emergent themes: the importance and difficulties of continuing with (engagement) work in some way during a period of confusion and uncertainty; personal and professional difficulties created by the situation and the authenticity of the work; the culture of the club in offering support to staff and the emotional labour attached to the work; and the development of the Blue Family campaign, including the challenges and rewards that created.

## Confusion, Concern and Coping with Lockdown

The claim that the COVID-19 pandemic was 'a leveller' that affected everyone in equal measure is far from accurate. There were disproportionate consequences based on age, socio-economic position and ethnicity. Nonetheless, there are notable common experiences in terms of the immediate reactions of individuals across the case study organisation. Interviews were held with players and coaching staff, stewards and grounds staff, EitC frontline engagement and administrative support staff. At all levels, there were concerns for their jobs but also the welfare of others. Beyond that, it became about turning confusion into cooperation and concern into action.

From March 2020, when the pandemic first started to be recognised as a problem, numerous industries, professional football amongst them, were forced to shut down with many organisations in the UK making use of the Government's furlough scheme which allowed staff to be retained even though there was no work for them to do, a proportion of their wages being paid from the national purse. Some professional football clubs considered making use of the scheme but were roundly criticised when, at the elite level, their most high-profile staff members are extremely well remunerated footballers. Unlike other football clubs, Everton FC chose not to furlough any staff but instead redirect those personnel whose work could not continue. Such a decision was, in MacIntyrean terms (MacIntyre, 2007[1981]), an easy one to make for those in charge of running the club: for the common good of the staff and the communities that they support their employment should be secured but an organisation the solvency of which is underwritten by a

billionaire owner should not be using public monies in the form of the Government furlough scheme. Furthermore, it was felt that the individuals who rely on EFC and EitC in different ways, to greater or lesser degrees, needed support more than ever. However, it should be noted that the final decision was made following lengthy internal debate and as a consequence of strong and principled leadership from the senior management staff including the CEO at the time. Thus, it was decided to continue paying all staff, including match day stewards even though there were no match days and community engagement personnel even though their usual face-to-face work was not possible.

With regard to the latter, many frontline staff were reassigned as EitC's support mechanisms were redesigned to be of benefit to local people within the constraints of, and as a direct consequence of, the social restrictions. As discussed in the section focusing on the Blue Family Campaign (Chapter 2; this chapter), such redefinition led to its own teething problems for staff but from an instrumental work orientation (Goldthorpe et al., 1968), there was relief that they would at least keep their jobs which was important at a time when other concerns were uppermost: "The first week I thought, 'that's it, if I'm furloughed I'll be homeless' … I'm getting well treated by Everton and everything, [but] if I miss a couple of months, you're only a pay cheque away from the street yourself, aren't you…" (EitC employee). Such views were prevalent as confusion about what the pandemic and lockdown meant for the future of people's working lives.

Many of those working for EitC are on rolling contracts, as is the precarious nature of work in the Third Sector, but staff were quickly reassured about their positions. As one community coach highlights: "My contract was meant to run out in May during lockdown but I was reassured that my contract would be renewed anyway… As soon as we went into lockdown I got the call, being told that I'm basically being kept on…" Such was the impact of the crisis, though, these worries were echoed by senior coaches within the football club who were equally unsure what the future might hold for football as a professional sport at a time when domestic fixtures had previously only been cancelled on a scale such as this during the second world war:

> It felt like a holiday to me at the beginning… but then after that there's this nagging feeling in your mind of when am I going to get back to work… I felt like I needed to secure my role because of the fear of [never returning to] normality and unemployment… I wanted to save my own position. Because I was worrying that there's going to be so many changes, going to be so many people laid off, so many people losing their jobs. There was a real sense of unemployment, really.

Using a football club as a window on the world during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic shows the 'subjective feeling of precarity' that

has come to pervade all social strata (Alberti et al., 2018; Dörre et al., 2004, 2013; Kalleberg, 2009). Insecurity has become a dominant feature of the human condition (if indeed it has not always been) and is clearly exposed in the initial reactions to the emerging global crisis at the local and individual levels. For Ulrich Beck (1992), such reactions are the consequence of transitioning from industrial modernity to a risk society. What that means is a recognition of social conditions whereby social inequality cannot be reduced to simplified appeals to social class within the boundaries of the nation state. In Beck's risk society, individualisation, globalisation and cosmopolitanism are the defining factors. COVID-19 was a global crisis which required cosmopolitan solutions. It is emblematic of 'catastrophic' risks that form part of Beck's thesis. The risk society, though, is one in which the local consequences of globalisation become individualised and such 'catastrophic' hazards act as both fuel for and a backdrop to everyday lives defined by anxiety. Such anxieties are those for which EitC provide support to participants and the local community through numerous programmes and whose experiences during the pandemic will be explored in the following chapter. Likewise, the critique of Beck's work (Goldthorpe, 2002; Mythen, 2004) will be exposed. For now, though, it is enough to acknowledge that what EitC represents within Beck's thesis is one of the many local institutions to which risk and responsibility has been devolved as part of the great risk shift (Hacker, 2008; Kennett et al., 2015). A shift that has seen neo-liberal adjustments to spatial and temporal political responsibility for, responses to and redefinitions of risk within global and local contexts. As such, the anxieties commonly felt by EitC participants and local people whose lives are defined by multiple indices of deprivation found solidarity amongst Everton staff.

Whilst acknowledging their own worries and concerns during a time of crisis, staff were also quick to focus their attention on those for whom they have responsibility. A member of the EitC team responsible for supporting people with mental health issues had this to say about the initial period of lockdown:

> I think at the beginning, like I say, it was just shock, wasn't it… then I was getting it into my head, just another two weeks, just another two weeks. I was doing it like that and then it got more and more serious. I was like, oh God, maybe it's another month and I sort of like crashed a bit. I was really worrying about [the participants]… and everybody around you.

Part of the solution for this staff member in terms of coping with the crisis was through taking personal responsibility for extending the engagement work because, "I do miss the contact with the [participants] and texts are alright but every now and again I need to hear their voice." The sudden removal of certain support mechanisms – gym sessions that are more about social contact than physical exercise or coffee mornings that provide the only reason for some to leave the house – "was quite shocking for some of the

[participants]… I was texting them and phoning them, because I know the effect it had on me… I was quite concerned about some of [them] who are living on their own or haven't got the support and stuff like that."

One of the strengths of EitC's engagement work is the commitment of the staff and their empathy in working with programme participants with a range of vulnerabilities, from young people with over burdensome familial responsibilities or at risk of criminal activity to adults with various levels of mental health issues or physical disabilities. This is not to single out EitC from numerous other public service and Third Sector organisations whose staff show similar compassion and dedication to their clients, service users and programme participants. It is to highlight the meaningfulness of football club-based community organisations and their staff at this point in time.

One of the EitC engagement team sums up what many were feeling when COVID-19 first arrived in the UK: "I was feeling anxious about what it was going to mean for our country as a whole… I've got family members that I would worry about… it was just a generally quite scary feeling. And I think at the very start, we were all just, kind of, uncertain." But she soon goes on to extend those concerns to the EitC participants with whom she works:

> worry as well for the young people… Because you know, not everyone's home environment is a nice place to be… And to ask someone to stay in their house for that period of time, you know, it's difficult. Like, we work with a family… the mum has got six children and she lives above a shop, like a small flat…. So, to say, 'Oh, you can't go out,' or whatever… Like, you've got six kids in that environment, it's difficult, do you know what I mean?

Similarly, at the other end of the scale, those football coaches who were worried about their own futures in what they also consider to be a precarious career (see Roderick & Schumacker, 2017) were equally concerned about the players, particularly within the development squads. Decisions had already been made about the futures of young players when the crisis happened and whilst such decisions are tough there is in more 'normal' times the reassurance that being released from a club of Everton's stature means that players will always find work at a lower level. This was not necessarily the case in 2020, which vexed those who had built a relationship with these players during their formative years. The biggest concern expressed by one coach was that,

> There's a couple of players who still haven't [got a contract at another club] which is new because a player leaving Everton would normally get fixed up quite quickly because of the level that he's played at. [They haven't] because I think money is so tight now with no attendances in the Football League and football clubs being run very close to administration levels.

For first team players as well, the sudden absence of their regular working regime was a significant challenge. The external goods (in terms of wealth accumulation) are often the focus of debate around football players at the elite level and was highlighted early on in the pandemic by the Health Secretary at the time, Matt Hancock, who singled out Premier League footballers from highly paid individuals in other industries by suggesting they should take a pay cut (Ellen, 2020). This was explicitly challenged by former players such as Wayne Rooney, Gary Neville and Gary Lineker (PA Media, 2020) whose opinions were echoed in research interviews with playing and coaching staff at EFC:

> I think that was out of order because a lot footballers do help the communities and donate to charities and help out under the radar… it just doesn't get noticed… But I know so many footballers that help out that people don't know about and for us to be singled out I don't think was fair. I do think it's right that we do help out because we're in a fortunate position, but I don't think we should have been singled out because I feel like it's an easy target to blame footballers and ask for footballers' money… I know 99% of footballers wanna help out… most of us are really good people and want to do what's right for others.
>
> (EFC 1st Team Player)

The 'interminable character' (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]) of this moral debate arguably provided a distraction from other Governmental decisions affecting the course of the pandemic in the UK (Ellen, 2020). The overwhelming and fairly banal perspective of players from within the case study club can be summarised by the following account of waking up one morning to a message saying not to come into training that day and remain at home until further notice; that the situation will be reviewed and further information relayed about when it is safe to return to work:

> So, it was strange. I was disappointed obviously, gutted not to be able to go into… everybody loves going into training. Obviously, we still had a lot of important games left to play. We wanted to get that finished, but at the time it was a bit more confusion; not really understanding really what is fully happening in the world at the minute. Obviously then, about a week later, the whole country goes into lockdown… it's obviously a long period of time to be stuck at home and you're pulling your hair out. You just want to play football. It's what we love doing. But then you also think of the bigger picture and there's a lot of people a lot worse off than [us].
>
> (EFC 1st Team Player)

Unlike the popular discourse that concentrates on external goods, there is a focus on the internal goods attached to succeeding as a professional football

player as well as an acknowledgment of the common good. Of course, there are inevitable differences between a high-income professional football player whose concerns for his wellbeing were the lack of social contact due to golf courses being shut down and a community engagement worker sharing the kitchen table as a home-based workstation with two other people in the household – "I'm in a different room for every Zoom [meeting]… I'm on my bed one time, I'm on [my children's] bed another time… I'm sitting here and I've got one leg lying on the bed, I'm bending over the computer…" (EitC employee). The point though is that there is a contingency in terms of what is possible for each individual's own teleological journey but that, within EFC at least, what might be considered each person's humanity becomes apparent within the wider narrative of the organisation. A narrative that was potentially being owned by the staff as they provided feedback to management and enacted the values associated with family and community around which the club want to be perceived.

> I think we all have a responsibility to look after each other. I think we all have a responsibility to look after our family, our neighbours, our street, our towns. Because if we don't, who is going to do it. I think in this world that we live in now, after what's happened and what we're living through together, I think it's brought people closer together than ever before.
>
> (EFC Football Coach)

Debates around the reliability and honesty of interview data notwithstanding, the proof of such statements is in the MacIntyrean pudding of consistency over time (see Chapter 1) alongside the routine embodiment and enactment of any such virtue. This research is not capable of, nor has the aim of, testing the commitment of each interviewee to any statement of virtue. It is about taking a less atomistic perspective in order to explore the idea that the collective humanity shown during the COVID-19 pandemic is the result of the organisation's continuing (internal) narrative of existing for a common good, over and beyond any external goods related to profit, prestige or power. A narrative that is embodied in the actions of those working for Everton FC and Everton in the Community and reinforced through the reflections provided by this research.

To do so is to situate such discussions in relation to the concept of 'authenticity': an intangible concept referring to, "that which is 'real' or 'genuine' or 'true'" (Lehman et al., 2019, p. 21).[1] In trying to substantiate the concept, Lehman et al. (2019) usefully categorise scholarly perspectives on authenticity in terms of consistency, conformity and connection, highlighting overlaps and marked distinctions. Most informative for the purposes of this research is the notion of authenticity as consistency. Consistency between thoughts and deeds, between ideas and actions. And, as in MacIntyre (2007 [1981]), teleological consistency. In this sense, to be authentic is to show consistency

between self-understandings of what is good and the outward facing actions based upon those understandings over time. Beyond that, authenticity as conformity values an entity by the extent to which it, "conforms to the social category to which it has been assigned or that it has claimed for itself" (Lehman et al., 2019, p. 12). Within the academic literature on football and within popular discourse, this is often conveyed within fan cultures as a relationship between the football club and its locality (and by extension a perceived support base that is also local to the club). Such claims to authenticity within football discourse are contested (Brooks, 2019), but a dominant perspective within fan culture categorises a football club as being an extension and representation of local identity, historically attached to the club's origins (or a specific point in time from which the 'invented traditions' the current fanbase have attached to the club) (King, 1998; Millward, 2011; Nash, 2000; Robson, 2000). A final defining feature of authenticity might be the ability to validate a connection between an entity and specific time, place or person. In an extension of and connection with consistency and conformity, such ideas of authenticity emerge within the realm of sport when clubs or teams are relocated from a specific place through which their identities, and those of the people connected to them, are commonly defined.

Fundamentally, if the club genuinely exists, at least in part, for the common good, this can be evidenced by a consistency between internal values and beliefs on the one hand and external expressions of such on the other; the way in which the football club's self-definition as the 'People's Club' conforms to the social category of such, as defined by 'the people'; and the connections that exist over time between the personnel representing the club and those on whose lives it has an effect. The following section explores the perspectives of those working for EFC and EitC in terms of their relationships with local people and the virtue of building 'authentic' relationships in pursuit of the common good at a time of crisis.

## Authenticity, Adaptation, Emotional Labour and Work Orientation

> I think footballers do so much good work that actually doesn't get the acclaim that maybe it should and I know that the players and the clubs don't do it for the acclaim, they do it because they want to do it and because there's a need to do it.
>
> (EFC Football Coach)

This notion of need is something repeated time and again within the research data, as is the agency of those making a choice to help meet the need. The sociological understanding of that need will be developed further in the next chapter, which focuses on the views of participants in EitC programmes and members from the local communities. The perception of those needs

from the perspective of staff, though, is an important motivating factor for their pursuit of internal goods and desire for excellence in achieving the 'common good'.

> …the need is there and if the need is there [and] there isn't great organisations like ourselves and others, it suddenly starts spiralling into social unrest, crime rates, suicide rates, who knows. It's not to say those things aren't already prevalent, as they are. But I think the service that we're providing, our motivation for doing it, is genuine because the need is so great. The more people doing good work, the better.
>
> (EitC Team Manager)

The genuineness of the staff can be seen in explanations given as to why they do what they do. A member of staff working on a project supporting individuals with mental health issues is effusive in their description of what the project offers to participants – "It's absolutely brilliant and the [participants] love it. They get so much out of it. I've seen a lot, they could come in and join one day and within a couple of weeks they're totally different people…" – but also what working on the programme means:

> It's just really, really good and I love it, I absolutely love it. I get so much out of it… I love seeing the [participants] coming on. I love seeing the confidence growing… to just see somebody, even just attend a session for ten minutes is a big thing for me because I know how hard that's been for them… I just wish they could access it during the lockdown because that's probably when they'll be at their most vulnerable.

Again, there is immediate concern about the restrictions placed on EitC's ability to do their work as a consequence of the pandemic but also the staff member is putting their self in the position of the participants by being able to relate to their difficulties in even getting as far as attending a session.

Acknowledging Bauman's (2015) challenge to explain our conduct in active rather than passive terms (as noted in Chapter 1), staff motivation often is 'because of' their own less than straight forward backgrounds but also 'in order to' provide positive examples through their own lived experience. This was very apparent from the research on EitC's youth engagement work (Stone & Hough, 2020). Despite not achieving high levels of formal educational achievement or fulfilling others' expectations staff regularly impressed upon young people how, like them, they could be positive role models within their communities or friendship groups and positively utilise their experiences in informing their career choices. This is the beginnings of an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach as opposed to deficit models more akin to the dominant political discourses of MUD and SID exposed by Levitas (2005) and described in Chapter 1 of this book.

For one worker who, due to his sporting abilities, was expected to develop a career as an athlete, the desire to be a professional was not there. In seeking an alternative use for his skills, he discovered how much satisfaction he got from working in a role that was more about building relationships with participants than honing their sporting talents.

> I was always pigeonholed to do sport because I'm good at it… I did [elite] sport for four years and I realised I actually hate this… That's when I started, like, football coaching. Then when I started doing coaching of 'naughty' kids I thought, I actually like doing this… speaking to these. When I'm [just doing the] coaching, I'm not getting nothing out of it. They're just playing football… If I'm speaking to someone and they're opening up to me, I'm getting something out of it.

The essence of this work is that football is a tool for engaging participants but the real work is through the use of youth work skills which aim to support young people's growth and development 'as people' (Stone & Hough, 2020; Young, 2006). Another youth engagement worker explained the joy they get from their job:

> I just love it… I've been doing it for years. It's just something that I enjoy doing. I enjoy being able to help young people to be who they are and be independent. To build on their own character, to help them shape themselves or to develop themselves and be the person that they want to be.

That this commitment is not in any way artificial is important to building relationships with participants as is the feeling that staff can demonstrate empathy with those they are supporting due to their own closeness to the challenges they face:

> I understand a young person from my area. I think I can engage with any young person, I'm just confident that I can and… I understand what goes on… [from a participant's point of view] it's like, 'well, he's from the area, he knows what it's like to be living around here so I could half-listen to him'.
>
> (EitC employee)

This might be conceived in terms of pastoral power (Waring & Latif, 2018) whereby frontline staff, "actively shape and are shaped by the community" (Mangan et al., 2025). Crucially, it is the ability to relate to participants because of mutual understandings of the local social context or complexities of achieving personal wellbeing that are important rather than sporting ability or association with a professional football club. This was highlighted by the evaluation team of the Positive Futures programme, in one of the first major examinations of such sport-based youth engagement work, who noted that,

"whilst successful relationship building may be assisted by sports competency, it is *primarily* driven by participants' identifications with the socio-cultural background and approach of staff" (Crabbe, 2006, p. 20).

In other strands of EitC's community engagement, the authenticity of the work relies on the lived experience of staff in similar ways, whether it is issues around mental wellbeing or social exclusion. Such experience is then nurtured to be of use by developing other skills in youth engagement or community development.

> I want to bring some of [my experience] and my relationships that I've built in [other roles] across the city… And [add] my experience and knowledge to the staff team because I think there's a lot of coach and sports-based people but there's not as many who've got [for example] such a big youth work background.
>
> (EitC employee)

This both reflects and counters scholarship in the wider field of (international) Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) that highlights the predominance of neo-colonial, evangelical rhetoric on the role of sport amongst frontline workers at the expense of the relationship building and community/social development skills that should be the priority for 'plus-sport' programs (e.g. Coalter, 2007; 2013; Crabbe, 2006; Darnell, 2012; Welty Peachey et al., 2018). It also connects with workforce studies of the not-for-profit and public service labour markets more generally. For employees working in the third sector, intrinsic rewards (or internal goods) tend to be a more motivating factor in the desire for the jobs they do (Leete, 2001; Light, 2002; Lyons et al., 2006; Mann, 2006) than extrinsic rewards (or external goods). Park and Word (2012, p. 712) noted that, "nonprofit employees [are] much more likely to indicate they [come] to work because of the nature of their job and the common good… [and] are significantly motivated by a desire to serve the public interest." Furthermore, it has been suggested that, whilst public service and third sector employees share similar attitudes and motivations towards their work (Houston, 2008), there is a tendency amongst third sector staff to be directed more specifically towards meeting more localised needs than servicing a more generalised 'public good' (Lee & Wilkins, 2011; Selander, 2015). The manager of one particular strand of EitC's work makes clear that, "from our point of view, it's a pleasure… to be able to support and bridge that gap [between professional health-care services and individual self-sufficiency] for the people of our city that we are so invested in…"

That investment stems from the football club's narrative of being 'the people's club' and the 'reinvented tradition' (Beiner, 2007; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) of football clubs' positions in relation to their communities. More corporeally, it is enacted in the work that EitC staff undertake and relationships they build in support of local people whose needs are not being met by the statutory services or more

personal or individualised support networks and self-management techniques implied by neo-liberal discourses of civic responsibility. It is, most importantly, embodied through delivery staff who are part of the local communities whose needs they are trying to meet and with whom they share a common identity – "I grew up around here so I feel this is my area, it's what I'm passionate about… I'd give everything to this community." (EitC employee). In this sense, EitC can be seen as providing an opportunity for local people who have the requisite skills and abilities to be part of the solution. It is not though necessarily a bottom-up solution, driven by community-led redistribution of resources to build capacity in achieving greater cultural and political citizenship. It is a more paternalistic approach – reactionary rather than developmental. Whilst there was evidence that a more asset-based community development approach was beginning to be developed when the pandemic emerged, much of the work during the research period is based more on a deficit model – the *need* is there, and we are in a position to meet those needs.

Nonetheless, it shows 'authenticity' in a number of ways. There is consistency between, in the language of Goffman (1959), frontstage presentations or actions as a true reflection of backstage self-concepts or beliefs and staff are connected to participants by virtue of being from the local area and/or having had similar experiences in life. However, authenticity is not (necessarily) related to their connections with the football club as fans (a dimension of authenticity addressed further in Chapter 6). Some staff are Everton FC supporters which feeds into the pride that they have in undertaking work in the name of the organisation with which they have a strong emotional connection. Others may be Liverpool FC supporters or lack any kind of football-based affiliation at all. In the initial stages of the Blue Family campaign, this caused problems for some EitC staff tasked with contacting vulnerable Everton fans; their usual employment being based on their skill set as a community engagement worker not their interest in or knowledge of football:

> …some people when you phoned up and you say Everton, they think you're someone quite high up in the club… I work for the charity and I couldn't even name all the players… do you know what, I couldn't even name one player! I don't know much about football. I was worried as well [that] I was going to make a show of the club because [they're] getting a phone call from someone from Everton and I don't know anything about [the playing side of] the football club.
>
> (EitC employee)

What makes this statement important is that the member of staff, whilst not knowing much about football, recognised the importance it has for the people they were calling and that one of the internal goods of Everton FC in its engagement with fans is to provide a personal connection and acknowledge the significant role the club has in their lives. They understand that, like all

football clubs, they are more than just a provider of entertainment; that there is a deeper connection as the club forms part of many fans' narrative self. This member of staff recognised that they were unable to fulfil what they perceived to be part of their responsibility in the new (temporary) role they had been assigned and therefore felt that they were letting the club down.

> After about two or three weeks I said I didn't want to do any more calls. I just felt like I wasn't personally equipped with the right skills to phone these people. I didn't have the medical [experience], the mental health background, or the football knowledge to give any just service to this phone call.
>
> (EitC employee)

It is this recognition of lacking authenticity in this particular scenario that is important. In their usual role, there is no such deficit as their employment, like all staff, is based on appropriate skills and a passion for supporting the participants with whom EitC engage, for which other research shows testament (e.g. Lucas & Hanson, 2019; Stone & Hough, 2020). Concerns such as this were addressed partly through the dynamic approach to the Blue Family Campaign, adapting as lockdown progressed and staff brought issues to the attention of their managers. The development of the campaign has been detailed in Chapter 2, but to briefly recap, the initial response was to identify and contact vulnerable fans of the football club and referrals received from promoting the campaign in this initial formulation. The benefits were to both those identified to be potentially at risk (discussed in the following chapter) and to staff themselves through being redeployed rather than redundant. Such reassignment was clearly not without its challenges though.

> Some of the stories that were attached to these people that we had to phone were end of life care. I think because I was so used to talking to teenagers that you forget how to speak to vulnerable adults. You have to rethink and it's not all jokes and laughs trying to build the relationship up.
>
> (EitC employee)

There are two things here that are significant. The member of staff is taking responsibility their self, by suggesting that they have forgotten how to 'speak to vulnerable adults' due to their work being dominated by 'talking to teenagers'. The other is the significance of relationship building over time when undertaking such engagement work. This was recognised as the Blue Family Campaign quickly developed, splitting into the Universal campaign and the Targeted campaign. As described elsewhere, the former was fundamentally a helpline service, initially directed at vulnerable Everton supporters, from which anyone could benefit. The latter was the result of discussions about how best to support existing participants on the various programmes run by

EitC, who needed it more than ever, in light of the restrictions to continuing face-to-face support on which the organisation's engagement is based. The Targeted campaign will be picked up in the next chapter. The fundamental issue outlined by some of the staff involved with the Universal campaign is summed up by one of the EitC managers:

> …it has taken its toll. I speak to a lot of the staff in our team who are involved in those types of calls and they feel the same because different to when we're supporting one of our participants, we've got a level of rapport already, we've got a level of trust, we know the wider support network that they're involved with and that we can rally around and plug them into…

The strength of the Blue Family Campaign as a response to the unfolding crisis was the way in which it developed so as to provide appropriately beneficial support. The desire to do whatever they could is admirable but realistically, the organisation was not necessarily equipped to offer the service that some people needed. This had the potential to cause further harm to those seeking help and raise problems for staff, whose caring attitudes and awareness of the issues motivated them to adapt as best they could but raised their own anxiety levels as well. That this was recognised early on is testament to the adaptability of the staff, management, leadership and structure of (the relationship between) Everton FC and Everton in the Community as organisations.

In academic terms, it speaks to the complexities associated with such relationship-based work and the (genuine) emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Humphrey et al., 2015) undertaken by EitC staff in pursuit of a moral authenticity. That is to service the needs of humanity at the local level in which EitC works requires a conviction and character the virtue of which is genuine. It also recognises that the boundaries that such workers span (Aldrich & Herker, 1977) as part of their regular work changed during lockdown – both as a result of a change in the type of person with whom staff were engaging and how, and a change in the needs of those with whom they already engaged.

The subtleties attached to 'emotional labour' have been highlighted through a distinction between 'surface acting', 'deep acting' and 'genuine' emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hoschschild, 1983; Humphrey et al., 2015).[2] Much work in this field has focused on service industries as a consequence of Hoschschild's (1983) seminal research on the commercialisation of employees' feelings through her study of the airline industry.

There has, though, since been much academic interest in the emotional labour attached to care professionals and community workers in what can be termed care labour or human service work (de St. Croix, 2013; Gorman, 2000; Gregor, 2010; Smith, 1992; Taggart, 2011). Erickson and Stacey (2012) point out that whilst the literatures on care labour and emotional labour share

common origins, there needs to be more of a distinction between the emotion work carried out by human service agents and those operating in the commercial sector (the increasing intrusion of commercialisation into caring professions notwithstanding). Otherwise, "…a cashier wishing a customer [to] 'have a nice day' [becomes] equated with, for example, the emotional skills required to care for terminally ill patients and their families." (Erickson & Stacey, 2012, p. 182).

Caring for terminally ill patients is not within the remit of EitC's programmes of engagement. However, as earlier quotes highlight, staff found themselves on the frontline of compassion during the early weeks of the first lockdown during 2020 as a consequence of being reassigned. Following de St. Croix (2013), it is clear from the earlier discussion that EitC staff have a passion for and emotional involvement in their work that aids an authentic commitment to their jobs. And it is in part this authenticity stemming from an emotional involvement for which staff are receiving remuneration – selling their emotional labour for a wage, in other words. Generally, they are able to skilfully frame their emotional intelligence to be a resource for the work they undertake (Guy & Lee, 2015) so as not to become, in Marxist terms, alienated from their roles. However, for some whose focus moved from participants with whom they had exerted much emotional energy over time to individuals with whom they were not familiar, in terms of having an existing relationship and in terms of their needs, it was a challenge to their emotional management strategies. This, at a time when the carework (Abel & Nelson, 1990; Malhotra & Misra, 2015) required in managing their own domestic lives was also more emotionally demanding due to combinations of homeworking, school closures and reduced social support mechanisms being available as a result of social distancing measures.

This book is unable to do justice to the 'emotion practice' (Erickson & Stacey, 2012) in which EitC staff are engaged as part of their daily workload. This is potentially highly fertile ground for carework and emotional labour researchers to investigate as part of a wider field of study around the responsibilities being required of the Third Sector and Sport for Development. What is pertinent is that the breaching of everyday (working) routines (Garfinkel, 1967) and expectations as a consequence of the pandemic exposed and intensified the emotion work that was undertaken more usually as an unacknowledged element of community sport workers' skill base. In some cases, staff were not experienced enough in either surface or deep acting (Hoschschild, 1983) as a way of maintaining the emotional balance needed and were thus at risk of the negative fallout of such emotional labour.

As so much of the engagement work in its existing form had to come to a sudden halt the initial solution to maintain contact and provide a service for the common good was through the Blue Family Universal Campaign. In recognition of the need to provide something more substantive for EitC participants, there were also benefits to the staff as the Targeted campaign was

more aligned to the practical skills and engagement approaches of frontline workers. This was encapsulated by a member of the disability staff team:

> It's been good, a good experience [delivering food packages] because you still get that contact with other people … I probably would get bored being stuck at home. So it's just better, being able to go out because you're helping as well, not just being helpless like stuck in.

What is being expressed here is this staff member's understanding of their role-identification. For them, the desire to help is a defining element of their self-concept and working identity. They are not used to being on the end of a phone trying to provide support or feeling helpless in the face of significant challenges facing local people that they are used to proactively supporting. This was recognised by managers who understand that such work is mutually beneficial: "a lot of the staff have missed out supporting the group, missed out being part of the team as much as participants have." Furthermore, managers themselves became far more aware of the emotional responsibilities in their own roles, which were also not as familiar without the regular face-to-face contact with staff. A member of the senior management commented thus:

> There are people in my team who are on their own… you start to wonder how everyone is [coping]. You start to take the responsibility or feel a responsibility to make sure everyone is okay. It's very difficult to do that when you can't have a cup of tea with them and weigh up their body language or look them in the eye and get a sense of things. I found that quite a challenge, feeling responsible for the wellbeing of so many people but actually having little way of really … some will open up to you and talk to you very openly about their feelings and how they're coping, whereas others, it's more challenging.

In their analysis of how leaders perform emotional labour, Humphrey et al. (2008, p. 163) point out its particular importance in times of crisis, stating that, "During these times leaders need to publicly display emotions indicative of confidence and optimism even if they privately share the same worries and anxieties of their subordinates." In doing so, it may be necessary to employ surface acting to a greater extent as the emotions that managers need to display are not so aligned with those they are feeling. It is therefore not surprising that this senior manager found it challenging.

More generally, managers were keen to stress their awareness of the situation their staff were facing:

> it's taken its toll, I'll be honest, [but] we're hopefully practising what we preach and I've been saying that to the team, don't feel like we have to be … bullet proof or beyond susceptibility to the type of things that we

> support our participants to help navigate because if anything, we're not being true to them and we wouldn't be being true to ourselves… You'd be a robot and you wouldn't have the right emotional balance or emotional intelligence to go through a situation like this and not feel a little bit overwhelmed at times…
>
> (EitC Team Manager)

Once again, the defining feature is authenticity in terms of 'being true to ourselves' as a collective whose internal values are related to emotional intelligence, of 'practicing what we preach'. That there is a 'consistency' between frontstage and backstage and between actions and feelings.

The nature of the organisation is such that it has developed strong internal support structures that were reassuring for staff:

> because of the field that we all work in, the support is phenomenal. I know I could phone or get in touch with any of my colleagues, anyone at any time and I know the support will be there. So yes, I don't know what I'd do without Everton in the Community, to be honest. Especially at this time.
>
> (EitC employee)

This blurs the boundaries between those staffing the programmes and those participating in them. As already noted, part of the authenticity and 'emotional harmony' (Grandey et al., 2013) felt by frontline staff is due to their own biographies and experiences of the issues faced by many of the participants with whom they engage. This does mean that the 'ethic of care' (Barnes, 2012) needs to be present at multiple levels of the organisation.

> From my point of view as a manager, there was that added responsibility to ensure that staff, their welfare and wellbeing was okay and that they felt comfortable to complete tasks, find a new way of working. There are definitely challenges and questions … but I think now everyone is into a routine, settled and this is their new normal really.
>
> (EitC Team Manager)

It has been suggested that third sector employees receive less social support from supervisors and colleagues when compared to their counterparts in the public or private sector (Selander, 2015). Staff were, however, keen to highlight how well supported they felt:

> From the club's perspective, you really can't fault them. They've been unbelievable for the staff. Obviously, people were worried about what was going to happen early on. Throughout the whole of it, I can't speak highly enough of the leadership and the support that they've given, and then

> obviously what we've created from the community's point of view and the programme that we've got, I really honestly can't fault them.
>
> (EitC employee)

A team manager within EitC is cognisant of this at all levels of the organisation, "…from the top down there's a real sense of care. Concern around wanting to be at their best in their respective roles…" This is the virtuous approach with which MacIntyre (2007 [1981]) is concerned. Within the practice of 'community sport', one of the internal goods is that of 'caring' but this extends from frontline workers engaging directly with participants to managers, support staff and other representatives and employees of the football club itself.

This supports similar perspectives provided by other research indicating higher levels of work engagement from staff in the Third Sector (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Mirvis & Hackett, 1983; Selander, 2015).

## Conclusions/Summary

> The club didn't furlough any staff, the club continued to pay the staff their wages. So that was an incredible gesture by the owner and the board to do that. A lot of clubs went down the furloughing route and we didn't. I find that an incredible gesture in this current climate that the club – I'm talking about the whole club – didn't do that. It was just incredible, an incredible gesture.
>
> (EitC employee)

Following the restrictions imposed on the country as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of Everton FC and Everton in the Community changed dramatically with various implications for the staff of the football club and its charitable foundation. There were inevitably instrumental concerns (Goldthorpe et al., 1968) about the consequences of the pandemic on people's jobs and the income upon which they rely. But, as one senior manager noted, "once they found out that their jobs were secure and their salaries were being secured, I think that was a big pressure off their minds and something I know they're all very thankful for." It might be interpreted that such gratitude led to being coerced into undertaking roles for which staff were not prepared. However, it is more likely that the genuine connection between staff and the club's stakeholders (be they primarily as fans or as participants in a community programme) and the authentic consistency (Lehman et al., 2019) between individual actors' front and back stages (Goffman, 1959) reflect, in MacIntyre's (2007 [1981]) understanding, the goods internal to the practice of football community engagement as part of the club's narrative quest within a sporting tradition.

There were initial difficulties in adapting work that relies so much on face-to-face connectivity, but once staff felt more secure themselves, they were

quick to voice their concern about others. Initial involvement in the Universal element of the Blue Family Campaign caused some to feel anxious as the 'genuine emotional labour' (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Humphrey et al., 2015) which usually helps to support their work-based self-concept was less easy to justify due to the complex relationship between their predisposition towards empathy and care for others and the skills that allow that to flourish for the benefit of a particular 'client-base' with whom they regularly engage. The dynamic approach taken by Everton FC and EitC to the pandemic and consequent Blue Family Campaign meant that staff could be reassigned once more as the Targeted element allowed staff to focus on local people with whom they already had a more regular interactive relationship.

Relationships such as those which EitC and Everton FC have developed with their various stakeholders need to be flexible within the parameters dominating the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) in which anxieties are subject to global, cosmopolitan factors but managed at the (extra)local level. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these stakeholders, as participants in various programmes offered by EitC or fans of Everton FC, will be explored in the next two chapters with reference to the role of the football club and its charitable foundation. The overwhelming evidence presented in this chapter, though, points to a staff team that, during the early stages of the pandemic were concerned for their own wellbeing, that of their colleagues and that of their customer/client base. It also shows that such concerns are a significantly authentic element of their working lives which is nurtured to be presented as part of the Everton FC brand.

## Notes

1 Lehman et al. (2019) draw philosophical and sociological connections with regard to authenticity as consistency between the ideas of Socrates and Aristotle through the existentialism of Kierkegaard to more contemporary concepts based on the dramaturgical approach of Goffman (1959). The latter conceived individuals in terms of the difference between their 'backstage' and 'frontstage' performances; between the inner or private and outer or public spheres of everyday life. In terms of contemporary research themes, this translates to research around self-concept, primarily focusing on the backstage, self-presentation, primarily focusing on the frontstage and organisational or brand management, which extends the first two themes to entities other than individuals.

2 Surface acting is being able to display or perform emotions for the benefit of the job at hand that are not in line with the actual feelings of the individual at the time. Deep acting involves a conscious effort on the part of an employee to summon the feelings necessary to perform or display the corresponding emotion appropriate for their role (Hoschschild, 1983). Hoschschild's use of theatrical metaphor owes much to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical understandings of impression management in everyday life. Furthermore, subsequent analyses of emotional labour have often viewed it through a negative lens, as dissonance between what Goffman (1959) sees as 'front'- and 'back'-stage performances, as a form of display that lacks authenticity. This is in part the consequence of studies focused on 'surface

acting' within service industries (Grandey et al., 2013; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Wang et al., 2011).

It has been argued that there is a third form of emotional labour: spontaneous or genuine emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). This is when, "service workers' natural and spontaneous emotions comply with social expectations and organizational display rules such that they do not have to deliberately summon the correct emotions" (Humphrey et al., 2015, p. 751). This is particularly apparent in caring professions.

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Chapter 5

# Sport for Development and Insecurity in the Risk Society

## What Lockdown Meant for Everton in the Community and Its Participants

### Introduction

The focus of this chapter is a number of specific programmes organised by Everton in the Community (EitC) and the immediate consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the participants within them. Specifically, the organisation's work with young people and projects designed to support adults who struggle with their mental health. The former includes projects such as Safe Hands and Breathing Space which were housed within the wider programme @41Goodison, as well as Premier League Kicks and Premier League Inspires programmes. The latter includes the Imagine Your Goals and Girls On Side initiatives. A full list of the 32 support projects and programmes that were running at the time that COVID-19 forced the cessation of social life as we knew it are listed in Appendix 2.

Like most football clubs' community engagement arms in the UK, EitC is run independently from Everton Football Club. The majority of the projects and programmes are funded from sources external to the business of the football club itself. The benefits that the club offers are in the form of administrative and marketing support, capital investment in physical spaces such as the Community Hub, Blue Base, Free School and 41 Goodison Road, and brand association. Certain programmes such as those funded by the Premier League are directly linked to EitC's connection with Everton Football Club, but many others are through the development of local partnerships. The benefits of community partnerships to the football club are often expressed in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (e.g. Anagnostopoulos & Shilbury, 2013; Breitbarth & Harris, 2008; Kolyperas et al., 2015; Walters & Panton, 2014). However, as proposed in Chapter 1, the external goods of the partnership between Everton Football Club and Everton in the Community (EitC) are secondary to the internal goods associated with a 'virtuous' approach (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]) towards excellence as an organisation that considers the 'practice' of football in its totality.

The remainder of this introduction outlines the social context in which EitC operates. This begins with a general history of how football clubs' relationships with local communities have arguably shifted over time before presenting a socio-economic picture of the local demography. This is followed

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by more individualised characterisations of the people with whom EitC are working. The main substance of the chapter is based upon interviews with participants about their experience of life during the initial lockdown following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is framed by a discussion of social philosopher Ulrich Beck's (1992) ideas around the shift from industrial society (first modernity) to what he calls 'risk society' (second modernity).

## The Social Context

It is argued that, historically, a football club provided a sense of local pride to the people of a city, town or neighbourhood (Fishwick, 1989; Holt, 1989; Mason, 1981). It was a representation of them (relative to others from somewhere else) as a collective whose everyday lived commonality was simply that of residing and working within a shared geographic space. A population whose communal connectivity was under pressure by the forces of modernity – urbanisation, industrialisation and the breakdown of traditional social ties. This is, in academic terms, an invocation of Cohen's (1985) symbolic construction of community whereby individuals sought their own meanings within a more fluid, yet still fairly rigid compared to contemporary social arrangements, sociality. Fundamentally, it is argued, a new set of social rituals came to define post-traditional communality through variously experienced sets of relationships with the local football club. The expression of this was most visible in the form of attending matches, supporting the players on the pitch as the vicarious extension of fans' relative positions in industrial society. The payoff was the communal celebration of victory and shared experience of defeat. At a more everyday level, the football club and its performances on the pitch provided a communicative tool for neighbours and work colleagues to share their thoughts in an increasingly privatised world. Like many football clubs, the symbolic community represented by Everton FC's fanbase stretches far and wide, and is communicated and experienced in increasingly diverse ways. The match itself as a physically experienced live event is available to a relative minority, some of whom still live within the locality of Everton FC's home stadium, Goodison Park, but the majority live further afield, throughout Merseyside, North-West England, the rest of the UK and across the world. Significant to the discussion at hand is that the immediate neighbourhood surrounding Goodison, is one of the most deprived in the country. Consequently, attending professional football matches is not economically viable for the majority of the local population. The presence of the football club in their lives is therefore qualitatively different to their ancestors. Football is so pervasive that Everton FC still creates meaning but the liminality attached to match attendance is not the primary source of 'communitas' (Turner, 1969) that it might have been in the past. However, for many, Everton Football Club remains part of the local construction of community through more instrumental means. Arguably less symbolic and more communitarian (see Delanty, 2003, for different conceptualisations of 'community').

Apart from the very apparent presence of the football club on match days, it is through Everton in the Community that many local people have a more prosaic relationship with Everton FC. That relationship is fundamentally as a service provider. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this book, poverty has played a significant part in the history of the region. That is no different today. Figure 5.1 shows England in terms of how areas rank on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).[1]

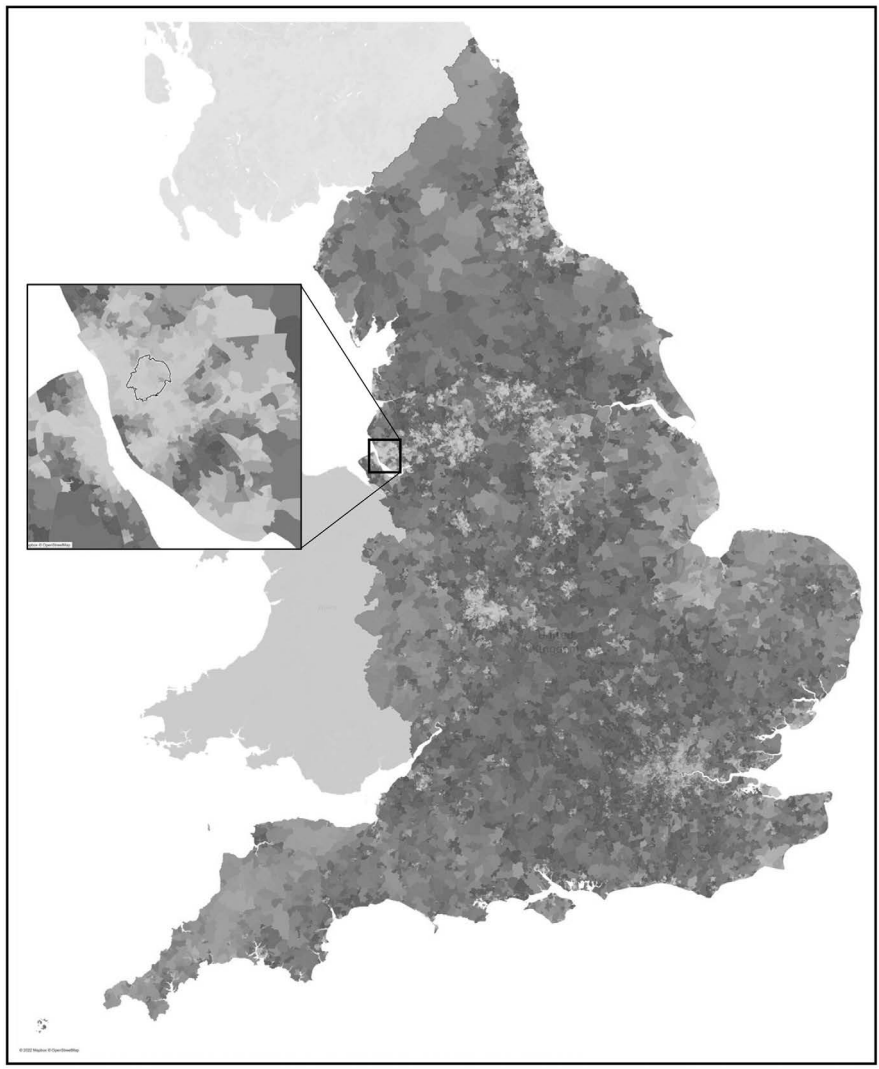

*Figure 5.1* Geographical spread of deprivation across England.
Source: OpenStreetMap.


*Figure 5.2* The Blue Mile shown as Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Source: OpenStreetMap.

The lighter areas are the most deprived in this illustration. It can be seen clearly that much of Merseyside, where Everton FC is based, is particularly pale. Drilling down to a more granular level, Figure 5.2 shows the area immediately surrounding Goodison Park stadium, where Everton FC called home for over 135 years. This area approximates to that which the club has labelled the 'Blue Mile' in terms of the most localised segmentation of census data.[2]

All but one of the Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) comprising the Blue Mile fall in the bottom 10% on the IMD with 11 of them being in the bottom 1%. The LSOA to the immediate west of Goodison Park and one to the south of Stanley Park rank in the 20th most deprived neighbourhoods in the whole of England (18th and 13th, respectively). With particular reference to the work with young people and projects around mental health, census data show that youth unemployment and underachievement is relatively worse within the Blue Mile (see Table 5.1) and the respective LSOAs are all ranked in the bottom decile of the Small Area Mental Health Index (SAMHI).[3]

As a city, Liverpool has the highest proportion of NEET young people (Not in Education, Employment or Training) for the country at 11.7%.[4] Table 5.1 gives an approximation of the recent levels of employment and educational attainment for 16- to 24-year-olds in the area around Goodison Park compared with the city of Liverpool more widely and with national statistics.[5] As can be seen, in the area immediate to EitC, there are significantly higher numbers with no qualifications or who have not progressed to advanced levels of education. It is also above average in levels of unemployment.

*Table 5.1* Local employment and educational attainment[5]

| | *Blue Mile (%)* | *Liverpool (LA) (%)* | *England (%)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economically active – in employment | 44 | 40 | 51 |
| Economically active – unemployed | 19 | 14 | 12 |
| No qualifications | 18 | 10 | 10 |
| Highest qualification – Level 1[6] | 21 | 13 | 17 |
| Highest qualification – Level 2[7] | 29 | 21 | 27 |

In summary, the needs of the local population are manifold, based upon historical and ongoing neglect of the region. Everton in the Community is but one service provider, often working in partnership with others, that aims to ameliorate the consequences of that neglect through the use of football, both as a recreational activity and as cultural symbol, by way of engaging different target groups. It is a legacy of Football in the Community (FitC) schemes that many professional football clubs developed from the 1980s onwards as part of the UK Government's response to inner city violence, unemployment and football related disturbance at the time (see Chapter 3 and Stone, 2018).

What these schemes provide as they have matured over the past four decades vary in degree from one football club to another. The rest of this chapter will evidence the role of EitC in the lives of programme participants, many of whom find themselves engaging with the organisation after exhausting other options. A senior manager for EitC explains the situation thus:

> in some cases… they're coming to us for stuff that we're not in a position professionally to be able to offer. That can be tough because they feel comfortable enough to be able to reach out to us in the first place or have someone else refer them to us… I don't know what their expectations are but sometimes you can feel a little bit like, well, we can't, we're not a hospital and I'm not a GP, I'm not a psychologist but in the same breath, 'there are fantastic support services available out there, here are the details, this would be the best line of enquiry.' But in a lot of cases, people have got into the situations that they have because they've exhausted all of those already and they're coming to us, not because they don't know where the doctor is, [or] don't know that if you're in crisis to go to A&E… The vast majority, they've been in these situations before and they know all of that but have exhausted them or had bad experiences or what have you, don't feel supported enough to be able to do them. Hence, then they come to us, a football club…

To put this into some kind of more personal context, the following individuals, whose stories have been edited for ethical reasons to provide composite

characterisations, are illustrations of some of the people with whom Everton in the Community were engaging at the time the COVID-19 pandemic forced much of their work to stop – in its conventional form at least.

### *Paul*

Paul is a wiry looking, softly spoken man in his early 40s whose bright disposition belies a more troublesome persona. Having grown up in the care system, he speaks relatively openly about being both physically and sexually abused. Until recently, however, he was unaware of how traumatised that had left him. A few months before the pandemic he was diagnosed with PTSD and psychosis. It is something that he admits on reflection he probably already knew but only really became problematic during lockdown when the EitC sessions stopped. He believes he had been managing his mental health, with support from various sources including attending the EitC Imagine Your Goals programme, without too much cause for concern.

### *Lisa*

Lisa is a very chatty woman in her late 40s who casually moves from one topic to another – problems with her Internet provider or phone contract, family issues, her social life, or lack thereof. Without warning, she recounts seeing a vision at the end of her bed of a long dead priest she used to know. This provides comfort when, as she puts it, she is not feeling well. Her ailments are both physical and psychological. The swimming sessions she attends as part of the Girls On Side programme provided by EitC are useful in tackling her arthritis and the attached social side of the programme is essential in helping her with her depression and diagnosed personality disorder. In addition, her social responsibilities include being the primary carer for her wheelchair bound husband and being the closest family member taking responsibility for her ageing parents.

### *Jade*

Jade has a strong personality that is reinforced by the presentation of herself as a carefully manicured young woman. Throughout her young life, she has always suffered with anger management issues that, when you get to know her, seem indicative of insecurities brought about by a combination of factors. Having attended the Everton Free School following numerous exclusions from other more mainstream educational establishments, she was able to at least improve her attendance record. Nonetheless, leaving school with few qualifications, at the age of 18, she was encouraged to join EitC's employability programme through the strong working relationships that exist between different areas of Everton FC's community engagement work. Challenges related to her

ADHD persist and her career ambitions remain unfocused, moving between a desire to be a dancer, or a hairdresser, or work in care depending on her mood. She has also been encouraged to attend the Girls on Side programme as a way of providing support, not only for her own mental wellbeing but as a release from the care responsibilities she has for her younger brother and her mother who suffers from poor mental health.

#### *Jake*

Jake is 16 and has been attending PL Kicks sessions provided by EitC regularly for the past four years. He has always been big for his age and uses his size productively against mostly smaller opponents he comes up against on the football field. He is not the most skilful player, and his robust style of play often leads to conflict. His overbearing physique combined with an aggressive attitude can lead to confrontation in other areas of life. That said, he uses his sharp sense of humour to ingratiate himself with others and is beginning to develop a likeable humility, not least as a result of the work that EitC staff have done with him in recent years. His mum and dad are separated, and although he lives with his mum, he was brought up by his grandparents. He used to go fishing occasionally with his dad but not anymore. He occasionally still goes with his uncle. His older brother is in prison for drug related offences and Jake regularly gets into trouble at school due to anger management issues. He would regularly get into fights in which EitC staff had to intervene whilst playing football during Kicks sessions. Following the death of his grandparents a couple of years ago, Jake developed an addiction to weed as a coping mechanism. Having built strong trusting relationships with a couple of members of EitC staff due to their supportive approach to his aggression he was persuaded to attend support sessions provided by another EitC programme, @41Goodison, which has helped him quit the habit and reassess his future. A future that for him is defined by his career aspirations to be a YouTuber based on his self-perceived expertise on the X-Box.

## Routine, Relationships and Reassurance in the Risk Society

In the previous chapter, it was noted that the COVID-19 pandemic was emblematic of 'catastrophic' risks that, according to Beck (1992), have become an increasingly defining feature of life as part of the 'risk society'. His use of this terminology is a little misleading and often misinterpreted – though elements of the thesis are also rightly critiqued (e.g. Atkinson, 2007; Bovenkerk, 2003; Mythen, 2004; 2005) and countered (Beck, 2007; 2013) as part of appropriate dialogic development of this and similar ideas about the gradual erosion of industrial society that has dominated Western, if not global, development during the post-Enlightenment period of modernity.

***Risk Society, Second Modernity and Institutionalised Individualisation***

Sharing similar paradigmatic positions with Bauman (2000) and Giddens (1990), Beck contends that we are undergoing a transition (and have been since the mid-20th century) in the terms of reference for the social project loosely contained within the defining epoch attached to modernity. What he labels as 'second modernity' is one in which the modern project characterised by science, rationality, enduring institutions, nation states and relatively stable identities is being eroded. For Beck, this shift is the consequence of a number of specific processes of change dominated by 'radicalised individualisation' and 'multidimensional globalisation'. Beck and his critics go to some lengths in exploring how 'risk' might become the defining feature (or not) for this new extension of modernity – if that is indeed what it is. Here is not the place to explore this in depth (Mythen (2004) and Sørensen and Christiansen (2013) provide excellent analysis of Beck's ideas) but rather to acknowledge that fundamental to living in the 'risk society' of 'second modernity' is that alongside the hazards facing society from pre-existing eras, many of which progress in science and communication have helped mitigate, there are further risks that are the very result of that progress. The relevance for Beck is that we are all once more vulnerable to an increase in unknown, incalculable and less containable risks. Moreover, collective management of or resistance to those risks no longer exists in the same way and solutions must be sought at an individualised level.

Examining changes in institutions such as family, nation and the welfare state, for Beck (2007, p. 681), "The crucial idea is this, individualisation really is imposed on the individual by modern institutions." This leads to a culture whereby risks are the consequence of institutional change but responsibility for which is devolved to the level of the individual. This is evident in the Moral Underclass Discourse (MUD) and Social Interactionist Discourse (SID) that were dominant within the politics of New Labour at the turn of the century (Levitas, 2005; see Chapter 1 of this book) and have continued to flourish under successive Governments since. Catastrophic risks are representative of a pervasive culture in which social inequality remains as a product of economic disparity but security is harder to come by because the 'traditional' collective support structures of modernity have been diluted. Beck (2007, p. 692) summarises it thus:

> Risk and social inequality, indeed, risk and power are two sides of the same coin. Risk presumes a decision, therefore a decision-maker, and produces a radical asymmetry between those who take, define the risks and profit from them, and those who are assigned to them, who have to suffer the 'unforeseen side effects' of the decisions of others, perhaps even pay for them with their lives, without having had the chance to be involved in the decision-making process.

The conditions of life for the more economically deprived in Liverpool are the consequence of global and cosmopolitan forces in operation over the course of its modern history as a city (see Chapter 3). The pandemic exacerbated those conditions further. It was a global catastrophe for which solutions were cosmopolitan in structure, that both transcended and were subordinate to national borders and the nation state as a political form. But it was the local effects that created distinctions between the 'risk' that the pandemic was likely to pose and the ability for individuals to cope. Existing anxieties were multiplied and added to for many of the people who EitC support through their various programmes. What emerged from the research was the importance of routine and supportive relationships that due to their persistence over time provided reassurance to participants during a period of increased uncertainty:

> [The news] is making me worry at the minute… I'm hearing about this, and I'm hearing about that, it's getting me down… [The EitC programme coordinator] texts me and asks how I am. I say, 'I just want to be back [doing] activities with them,' and stuff like that. I just miss all that because that just kept you going really. When you were there, you didn't get depressed, or anything like that.
>
> (EitC participant)

***Routine, Sociality and Digital Exclusion during the Pandemic***

People's everyday lives are governed by routine and habit; they are maintained through the interactions with others. Familiarity is a cornerstone for (seemingly) healthy lives, from which excursions into more challenging environments and social situations can be achieved. Of course, familiarity with domestic violence, oppression, over burdensome responsibility can leave individuals with huge challenges to their own self-concept. For many of the vulnerable people with whom EitC regularly engage, much of the work involves challenging and changing negative routines, whether it be young people at risk because of anxiety or aggression at school or adults with long-term mental health conditions such as depression that prevent them from engaging more fully in social life. For one participant on a programme aimed at adults with mental health issues, connecting with others at the sessions provides motivation that has become habit forming in the face of diagnosed depression:

> It's just the social side really, that makes me a lot better. Because obviously some days I don't feel like even getting out of bed and going out. So socialising on a Tuesday, knowing that I've got to do that, and I've got to do it for myself, it's a bit of an impulse, you know?

EitC offers an alternative environment where participants can be reassured, build relationships in such a way that it becomes part of their routine. During lockdown, virtually everybody's routines suddenly changed. Work, leisure,

family, football. The previous chapter highlighted the difficulties that staff working for Everton FC and EitC in various roles faced in managing different aspects of their lives during the initial lockdown. Their challenges were related to changing processes attached to working remotely, adjusting to different working routines and modes of interaction with their colleagues (and their families or living companions as a consequence of home working). For EitC participants, the programmes provided become an extremely important part of their lives. Lives that were complicated anyway but that became even more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For those with physical and mental health challenges, routine was recognised as an incredibly important part of EitC interventions. Lockdown meant that a crucial part of participants' weekly routine was removed because face-to-face sessions were not possible. Programmes were quickly adapted and sessions that revolve around playing football were replaced with online quizzes and other games or the demonstration of football exercises that could be done at home. These sessions took place at the same time as those prior to the pandemic. This allowed participants to keep some semblance of their routine as well as maintaining contact with programme staff and other participants. This was recognised by staff, as one of the community coaches pointed out:

> After lockdown, when everything slowly goes back to normal, we'll still have [had] that routine for them… because routines are key for them to follow… every week they'll have a quiz with us and they'll see the regular faces. So, it's not just like they've not seen anyone for the past weeks, they're still in regular contact…

Of course, the very real consequences of inequality exist for those without the resources to fully participate in the digital spaces that lockdown ushered upon the population. Prior to the first lockdown, EitC were running weekly sessions designed to bring together people with mental health concerns in a supportive social space. In an attempt to maintain their crucial routine connection with these participants, EitC sought to replace these sessions with 'virtual coffee mornings'. However, the majority of the group found themselves excluded because, as one staff member explained, "They either haven't got the internet access or they can't do it." She went on to highlight that:

> Some of them don't have internet at all, not even on their phones. They have a basic phone and all they use it for is phone calls, maybe the doctor's… Some of them don't even have a phone. They're just not into the technology or they're not well enough to use it … and some of them probably can't afford it either…

The consequence for such digital 'vagabonds', to make use of Bauman's (1996) metaphor, is that the anxieties associated with living in difficult

circumstances, of life in the 'risk society', are extended and amplify existing demands on the management of their mental wellbeing. One of the participants found the situation very frustrating:

> I've tried to get in on this virtual coffee morning, but I can't manage to get it done on my laptop. I got as far as doing the meeting number, but the password didn't show up for me to put in… I tried to get in through the phone and my credit ran out. It is too expensive, so I can't do that again… [technology] really frustrates me. I end up shouting and screaming… I get frustrated, very frustrated with it… I end up with chest pains and anxiety.

The very purpose of these sessions is to alleviate the anxieties felt by participants but in the immediacy of the initial lockdown in March 2020, as organisations such as EitC attempted to move their services into the digital realm, the consequences were not just that participants lost the routine of meeting and socialising face to face but that the alternative highlighted how those deprived of the skills, experience and fiscal means to easily operate in the digital space were further excluded from the means to manage the situation. In other circumstances, participants who might need to get online could have found support or be signposted to other venues but, as one of the EitC volunteers conceded, "At the moment there's not even a place where you could go. Like you could go to the library and use the computer or whatever, they can't do that…" Echoing the selfless sensibilities of staff that were highlighted in the previous chapter, her desire was to, "…go around and give them all a tablet and say you can just press the button and we all appear on Zoom or something." While this would have solved the technical and logistical difficulties, it still may not have met the social need. It may be the case that, as one team leader was keen to point out, "A lot of participants are really pleased to see us online. They get the chance to see some of their friends [and] it's a great social interaction opportunity for them," but for the participants themselves, the online experience was an impoverished one. For someone who was referred to EitC sessions by the psychiatric hospital, the group provided crucial support in helping manage their mental health.

> I've missed the contact, the social contact… I've made a couple of friends there… who have been in touch… [The organiser] has been in touch as well. [They've] been brilliant… It's just not the same as seeing someone face-to-face.

This was picked up by a staff member who works with young people:

> When they [participants] come, they know they can just be themselves. And if they've got an issue, it's not like you've got to disclose things, they just tell you anyway because they know we can help them with it. It's like they'll just grow because they're here… [but] online, it's very clinical and it's very external.

Being in one another's physical presence, unconfined by the time constraints of a digital interaction and benefitting from the subtleties attached to communication cues beyond language is at the heart of youth work approaches. Beyond that, though, the importance of physical contact in showing solidarity should not be underestimated as part of any therapeutic portfolio:

> [I miss that] face-to-face support, you know? I'd have gone in, and one [of the other participants] gave me a hug one time when I went in. I had been crying. And it was just so nice to feel like you're part of something…. that's just unique for me, to take part in something like that… [and] that's all I have really, going on. It's just that.
>
> (EitC participant)

This person, like many of the other participants, felt isolated already; whose social interaction beyond that of having to look after elderly parents and text message exchanges with siblings is entirely focused on the sessions attended at EitC. For individuals such as this, the relationships that are fostered through EitC are extremely important. And, like many others whose interactions in the physical world abruptly ceased with the social distancing restrictions that were enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the isolation increased and the anxieties multiplied. This was highlighted by an EitC team leader:

> A lot of [participants] are scared of going outdoors because of the COVID thing. They don't wanna catch that. So, for a lot of them, there's the fear. And then it's that isolation. It's really what the original programme was for – to reduce that isolation. Even though we might only be an hour or two hours a week engaged with them. They really do look forward to that.

#### *Relationships and the Surrogate Family*

The enduring images and memories of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated periods of social distancing are of family members trying to communicate with and offer support to one another through the barrier of double-glazed windows and down the length of the garden path. At a time when emotional support often expressed through familial physical contact and time spent in one another's company was needed more than ever, families were being isolated from one another. For participants of the various support programmes provided by EitC, the consequences of being unable to attend sessions and physically engage with one another evoked similar feelings of isolation from their kindred companions. As one participant who suffers from depression understatedly remarked about how they felt during lockdown: "I was very down. I kept saying to my mum, 'I can't wait for [the EitC programme] to be back'. I just can't wait for them to say, 'You can come back'." Another participant from one of the EitC programmes that engages with adults suffering with mental health issues through the offer of weekly football sessions notes that

whilst they did miss actually playing football, more importantly it was, "the laughs and the jokes, the banter with the lads and just seeing how everybody is…" This is because, "It's like a family… we're all there for each other."

Family was a common metaphor that participants used to describe their relationships with one another and with EitC staff:

> …for me, there is a glue that is [the staff]. If it wasn't for them, then that glue disappears. And then you've obviously got lads on the programme who have been there for a number of years, they keep coming, and they're brilliant. It's almost like we are a family. But for somebody who, like me, that's all I was searching for my whole life, was a family, to find that in the most unlikeliest of places is quite bizarre. I would be absolutely lost without it.

Conceptually, 'family' has always been an amorphous concept that in modern, industrial societies came to be dominated by some notion of the nuclear family as an ideal to which other forms were compared. This construct is increasingly contested but remains a dominant cultural and political discourse (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Gubrium & Holstein, 1990; Murray & Barnes, 2010; Welch, 2018). For participants whose, "friends are [all] Everton in the Community based," and who, "…don't have a friend who doesn't go to Everton in the Community," their invocation of 'family' is rooted in conceptualisations of, "care and trust in the context of enduring relationships" (Murray & Barnes, 2010, p. 533) that are not defined by kinship but offer the unconditional support supposedly more often associated with family membership. In a world defined by 'institutionalised individualisation' (Beck, 1992), 'families of fate' and 'families of choice' merge to form 'personal communities' (Pahl & Spencer, 2004) that redefine the institution notionally characterised as 'the family'.

> I won't go into too much detail of what I have experienced but … I went through a lot of emotional, physical and sexual abuse when I was in the care system. So, I found it really helped when other people trusted in us, kind of thing. And that's something that Everton in the Community has helped me with massively. Because the lads that are on the programme, I trust implicitly, and that's kind of strange because that's something that I don't do.
>
> (EitC participant)

This participant also highlighted how the programme leader put a lot of work in to help their integration within the programme, making phone calls between sessions to "make sure that I was alright and stuff." As we have seen from the previous chapter, that 'ethic of care' (Barnes, 2012) within the staff team persisted as best it could during the period of lockdown when face-to-face sessions had to be suspended. This was recognised by participants: "The support is there 24/7 through this period… for example, you can ring

[the programme leader] any time of the day, day or night, and he's there for you. So the support's always been there. If anything, it's a lot more now…"

Beyond the 'emotion practice' (Erickson & Stacey, 2012) significant to interactions between participants and staff, though, are the social bonds amongst participants within the group.

> I think when you come from a troubled background, or when you come from a background where your life has seen a bit of adversity and poverty, abuse and stuff like that, you recognise it in a lot of people. And a lot of people recognise it in you. In a normal football environment, you go to a football environment and the lads just take the piss constantly and it's banter and stuff like that. And we have that at Everton in the Community, but we also have a thing where people make sure that everybody is alright and that nobody is singled out. And when a new person comes, everybody makes that person feel welcome.
>
> (EitC participant)

Another participant again invokes the metaphor of family to illustrate how the implicit circumstances that have brought others to the programme lead to an emotional support network:

> We just really have a gab with each other, and share similar experiences. But if someone is feeling low, I'll be, 'Oh, you'll be alright, mate. It's alright, you can talk to me, we're all brothers here, all family.' And then whether they want to speak to me about it or not, that's their choice, but I'm always there for [them]…
>
> (EitC participant)

This sums up the interrelation encouraged by EitC staff. The three elements are: the forming of bonds (implicitly) based on the commonality of experience; the discursive production of the (idealised) family; mutual respect of boundaries. Like in any family, there are both strong bonds and weak ties.

Understanding that they have become a surrogate family for participants on their programmes, EitC, with support from Everton FC, have modelled the metaphor and developed their modes of engagement rooted in the infrastructure and interactions associated with family life. For example, number 41 Goodison Road looks similar from the outside to any other terrace house in the neighbourhood. The difference is that this house was bought by Everton Football Club to be used as a more homely and nurturing base for working with vulnerable young people. For the @41Goodison participants, the house is 'like a second home' defined by informal and caring relationships:

> I'd happily go in the house and… talk to one of them, [rather] than like go to a doctor or a counsellor, do you know what I mean? It's so much more informal and like I know that they're genuinely bothered…
>
> (cited by Lucas & Hanson, 2019, p. 26)

The space is organised like that of a family home, with a kitchen that young people can use to make breakfast for themselves, cook some toast or help themselves to a drink. The room in which staff and participants engage with each other is set up like a teenager's bedroom, with couches, a digital games machine and informal study space. This promotes important 'reciprocal recognition' (Honneth, 1995) in terms of 'love, rights and recognition' (Thomas, 2012). It models the family home as an ideal for nurturing of unconditional familial relationships which is more conducive for young people to share personal concerns and issues compared with the formality of professional spaces and professional relationships.

A visit during the pandemic, however, revealed a very different scene. The spatial arrangements of 41 Goodison Rd made social distancing problematic. Engagement work, an impossibility to begin with due to the restrictions on face-to-face contact, was at least allowed to restart once certain safeguards had been put in place such as daily temperature tests, the use of facemasks and sanitiser, and restrictions on participant numbers. A further temporary measure was to relocate the work to the community hub. A purpose-built centre, the highlight of which is a 4G football pitch, the hub includes multi-use spaces that can be utilised for various activities. As much as the staff tried to make the space welcoming, the starkness compared with 41 Goodison Rd made it the complete opposite to a 'homely' environment. The room had a table tennis table at the back and a large screen connected to an X-Box in the corner but the four participants attending the session were sat at tables, worksheets in front of them, in a very similar arrangement to that of the classroom. One of the EitC programme staff was highly dismissive of such attempts to continue with the work in the circumstances: "This is not how I want to work with them. I've said to my line manager, 'there's no point'. We can't engage these kids like this…" The participants themselves sit obediently at the desks in what might be described as engaged disengagement.

This particular group of young people was attending sessions once a week as part of a supportive structure provided by EitC to schools who identify pupils at risk of exclusion. Other young people who benefit from the programmes housed by 41 Goodison Rd are those at risk of entering youth custody or at risk of becoming looked after by local authorities. Referred from youth offending teams, schools and social services, they may have just got out of prison, might have previous offences on their records or they have been (or are on the verge of being) excluded from school. They are young people with challenging home environments, likely to be living in poverty and possibly suffering from or witness to domestic violence within the household. In many cases, there is substance misuse and a high chance that participants are struggling with their mental health whether that be general feelings of social anxiety or something more specific like cannabis-induced psychosis.

These types of issues are prevalent, if not necessarily directly experienced by all, within the lives of young people living in the vicinity of Everton FC and

the early identification and prevention of which EitC's PL Kicks programme aims to support. Funded by the Premier League Charitable Fund, PL Kicks is a national programme delivered by the charitable arms of 90 professional football clubs across England and Wales. The vision of the programme is to, "inspire children and young people to achieve their potential and improve their wellbeing…" (Premier League, 2022). Part of the programme aims to inspire young people to develop positive, supportive relationships with one another and the authorities, improve participants' self-esteem, ambition and social skills, and strengthen communities by providing positive role models and support for education, training and employment pathways. EitC deliver numerous PL Kicks sessions across Merseyside each week which are modelled on an open access youth work approach. From the staff perspective, the main aims of the programme are, "to provide an alternative to engaging in anti-social behaviour and provide a safe space to socialise with friends and meet new people" (Stone & Hough, 2020, p. 14).

Evidence from a specific study of EitC's youth engagement work highlights its strength in providing a safe space for young people to express themselves and create distance between themselves and risks associated with growing up in the area alongside building trusting relationships – between young people themselves, between young people and staff and between young people and wider society. From that, other opportunities for personal development and informal education are possible (Stone & Hough, 2020). What concerned staff most at the time of the original lockdown was that work which relied so much on face-to-face relationship building over time could very quickly unravel without that provision.

Participants themselves acknowledged that during the pandemic, "being away from footie and meeting up with the lads was difficult… I was used to being out everyday." They missed coming to PL Kicks sessions: "it's something to do instead of just being out and hanging around on the street… all your mates will be there… it's like something to do, to get you outta the house and that… [but] you just had to stay in." Whilst the majority abided by the regulations because, "you don't like know how to act like in a global pandemic do you…" many young people in the area "… didn't listen to it and just went out [to] do what you normally do." This situation was recognised by staff, partly as the result of existing relationships with the young people themselves but also a necessary change in working practices that brought them more in touch with participants' families:

> …at the minute there's a few that I'm working with, who, her son or daughter, like I say, has disregarded what the regulations are and that has created a rift within the family. And obviously you're living in such a small environment together, you're seeing each other more than you would normally… That's going to have an impact upon your relationships with your siblings, and your family members, isn't it? And if it was already strained to begin with, it's tough.

The nature of the relationships between staff and young people is based upon the twice-weekly, face-to-face conversations and interactions attached to informal space provided by the PL Kicks sessions. Connecting with the young people on issues around their welfare is mutually negotiated within the boundaries of established emotionally safe spaces. Connecting with young people remotely was not possible in the same way. Contact had to be more consciously initiated with, "weekly welfare calls… Calling young people [to ask], 'How are you? How are you getting on?' and stuff." Whilst this was not as effective, making the most of opportunities to connect with participants' families through the Blue Family campaign was seen as a positive extension in difficult circumstances:

> …we've looked at improving wellbeing by supporting the family unit as a whole… As opposed to, like, our focus would maybe be on the young person… We've had to really look at how can we best support families and young people in a different way because we can't necessarily tackle the issues that we would… What we've tried to do is, through the Blue Family campaign, look at how we can bring together families; improve family relationships. We've kept in contact through welfare calls. We've delivered food packages. When we've delivered food packages we've been able to, obviously with social distancing, just have a chat; let them know that we're there in a supportive way. We've not maybe been able to do that bespoke individual work but what we've been able to do is maintain a support network.
>
> (EitC employee)

The 'whole family approach' has become increasingly utilised across public services (Morris et al., 2008) and might be seen as a positive outcome of being forced to change their way of working. It is acknowledged that in some cases, such an approach causes tensions and conflict and is certainly beyond the design of the provision set out by the funding agency within more normal operational periods outside of the restrictions related to the pandemic. Time will tell whether this approach is adopted more permanently but during the period of lockdown, from staff proactively reaching out to the families of participants a reciprocal relationship developed that meant EitC could at least provide some support where it was needed as well as be kept in the loop when the continuance of relationships with young people themselves was disrupted by the lack of face-to-face contact:

> …once you've got a relationship with that family, you know, particularly with some mums who I've gotten to know a bit more through lockdown… They will feel comfortable texting me and saying, 'I've got no gas and 'leccy' this week, I really need some help with it.' Or ringing me, saying, you know, 'whoever, the son or daughter, has not been back since last night'.
>
> (EitC employee)

For EitC, these issues were, respectively, managed through the development of the Blue Family campaign (outlined elsewhere in this book) to provide support in the form of food parcels, energy vouchers and a helpline and through working hard to maintain existing relationships with participants themselves.

## Conclusion: EitC and the Common Good – Family, Individualisation and (Un)Certainty

> With my mental health I have my dark days. I'm sure everyone does. But it's reassuring to know when you do have those dark days, you have got the lads from Everton in the Community, you've got the sessions… [During lockdown] everyone's still in contact with each other… [they] are there if you need them. You can ring them up and just speak. We're one big family, that's what we are.
>
> (EitC participant)

COVID 19 was in many ways the epitome of what it means to be living in what Beck (1992) has referred to as the 'risk society'. A global, catastrophic event that called for cosmopolitan solutions. But the risk society is one characterised by individualisation, where the political processes and structures of society attend to the population as individuals responsible for their own lives. For the globetrotting minority, this may lead to anxiety based on the effects of such global incidents on their chosen lifestyles. For those living in poverty and facing multiple issues relating to insecure working and personal lives, the effects intensify the anxieties associated with societal expectations that condemn them to choices that promise access to a more upwardly mobile life but arguably reinforce their position at the bottom of a market-based society.

This chapter has provided insight into what the programmes offered by EitC mean for some of the participants and how they managed when lockdown measures were introduced soon after the COVID-19 pandemic spread to the UK in the Spring of 2020. There is no doubt that EitC provides an important service, primarily in providing supportive social spaces for individuals whose multiple needs require multiple support forms. EitC does not replace other public service support but supplements such provision. During the pandemic, however, many participants struggled without the particular kind of support that EitC provides. This is in part as a consequence of the role that the organisation plays in building and supporting family-like relationships. For some, these relationships are idealised 'families of choice' that act as an alternative to dysfunctional or deficient 'families of fate' (Pahl & Spencer, 2004). For others, they become part of an extended family, offering additional support when needed. As other research indicates, family life was affected enormously by the COVID-19 pandemic (Feinberg et al., 2022; Lebow, 2020). Though most research tends to adopt an interpretation of family synonymous with household-based relations, the family-like 'personal communities' (Pahl & Spencer,

2004) of which EitC participants speak were affected in similar ways (often in addition to their kin-based family relationships).

These 'personal communities' are the inevitable consequence of the 'radicalised individualisation' associated with the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992). The critique of Beck's work is that, "the risk society thesis presents a lopsided account of cultural experience which highlights uncertainty and hides away stability" (Mythen, 2004, p. 128). For many EitC participants, the organisation offers that stability but against a backdrop characterised by uncertainty. As is the case within the risk society, though, that stability is only as good as the ability of EitC to continue to resource their services. That capacity is contingent on various funding sources and the conditions attached to them. The pandemic enforced EitC and its staff to alter their delivery. From the perspective of the participants involved in this research, the social aspects and reliability of what the programmes provide were greatly missed as a consequence of lockdown.

Lebow (2020) highlighted that, "for those who depend on rituals for connection, be it church or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings or family dinners," the disruption caused by COVID-19 was a challenge. He notes that, "the maintenance of such regular and dependable rituals can be central in distinguishing those who become casualties from those who remain resilient through difficult times." What EitC participants come to depend upon is the ways in which the organisation and its staff facilitate a trusting, supportive network and provide a safe space for exploring self-dependence and positive social interaction. What that meant was that as long as those networks could be maintained in some form allied to the trust that existed already, many individuals coped better than they might have expected during lockdown. Whilst the Blue Family Targeted campaign (outlined elsewhere in this book) was able to respond to more infrastructural needs that were causing anxiety, for a lot of participants it was about supporting the existence of what was already in place – i.e. the facilitation of relationship building and reassurance that participants' routines would return to what they were as soon as was feasibly and legally possible.

As noted in Chapter 1, virtuous behaviour is for MacIntyre (2007 [1981], p. 221) shaped by the language and shared standards of the communities of which we are part – "the family, the neighbourhood, the city and the tribe." In late modern sociality, such communities are more fluid, their influences contingent on the 'choices' for which we are unable to avoid being held responsible. EitC offers a community in which participants have the opportunity to be better versions of themselves in their own individual teleological journeys towards excellence. They may have multiple needs but they still have their own goals in life – to successfully manage their anxieties; to support others in similar circumstances; to be more independent.

It could be said that the purpose of EitC, its programmes and the staff that run them, is to facilitate participants in developing themselves through the

relationships they cultivate – an organisational feature that performatively results in participants benefiting from the 'internal goods' provided by their own presence. This is the neo-liberal ideal of the enterprising individual for whom support is provided with the aim of becoming self-sustaining through self-governance as part of a collective. EitC provides the circumstances for that to happen that other public services and bodies possibly do not. The risk is that the club and its community foundation become an agency of the state that ends up reinforcing the status of those with whom they engage, perpetuating the poverty gap as the Government simply passes on problem populations.

The paternalism that is a persistent feature is admirable but if public services become over reliant on such an approach, then the risk is that certain populations are overlooked. That is not to say that a similar problem might be levelled at state provision but such services are ultimately answerable to the electorate. Whilst EitC are governed by the statutes of their governance documents and the Charities Commission, they are within their rights to focus on particular communities. This is not to criticise EitC and their staff who were operating in very difficult circumstances to find solutions that would maintain their service to, and meet the needs of, the various groups with whom they engage and to whom they provide development options. It is to recognise that social inequality in the 'risk society' tracks similar lines to that of industrial society – mostly because we are still in the transitional phase and such legacies are inevitable. The key difference is that, as part of the 'Great Risk Shift' (Hacker, 2008; Kennett et al., 2015), rising to meet the demands of the 'common good' are numerous charitable organisations such as EitC, each with their own approaches and priorities, rather than a functioning single authority (the nation state, its civic apparatus, effective collective movements) as idealistic and equally dysfunctional as that may have been.

## Notes

1 The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 use 39 separate indicators, organised across seven distinct domains of deprivation which can be combined, using appropriate weights, to calculate the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019. This is an overall measure of multiple deprivation experienced by people living in an area and is calculated for every Lower layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in England. Basic information about the Indices of Deprivation is provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853811/IoD2019_FAQ_v4.pdf
2 At the most granular level, England is divided up into 32,844 Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Each LSOA represents between 400 and 1,200 households.
3 The SAMHI is a composite annual measure of population mental health for each Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in England. The SAMHI combines data on mental health from multiple sources (NHS-Mental health-related hospital attendances, Prescribing data – Antidepressants, QOF – depression, and DWP – Incapacity benefit and Employment support allowance for mental illness) into a single index.

4 Based on latest figures from the Department for Education (DfE, 2018) at the time of the first COVID-19 lockdown period. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training#history
5 Based upon the 2011 Census Data available from Nomis (2024).
6 Level 1: 1–4 O Levels/CSE/GCSEs (any grades), Entry Level, Foundation Diploma, NVQ Level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic/Essential Skills
7 Level 2: 5+ O Level (Passes)/CSEs (Grade 1)/GCSEs (Grades A*–C), School Certificate, 1 A Level/2–3 AS Levels/VCEs, Intermediate/Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First/General Diploma, RSA Diploma.

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Chapter 6

# Football Fandom, Devotional Leisure and Everyday Social Welfare

## When the Meaning of Life (and Sport) Is Questioned

### Introduction

In the midst of a global pandemic, in which as many as 1,346 mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, sisters, brothers, daughters and sons were dying in the UK each day (see Figure 6.1),[1] being unable to watch your favourite football team would seem to be of little importance.

And yet, amongst the pressures of lockdown caused by reduced social contact, job insecurity, feelings of domestic incarceration, political indecision and masked communication, the lack of football caused many fans to reflect on the sport's importance in their lives (Campbell, 2020). Its absence was also seen by the political elite, no doubt under pressure from the forces of capital driving the sport, as sapping the country's morale. Accordingly, UK foreign secretary Dominic Raab announced that restarting sport in Britain would, "lift the spirits of the nation." This was supported by the incumbent UK Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, and former health secretary, Jeremy

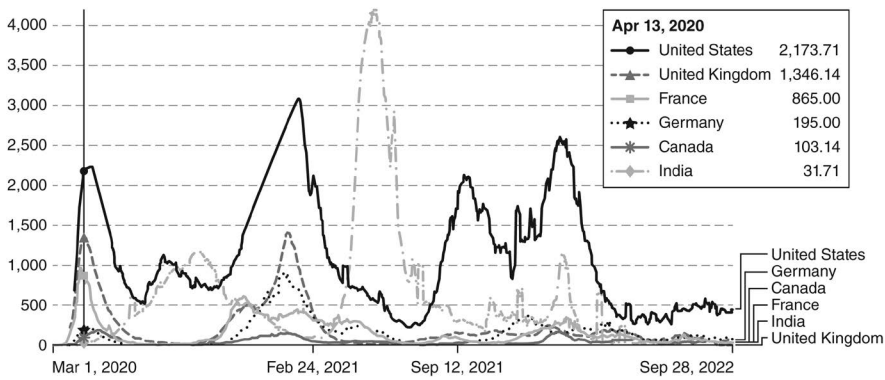


*Figure 6.1* Daily new confirmed COVID-19-related deaths.

Source: Mathieu et al. (2020)/Johns Hopkins University.

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Hunt, who suggested that football needed to resume because, "it is our national sport. And when people are stuck at home, this is the kind of thing that would lift people's morale and its spirit." (BBC Sport, 2020). Interestingly, the response from the general public at the time contradicted this perspective. A YouGov poll conducted on 11 May 2020 showed that 73% of adults surveyed thought that resuming football would not boost their morale (YouGov, 2020).

The basis for this chapter is a survey of Everton FC supporters in which respondents were asked to reflect on how the pandemic and its consequences on people's lives had altered their views on football and Everton FC. The survey was completed between 15 and 20 June 2020. This was the week that the 2019–2020 Premier League season resumed, three months after the initial lockdown started (Everton played their first match on 21 June 2020). The key questions were as follows:

1 Has the sudden enforced absence of football given you a different perspective on the role that Everton plays in your day-to-day life?
2 If and when football returns to 'normal', do you think your opinions about football and your everyday football behaviours will return to how they were before the crisis?
3 To what extent do you think Everton FC have acted with humanity and humility in supporting different communities during the Coronavirus pandemic?

For the first question, respondents were asked the extent to which they (dis)agreed with the following two statements: 'I have realised that football is not as important to me as I thought' versus 'I have realised that football plays a more important role in my life than I thought'. The second question had two parts and respondents were asked the extent to which they (dis)agreed with the following: (1) 'Things will return to how they were and I will resume the same regular football behaviours as before' versus 'Things will be different and I expect my regular football behaviours to change'; (2) 'My attitude towards football has permanently changed as a consequence of the crisis' versus 'My attitude to football will remain the same as it did before the crisis'. The third question involved (dis)agreement with a number of statements: (1) 'Everton FC has provided crucial support for local communities'; (2) 'The club have looked after their players and staff'; (3) 'Fans have been kept well informed of what is happening'; (4) 'Everton players have acted responsibly'; (5) 'Everton could have done more'; and (6) 'In general, the football authorities have shown strong leadership and understanding throughout the crisis'. For each of the three broad questions, respondents were also asked to explain their answers in more detail, which 70% of respondents did to greater or lesser degrees. Follow-up interviews were held with 12 respondents from a random sample of those who agreed to be contacted.

## Football Fandom and Everyday Life

> I set my schedule around watching football on the weekend. Without football, I find it hard to have a structured weekend.
>
> (Respondent #585)

Football is for most fans an unspectacularly significant part of their everyday lives (Stone, 2007; 2017). It is not necessarily more important than other significant parts of life – family, work, friendships, other leisure pursuits – but intermingles with them, reinforcing some aspects and causing conflict in others. Everyday life is, however, governed by routine, habit and ritual (Felski, 2000; Garfinkel, 1967; Heller, 1984; Lefebvre, 1984; Southerton, 2013). Consequently, much of the prosaic meaning attached with daily life is pre-reflective – though increasingly more self-conscious due to 'reflexive restructuring' in late modernity (Giddens, 1991) – and only becomes more meaningful as a result of breaches to our expectations or usual behaviours (Garfinkel, 1967), which the COVID-19 pandemic was on a global scale. The survey questions and timing were therefore designed to help supporters reflect on a particular aspect of their lives that had been previously taken for granted, consciously not been seen as significant or become performatively over-important until it had unexpectedly been removed. It was designed to elicit responses that were not simply part of respondents' already habitual understandings of themselves as football fans but to think about what kind of fans they were and whether something as significant as COVID-19 challenged their everyday assumptions around that part of their lives. The purpose was twofold. Firstly, this was a unique 'breach' of the regular seasonal routine that governs and 'makes possible' many football supporters' everyday lives and habits. Secondly, the effects of COVID-19 provided an opportunity to question the apocryphal association that football is 'more important than life or death' that is often associated with how authentic a 'traditional' fan (King, 1998; Millward, 2011) might claim to be. It was in essence an opportunity to reveal the 'illusion of sport' through encouraging fans to have a conversation with their 'other' selves as 'naïve observers' (Black, 2021; Pfaller, 2014).

What emerged from the open text responses and interview data was an ambivalence and an overwhelming relationship with football that is defined by the social aspects around which supporting Everton FC is built. Not least was this expressed in terms of familial connections, both literally in terms of meeting up with extended family members or attending with immediate kin, and metaphorically by reference to the Everton family, which might include other fans, the familiar faces of match day stewards and the symbolic bonds with the Everton FC moniker, embodied by their connections with the players and other representatives of the club through various online and offline interactions. Health was inevitably a factor in many responses around the role of football in people's lives and how important it is perceived to be. In the

starkest terms, this was expressed simply as a distinction between the loss of life compared with being entertained. At a more nuanced level, such views were combined with a realisation that whilst people's lives and livelihoods were more important than getting to watch a football match, their own self-identity and mental wellbeing was intrinsically linked to the presence of football and more importantly Everton FC in their lives. The other main themes that emerged were: (1) the strength of feeling for what Everton FC does for local communities and, for many, a greater awareness of Everton in the Community's work; (2) disdain for the football authorities in terms of restarting the league, expressed in relation to the monetary cost of the pandemic, the greed of the broadcasters/Premier League and their related focus on the 'Big 6'.[2]

It is important to acknowledge that football fans are fundamentally partisan in their opinions and are likely to highlight the positives about their own football club and be more critical of particular rivals or representative cliques of which they are not part. That said, there was also a self-awareness amongst the fan base when criticising their traditional rivals, Liverpool FC, that certain decisions transcend football.[3] It also did not stop criticism of their own where warranted – mostly the expression of disappointment surrounding the behaviour of young striker, Moise Kean. The other important observation is that more than half (51.8%) of respondents were aged 55 or over. This is to some degree reflective of the fan base demographic but will also be skewed within the survey due to this age group having more time available to complete a questionnaire sent to them and possibly greater desire to do so because social isolation was more keenly felt by older people whose own families may no longer be part of their immediate households. This might have meant that responses relating to future match going behaviour would show an over representation towards change as a result of health concerns. However, when examined more closely, the data suggested little difference between age groups in voicing their concerns about their own health as reason for changing behaviour. Where concerns about health did become more significant was in response to questions about how important football was perceived to be in respondents' lives.

The remainder of this chapter will analyse the survey responses and interview data in more detail with respect to both fans' understandings of the football club's impact on their own welfare and their views about Everton FC and Everton in the Community's humanitarian response.

## "Bill Shankly Was Wrong": Life, Death and Footballing Transcendence

> Someone said to me, 'To you football is a matter of life or death,' and I said, 'Listen, it's more important than that!'
>
> (Shankly, 1981)

> I've said before that football always seems the most important of the least important things.
>
> (Klopp, 2020)

> Obviously supporting a team such as Everton will always be a part of my life but it is not a matter of life or death… However, once a blue always a blue – COYB!
>
> (Respondent #228)

It seems wrong when our case study is Everton Football Club to refer to the, overused and often misrepresented, statement made by a former manager of great rivals Liverpool Football Club, Bill Shankly, and its reworking into a similarly pithy observation from the incumbent manager at the time of the pandemic, Jurgen Klopp. But if I might, rather casually, appropriate Jaques Derrida (1976) for a moment, it would be to observe that traces of each club must be present in the other. In other words, it is not uncommon for football fans to prioritise their own football club whilst also inferring the relational dynamic with their rival. As one respondent simply put it: "Bill Shankly was wrong." (Respondent #259). Similarly, the insightful soundbite provided by Jurgen Klopp was referred to by a number of respondents in trying to explain how they felt about football in their lives at the time. Others provided more personal versions of football's 'sacred seriousness' (Huizinga, 1950; Pfaller, 2014) and the 'inherent ambivalence' (Black, 2021) of football fandom.

Some fans were very clear about football's (un)importance: "I'm alive and so is my family and that is much more relevant than anything to do with football" (Respondent #149) because, "Football is insignificant compared to death" (Respondent #150). And yet, both these respondents believed that, despite deciding that football was not as important as they thought, their attitudes and behaviours would return to their pre-pandemic state once football returned. The thing is, if we take football as a practice in its entirety, the common goods to fans and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, beneficiaries of Everton in the Community's programmes, imply that the consequences of the sport are as meaningful as those of life and death, in the more personal meaning that Shankly's comment was intended. In a more thoroughgoing commentary on Bill Shankly's television interview from which the quotes originally emerged, Moore (2021, p. 46) points out that, "Shankly's words were meant to be just personal to himself, not to have resonance for others… suggesting regret about his 'life or death' commitment to the job." Echoes of this bittersweet realisation can be heard in the views of fans in their reflections on the importance of football and Everton FC:

> Knowing three people who have died and one who was seriously ill in hospital [because of COVID-19], I have changed my thinking around everyday life but missing football and Everton in particular has been hard as it

> has always been a big part of my life for enjoyment… Football has always been and will continue to be a big part of my life. I can't wait to be back at Goodison Park.
>
> (Respondent #155)

There is a tension in such views that seeking pleasure or enjoyment at a time when others are suffering is not good; that death trumps anything else in the relevance stakes. But death is only relevant in relation to life – and in consumer-led liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000) choices still have to be made, performed and presented by the living, breathing football fans whose ongoing lives are poorer for the very specific absence of their chosen leisure pursuit. Furthermore, as so many respondents explicitly stated, their football club is a big part of their life. Even when its significance is suggested to be less relevant, there is an implied devotion that is difficult to overcome:

> I'm not missing it at all. I have found other things to fill the void and wish I was not *committed* to my season ticket as I would love to direct the funds elsewhere.
>
> (Respondent #397 – emphasis added)

This short statement evidences the ambivalence attached to embodied experiences of what Blackshaw (2017; 2010; 2003) would describe as liquid-modern leisure life worlds. Such ambivalence is the consequence of the transitional period in which we find ourselves whereby the more assured referents associated with solid modernity are being reformulated as liquid modern living compels us to persistently challenge the perceived stasis of everyday life (Bauman, 2000). So, whilst the commitment fans attach to their fandom is indicative of 'serious leisure' (Ertaş, 2022; Gibson et al., 2002; Jones, 2000; Stebbins, 1992), the form is that of more 'casual leisure' through the consumerist connotations and ephemeral (though arguably longstanding) emotional experiences that fans invoke. In contrast to such predetermined definitions, Blackshaw (2018, p. 80) borrows from Sloterdijk (2013) to present leisure as a way of perceiving and of becoming ourselves through anthropotechnics: "forms and networks of cognitive, physical and social training through which we live our lives and construct our worlds in the face of the uncertain risks presented to us by modern living and the certainties of death."

Blackshaw's (2003) work on the leisure lifeworlds of 'the lads' explored the contingency through which young men attempt to maintain or recapture some sense of lost meaning about who they are. He suggests that in their leisure, this group of individuals seeks more solidly familiar ways of being and communicating which has as its modus operandi, "the confirmation of hegemonic masculinity and the restoration of disrupted stability, both of which provide intimations of a past world of communal bliss in a protected time-space in which the leisure life-world attempts to impose the fixity of a

masculinist, working-class myth on to the fluidity of contemporary everyday life" (Blackshaw, 2017, p. 110). The way in which many survey responses were framed indicate many Everton fans seek such confirmation through their leisure practices that revolve around following their football club. At the same time, the liquid modern world challenges that commitment, compelling fans to seek more adequate versions of themselves – they both reject football, as something that is no longer theirs (in its perceived traditionally, solid modern form) as well as not wishing to let go but feeling powerless about reclaiming, or redesigning, a version of football (fandom) that is suitable to their understanding of a liquid modern existence.

For Blackshaw (2010; 2017; 2018), leisure is hermeneutical; it cannot be subjected to a grand narrative and must be understood from within the context of individuals' lives. Football will offer a multiplicity of meanings, in relation to life and death. His point, though, is that it is through such leisure practices that meaning and purpose is achieved, or at least sought. There is a teleological possibility in putting leisure practices at the centre of leading a purposeful life, of leading a good life. As Blackshaw (2017, p. 103) is keen to highlight, in seeking transcendental and authentic existence through leisure as a form for becoming and for knowing oneself, "selfhood is always constructed in social relations, and doesn't exist outside social relations." It was this that was made very clear in various ways by many respondents.

> Although football is clearly not the most important subject in the current climate, I have realised the impact made upon my social life by not going out to watch Everton at the weekend. Naturally, the lockdown has affected every area of my life but I think I probably took going to the match for granted and I've missed the experience more than I expected to; I see people on a regular basis when I go who I don't consider close friends but, seeing them on a fortnightly basis, they play a bigger part of my social life than I'd realised.
>
> (Respondent #590)

More succinctly: "People are more important than sport – I would have totally agreed with statement on left[4] but football keeps me in contact with people I would not see as regularly if I did not go to the game." (Respondent #194). As social beings, the pandemic had an effect on a fundamental aspect of human life. There is no reason to think that it would not have a significant effect on the social activity of following a football club. That sociality may not stretch far enough so as to encompass the 'thick' relationships associated with traditional community bonds to which the work of Cohen (1985) points but is a relevant part of football fans' 'elective communities' (Maffesoli, 1996).

For some, it meant that, "Weekends have been hard to fill – I didn't realise how regularly I relied on football as the centre of my weekend…" (Respondent #137) because, "I have found myself bored when there would [usually]

have been football on… often running out of conversation with fellow football friends." (Respondent #179). Thus, if it is the social side of football rather than what actually happens on the pitch that is important, from a McIntyrean perspective (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]) of football as a practice which aims for the common good, for the football club to be virtuous it must strive to be excellent at continuing to provide the social benefits to its fanbase. Arguably, that means extending their inclusionary approach to developing and meeting the desires of that fanbase whether based on economic, ethnic, gender, accessibility or sexuality.

Of course, the extent to which that is an organic, authentic experience is as much down to the desires or wishes of the supporting consumer base and the cultures through which that support is experienced as fans' everyday engagement with football becomes more fluid than it might once have been. For a large proportion of the Everton fanbase who were part of this research, that experience centres on match day attendance. But it very much permeates their everyday lifeworlds:

> Before COVID-19 football played a huge part in my life, attending matches, watching matches on tv, reading the sports pages on numerous websites every day. Most of my time spent with friends also revolves around football or discussing football. The lockdown has forced me to be without football and although I have really missed it I have had time to appreciate other things…
>
> (Respondent #9)

As explored in the next section, the role of football in the lives of Everton fans provides a social context for much of their daily life but its absence was both lamented and welcomed.

## Social Benefits of Football Fandom and the Management of Everyday Life

> I'm not a fan whose emotional stability is determined by my team's result so I wouldn't have thought I'd have been that bothered, all in all. However, I have missed the weekly rhythm of the matches, punditry and various storylines of sport generally in lockdown which I was not expecting.
>
> (Respondent #445)

> I have found that I miss the routine of weekends. I miss the sharing of a common cause with my friends. I miss the social aspects, the meeting up with friends in the fan zone before games. The joy and despair during games. The unpredictability of football. Looking forward to Match of the Day on a Saturday evening. In particular the banter on a Monday with colleagues from our Newcastle office.
>
> (Respondent #327)

Studies of football culture (and fandom more generally) have often focused on extreme versions and fetishistic activities whilst failing to explore the significance of more mundane behaviours and identity forming associations as part of everyday life (Stone, 2007; 2017). The first quote above shows that, to some extent, this is also true within popular discourse – the respondent beginning their self-identification as a fan with reference to a common enough trope within football culture of how the results of one's football club has a determining effect on emotional wellbeing. As others noted, watching football is, "…my escape; it's 90 minutes to forget all my problems and just watch the blues" (Respondent #110). It is, "…a pleasant distraction from the most important part of my life, i.e. family, friends and work" (Respondent #23). As will be discussed further on, identifying with a football club as a fan has its own stressful features but the activity of watching the match allows fans to suspend worrying about other, arguably more meaningful concerns:

> Football is all about the community around you. Being able to go and sit with friends and family and enjoying the football is really important and I find going to the football really good for my mental health as it is a bit of escapism from the stress of work…
>
> (Respondent #130)

Heun and Pringle (2018) highlighted that there is no systematic evidence that attending football matches reduces symptoms or causes any significant change for those experiencing active mental health problems but do point to Pringle's (2004; 2010) earlier findings around football fandom and positive wellbeing as a result of amongst other things the catharsis associated with watching football. Similar to Pringle's work, evidence from this research shows that part of this is the social context of watching football and sharing the experience with family and friends. It is an experience that is intensely emotional during the course of a match, especially when in concert with others in the heat of the moment, but extends beyond the bounded spaces of the stadium. Whilst the jubilation and disappointment associated with winning or losing matches is an important performative part of following football, undoubtedly affecting emotional responses beyond the match itself for many fans, it is the reliable rhythms and wider activities associated with teams' results in terms of ongoing social interaction that is also important for mental welfare.

This is, to some extent, recognised within classic 'everyday life' studies such as those offered by Goffman (1959) and Garfinkel (1967). Within such 'micro-sociologies' and interactionist studies, the subtleties of everyday life are examined, in much the same way as ethnographic and community studies work that inspired academic texts on football culture such as those by Armstrong (1998) and Robson (2000), to show the routinised, habitual nature of daily life. Habits and routines, or the 'weekly rhythm of the matches, punditry

and storylines', that form the backdrop necessary for both coping with and enjoying the surrounding world on a day-to-day basis. Chaney (2002) suggests that sociologies of the everyday intentionally ask questions about how it is that the everyday is made possible. This has led to the suggestion that, "football culture seeps into the practices of everyday life to such an extent that it could be seen for some people as an essential part of making the everyday possible…" (Stone, 2017, p. 446). If that is the case, we must ask how such people managed from one day to the next when football was suddenly and unexpectedly removed from their lives – in its familiar form, at least (notwithstanding the 'daft examples' of how football clubs attempted to maintain their supporters' attention (Black, 2021)). But also, we must continue to examine how changes to football culture and consumption are incorporated or challenged in the management of everyday lives and 'presentations of the self' (Goffman, 1959) therein.

There were those who found the idea preposterous that the pandemic might alter their perception of football and the role of their football club in their life:

> I don't see why the current crisis will have any bearing on my love of Everton. When everything returns to normal my routine will return to as it was before all this began. Following Everton isn't just about watching a football match it's about meeting mates and enjoying experiences that last a lifetime.
>
> (Respondent #46)

This respondent also noted, though, that the situation had made them reflect on how, "My whole life generally revolves around following Everton, be that cancelling events because they clash with matches or taking days off work to attend games." Without having any matches to watch such supporters suddenly had a surplus of spare time. This of course was not unique to football fans. Many people's perception of time was distorted during lockdown (Ogden, 2020) and as everyday activities related to work, leisure and socialising were curtailed, vast swathes of the population were left seeking other things to do with their time. This was seen as a positive for many fans:

> Our lives revolved around Everton. We waited for fixture lists before booking holidays. Our weekends were taken up following Everton leaving little free time to relax after a week of work. We have spent time appreciating our home, garden and surroundings.
>
> (Respondent #119)

The quotes above (#46 and #119) reflect the two extremes of how people in general responded to the pandemic: that either this was just another aspect of living in the risk society (Beck, 1992) that needed to be overcome and managed in some way before 'everything returns to normal', (#46) or a more

fatalistic view that their way of life was more permanently altered, as evidenced by the use of the past tense by Respondent #119 (above). Furthermore, within this response, there is, once again, a sense of obligation; that following their football club was not an activity that they chose to undertake *in* their free time but which *'takes up'* free time that might be better spent in contemplation or appreciation of other things in life; of the 'good things' in life? They were also one of the 10% of respondents who thought that mostly things will be different and that their regular football behaviours would change when football returned to 'normal'. How much they did change is not known[5] but the point is that their response is indicative of a common theme that emerged of football fandom as "an enjoyment that is decidedly unenjoyable" (Black, 2021, p. 98).

There is a hint of internalised 'class bias' here as dominant historical discourses about how leisure is spent are constructed around 'positive activities', of engaging with 'high culture', rather than 'wasteful' or 'popular' cultural pursuits (Bourdieu, 1984; Stebbins, 1992). Equally though, in recent times, Everton fans have not seen much success from their club on the pitch which may also inform this rather negative perspective. But as football clubs' fortunes ebb and flow with changes in the ways in which football financing and competitiveness is governed, supporters from all clubs will have to alter their expectations. To reiterate, for the majority of football fans, although the actual success and failure attached to football matches is an essential element of consuming the sport, it is the surrounding activities and interactions that create meaning.

One respondent acknowledged how during lockdown, "I still check every day what's on the forums, whether it's player transfers, investment, new kits, new sponsors. I'll still check that stuff every day." But went on to note that, "What I haven't got is the stress of the build-up to a game. Or worried about how the results are going to go…" (Interviewee E48). So, whilst a number of fans were pleased with the efforts of the football club to keep them engaged with online screenings of old matches and other digital content, there were many who reflected on the sense of freedom that no football seemed to offer them. Perhaps, more clearly than earlier attempts to understand football's everydayness (see Stone, 2007; 2017), this illustrates that for many fans, the identity forming actions that carry on throughout everyday life (i.e. the surrounding football 'wallpaper' of social media interaction, player transfer rumours and other news items) are what sustains football culture and is enjoyable, without being acknowledged as such, whilst the core 'practice' that fulfils the purpose of a football club's existence (i.e. playing competitive matches against other football clubs and striving to do the best they can within the organisational structures of league and cup competitions – and sustaining their business model, paying dividends to shareholders and fulfilling the objectives of their owners, financial or otherwise) is the cause of stress which fans could do without. This was expressed as, "A strange feeling not having countless weekends ruined by your team…" (Respondent #114). That, "without football, I've noticed I'm less sad and have more free time on the weekends with

family" (Respondent #108). Realisation of this, though, was also concerning: "I have been generally more happy with Everton not getting beat, which upsets me" (Respondent #102).

Bauman's (2001, p. 10) existential view is that, "We seek and find the dénouement to the drama of mortality not in things we gain and the states we attain, but in desiring them and running after them." Inherent to the enjoyment of sporting competition are the known unknowns. The sense of jeopardy that the outcome of a football match, of a league season, of a lifetime's support will not be as desired. The pleasure, though, is sought in the journey of reaching that outcome, over the course of 90 minutes, throughout a nine-month campaign, as a consequence of years of engagement with the object of one's devotion. The social interactions, the memorable highlights, the greater satisfaction achieved from having invested time, money and emotion into supporting a football club speaks to both the importance of leisure as hedonistic freedom and as eudaimonic devotion (Blackshaw, 2017; Bouwer & van Leeuwen, 2017).

> I realise, that I have taken attending the matches for granted. I find that I miss the social side of going to the games. I miss the wide range of emotions ranging from utter devastation to euphoric delight that I experience from watching Everton. I miss the feeling of being so emotionally invested along with 40,000 other supporters. I miss being able to vent my disappointment or express my joy. Going to the matches is therapeutic to me. I miss being part of something that makes me happy…
>
> (Respondent #83)

For this respondent, 'being part of something that makes me happy…' incorporates the emotional experiences of euphoric delight and utter devastation, and the sharing of such with others. Happiness is both a subjective state of mind and a philosophical preoccupation (Haybron, 2013) and in relation to the latter is intrinsically linked to understandings of leisure and well-being (Bouwer & van Leeuwen, 2017). What emerges from the responses is the relationship between being an Everton fan, the effect that following Everton has on mood and other factors that also effect wellbeing. Whether, on reflection, fans' engagement with their football club is seen as a useful distraction or a source of unwanted stress, it was the absence of such feelings that contributed to an emotional dissonance that transferred to a more profound and less sacred seriousness the everyday experience of which involved very little agency – in terms of consumption and choice to which liquid modernity has accustomed us. In fact, there was a longing for a more manageable, or familiar, source of anxiety.

> Everton are very important to me. I miss travelling up to the game and meeting up with my brother. On the other hand, I have welcomed the absence of stress, which is a constant presence during the season.

> (There is plenty of real-world stress instead of course. In theory, this puts worrying about Everton into perspective, but in practice, I know I will still be anxious and miserable if (when) we lose).
>
> (Respondent #8)

Once again there is an ambivalence, but perhaps without that 'stress' as a 'constant presence', such individuals would lose the vitality of life, which exists in the antagonisms between pleasure and pain, devotion and choice, freedom and duty, utility and aesthetics. These are the very essence of contemporary and historical debates about the role of leisure (Bouwer & van Leeuwen, 2017). With reference to the more extreme forms of 'edgy leisure', such as shock art and black metal, Bouwer and van Leeuwen (2017, p. 180) highlight that, "experiencing (and resisting) pain can be a way to feel alive," and point to King's (2008, p. 443) claim that, "People want to be happy, but sustainable happiness requires occasional unhappiness as well."

Football fandom would not, for most, constitute 'edgy leisure' (organised forms of hooliganism, notwithstanding), but it does call into question the extent to which a football club has a responsibility to its fans for their emotional wellbeing. The unhappiness experienced by football fans serves the purpose of being both the consequence of something out of their control, in some ways insignificant compared with more meaningful causes of stress related to their family or work, but also significant to their sense of self and thus performatively constructed to possibly defer responsibility from more meaningful forms of stress which, in the moment, fans can distance themselves. The 'illusion of sport' allows fans to defer responsibility for its 'sacred seriousness' whilst also benefitting from the emotional performativity necessary for sustainable happiness. As Blackshaw (2010, p. 148) states, "Perhaps the greatest virtue of leisure is that it allows us to suspend for the time being the weight of the world, to be irresponsible and delight in it…"

## The Blue Family: Sociality and Solidarity through Football Fandom

> Whilst football especially Everton is and always will be a key part of my life and is something that I reflect on every day, given the current situation it has seemed less important than it was. Whilst I love being part of the Everton family, not being able to see my own family, meet up with them and not being free to do what I like when I like has changed my perspective a little and made me realise the importance of other aspects of my life.
>
> (Respondent #101)

> During the pandemic, I find I haven't missed actual football per se, but I have missed my Everton family. I have missed being part of a wider

> community and missed having a mutual interest to discuss, beyond my family concerns.
>
> (Respondent #91)

Similar to the way in which EitC participants invoke the family metaphor (see Chapter 5), fans also repeatedly refer to the Everton family as a shorthand for what the club represents to them. As noted in the previous chapter, for EitC participants the notion of 'family' represented caring and trusting relationships that had been built up over time amongst group members and the staff. It is less clear what fans' use of the metaphor symbolises – and is probably fertile ground for further research. In both quotes above, respondents make distinctions between the 'Everton family' and 'their own' family – the latter being identified as more significant (when a self-imposed binary choice is considered – choices which became a regular feature of lockdown as decisions were made about who should form part of our social bubble and who should not) and the former indicative of a shared interest that provides a distraction from that significance. What many responses also made clear was the part football plays in maintaining kinship connections and that watching football was a family affair: "I go to the home games with my dad and we have a routine where we go the pub beforehand then on to the game. It's our time together" (Respondent #145).

The limited academic interest in football fandom and familial affairs has explicitly explored the circumstances under which it is a bonding or detaching experience for parents (Tinson et al., 2017) and particularly the generational legacy in relation to football club identification (not) being 'passed down' from father to son (Tamir, 2019). Football's blood ties are also implicated in the ethnographic studies of Armstrong (1998) and Robson (2000) as well as the work of Brooks (2019). Stone's (2017, p. 454) studies of football and everyday life decentre the match, pointing out that,

> Familial and romantic connections mould themselves around and adapt to football affiliations as part of everyday expressions of togetherness… The extent to which football becomes a part of a [family's] shared biography is not necessarily displayed through attendance at matches or a mutual enjoyment of the game (though this may be part of it). It is manifest through the performativity of relationships and the accommodation of various positions that football occupies within daily life more generally.

There is, though, a gap within the anthropological tradition that would be usefully filled by unpacking fans' own interpretations and understandings of the literal and metaphorical connections between football and family. Within the context of this research, it would seem that the use of 'family' is to indicate a relationship that is so familiar – through shared experiences over a significant period of time – that football fans can pick-up from where they left off without

the usual small talk that might be common when interacting with other people beyond those with whom one has the most intimate of relationships.

More than that, it represents a surrogate form for familial responsibilities. At a time when many people felt they could or should do more for others (perhaps a stark reminder that we could and should always do more for others), Everton Football Club, through the work of Everton in the Community, represented for many fans a tangible expression of humanity – at a time when many felt helpless, often despite their best efforts.

> … so much has been going on in the world and we've lost loved ones and been in constant worry over others, so football doesn't seem as important compared to these things… [However], life has been so dull and depressing there has been very little to cheer us up or look forward to… seeing what the club has done in the community during the past few months made me happy and gave me hope for the future, and that is really powerful for me.
>
> (Respondent #477)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were numerous stories of support and compassion, from all walks of life and across varying communities, which highlighted the overwhelming humanity that is foregrounded in times of crisis. Not least was this true across the world of football – incidents of self-interest notwithstanding – as referenced in Chapter 2. The same chapter showed how Everton Football Club was quick to respond to the needs of those with whom they have an enduring relationship, organising welfare calls to fans they felt to be most susceptible to the effects of the pandemic and reorganising, as best they could, the support provided by Everton in the Community to various vulnerable groups locally.

For football fans generally, there is little evidence and virtually no academic discussion as to the significance they place on their clubs' community engagement work. Unsurprisingly, responses to the final section of the survey, which requested Everton fans' perspectives on how the club acted during the COVID-19 pandemic in supporting different communities, were overwhelmingly positive. 87.4% of respondents strongly agreed that Everton provided crucial support for local communities and 82.4% strongly agreed that the club have looked after their players and staff.[6] In the open-ended responses, many fans discussed how proud they were of the work undertaken by Everton in the Community over the years and particularly the way this was redoubled, supported by the football club itself, during lockdown: "EiTC is always a source of great pride to me as an Evertonian and once again the club has stepped up" (Respondent #246).

> Everton as always were at the forefront of helping the community without being advised to. They have long been admired as a club that has its roots

> deeply embedded in the community. Everton's off field work is in a class of its own and something the club and fans should be extremely proud of.
> (Respondent #46)

Many Everton fans seem to follow the club's narrative of existing for the common good – some respondents keen to evidence that they know their history by referencing the club's Methodist roots (which is discussed in Chapter 3). Fans are thus invested in some sense with the idea of the club's 'virtuous tradition' (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]), and it is often used as a point of comparison with their rivals. Many respondents pointedly remarked on Liverpool FC's very different response at the outset of the crisis and is part of an ongoing process of distinction that has been created and is encapsulated by the club's branding of itself as the 'People's Club'.[7]

> Everton have once again proved they are the people's club and supported local communities, fans and vulnerable people alike. All this has been done quietly, without fanfare as though it is what the club should be doing while others have used the furlough scheme and broadcast loudly the minimal help they have given in their communities.
> (Respondent #373)

The focus of this research was not to explore fans' wider rationale for the distinction but a thoroughgoing sociological investigation of how fans perceive and take on their football club's community engagement as part of their self-concept is long overdue.[8] Not least because, there is a sense that the 'community' (which as part of EitC's moniker Everton are 'in') seems to apply to something other than that to which fans are a part themselves. The perception is that EitC work with and provide support to local people, helpless and needy; a disembodied, imagined entity distinct from the Everton fanbase as a collective to which supporters belong.

These 'flawed (football) consumers' (Bauman, 1998; Stone, 2022) may or may not be Everton fans. Something of which the club are proud – that EitC will help local people regardless of their allegiance. It seems that you don't have to be a blue to be part of the Blue Family. There is a tacit understanding amongst fans that a football club is a significant part of its local social environment. There is also recognition that bigger clubs (loosely defined as those consistently competing in the Premier League and consequently able to grow and maintain a large and often geographically dispersed fanbase) are increasingly detached from a highly localised support base – in terms of match-going support, at least. This is expressed through reference to the idea of a 'community club' – a category familiar to those who connect with grassroots and lower league football as it has entered the lexicon of amateur football through the Charter Standard accreditation provided by the English Football Association and as an identity attached to clubs such as Dulwich Hamlet FC,

AFC Liverpool, FC United of Manchester, AFC Wimbledon or Whitehawk FC amongst others (Cleland et al., 2018; Porter, 2019; Ziesche, 2020). Fans are fully aware that the practices and purposes attached to professional football and grassroots football are distinctly different but, "Everton have shown what a community club is when scaled up to a big Premier league club. Other clubs, the Premier league and the FA need to follow their example" (Respondent #373).

Unlike the expectations modelled by the FA Community Club Charter Standard, at the elite level of football there is often an ethical and functional disjunction between the club and its community partner (Anagnostopoulos & Shilbury, 2013; Walters & Panton, 2014), as highlighted in Chapter 1. Most fans, however, see the football club and the charitable exploits undertaken by clubs' foundations or community trusts as indistinct from one another.

> Everton [Football Club], as usual seem to have taken the moral high ground and used this crisis as a time to further enhance their reputation as a caring club who go the extra mile to help local communities and particularly those in need.
>
> (Respondent #50)

The significance of this is the transparency of the interrelationship between the two organisations, moral claims across the football industry in terms of the 'common good' and the impact on consumer behaviours. Evidence in previous chapters of this book shows that compassion extends through Everton Football Club and Everton in the Community, both in terms of community support and as a platform for strong leadership. If by believing that, "Everton football club [showed] themselves to be market leaders in compassion, leadership and community engagement [throughout the pandemic]," (Respondent #236) fans were encouraged to buy into the club's 'virtuous narrative', the question then becomes about the extent to which fans are willing to support such a notion more substantially as part of their identification with the club? There is evidence from work carried out by Stone and Gransden (forthcoming) that donating money to EitC offers a source of connection important to transnational supporters. The willingness of many Everton season ticket holders due a refund as a consequence of the 2019/2020 season being curtailed to donate their repayment to EitC demonstrates a financial commitment to the work the organisation undertakes.

> I am full of admiration for Everton in the Community and I was delighted to be able to contribute my season ticket refund to support them… It is an organisation that I try to support on a regular basis – it is local, I know where the money is going and it makes an important contribution to the city.
>
> (Respondent #343)

There is little evidence, however, that much income for the work of EitC is generated through donations from fans more usually. Furthermore, there is little uptake from fans for volunteering opportunities that might be available to support the work of EitC in other ways. The fanbase as a 'human resource' is often overlooked by football clubs (Stone, 2022), with academic scholarship often more focused on 'fan activism' (Cleland et al., 2018; Garcia & Zheng, 2017; Numerato, 2018) than what might be labelled 'fan humanitarianism' or 'fan philanthropy' at the everyday level.

> Everton have done amazing during this Pandemic. Compassion is at the forefront of the club's community efforts and I really appreciate the letters from the CEO about what the club is doing on and off the field… it makes me feel included and why I donated my refund to EitC.
>
> (Respondent #172)

Unlike the football fan movements studied by Cleland et al. (2018), 'feeling included' for fans like Respondent #172 is not demonstrated through political engagement, community activism or collective action (other than the communion associated with being part of the crowd in the stadium). It is, possibly in line with the expectations of consumer fans who are more likely to comprise a greater majority of a big Premier League club such as Everton FC, a more transactional relationship. Identification with a football club that is perceived to be a 'caring club', that successfully translates that 'tradition' into a 'narrative' that fans can buy into, generates income and self-satisfaction for fans who have, "…rarely felt as detached from the game as I currently do." (Respondent #553). Fans who believe they are doing their bit and thus feel more included in a club which does not fit the criteria for being a 'community club' in the same way as the non-league and grassroots clubs mentioned earlier. Of course, many fans of FCUM or Dulwich Hamlet, for example, may be similarly using the vicarious association with the socio-political meanings that have formed around such clubs as a form of virtue signalling (rather than, or as a different form of, BIRGing[9] (Billings et al., 2016; Caldini et al., 1976; Dalakas et al., 2004)).

Interestingly, according to EFC and EitC staff who were tasked with calling season ticket holders who donated money it would seem that many fans had not previously seen the community engagement work as particularly important – until it was made more apparent to them or, perhaps, as a consequence of greater charitable instincts that were emerging during the pandemic. One EitC staff member involved in making such calls noted that,

> Although they [season ticket holders] didn't know too much about Everton in the Community … they'd seen loads about it on Twitter and through the club channels and … they just said it was a no-brainer that they would give that money up to further the work…
>
> (EitC employee)

This suggests that even for many of the most dedicated supporters, there is little interest in what community engagement work is done but they are proud to be associated with a club that has such a good reputation for doing such work. As the following quote demonstrates, summing up the view of the majority of Everton fans, the pursuit of the primary purpose of the business (i.e. to entertain and compete) is important but not at the expense of their socially responsible brand identity:

> Maintaining Everton's reputation as a family, community-based club is paramount. Naturally I want to see us win trophies again and to have better facilities at a new ground but not by turning us into a soulless branded operation like the current top six.
>
> (Respondent #24)

It might be noted that, after many years of being unable to compete with their great rivals Manchester United (in terms of playing related success), similar views were expressed by Manchester City fans before significant investment turned their fortunes around and came to be, what this respondent would suggest, one of the 'soulless branded operations' that are part of the current top six. Manchester City fans, of course, would argue that within the shifting contexts of hyper-commodification and re-embedding of affective relations with their club, over time local fan cultures have evolved that both mimic and extend the 'invented traditions' of previous eras (Edensor, 2015; Edensor et al., 2023). The competing discourses around community and commercialisation, authenticity and identity, belonging and placelessness, ownership and governance have become an increasing part of football fan culture as unquestioned, unreflexively solidly modern embodiments of fandom become more fluid, self-conscious and subject to rapid change. Whilst these elements become absorbed and adapted within localised fan identifications with the majority of fans refocusing their performative footballing selves in order to retain a sense of self so rooted in their support for their club,[10] there was strong resentment towards the actions of football's governing bodies.

## Wealth before Health – Fan Views of the Football Authorities and Their (Lack of) Responsibility

> Everton has always been in the vanguard regarding help to the local community and long may it continue. Winning a trophy or two would be nice but remaining "The People's Club" is imperative. As for the football authorities they are weak willed money grabbers and the Premiership in particular is incorrigible in its elitism, greed, selfishness and pomposity which is quite absurd seeing that it is totally subservient to the aforementioned TV companies.
>
> (Respondent #294)

> Everton have done well in this pandemic but could have fought more to only restart the season when fans are allowed in the ground. I feel that all clubs have let fans down and chose money before fans.
>
> (Respondent #118)

When asked whether the football authorities had shown strong leadership and understanding throughout the crisis, 65% of respondents felt that not to be the case. There was an overwhelming feeling that, rather than for the morale of the country, as suggested by the likes of Jeremy Hunt and Dominic Raab, Project Restart was more concerned with minimising legal and financial costs relating to broadcasting contracts between the Premier League and television companies. As already discussed, Everton fans were very proud of how their club, particularly through its partnership with EitC, had acted during this difficult period because whilst, "Everton FC couldn't have done any more for their community … the FA & EPL should hang their heads in shame, purely chasing the money when there are far more important things in life right now" (Respondent #178).

However, many wanted to see greater moral leadership from their football club in challenging the decisions being made by the governing bodies:

> Everton and players have done a lot for local communities… However, we [Everton Football Club] could have fought harder to stop the league returning… The Premier League have been too eager to get the league back regardless of consequences. As a result, players are putting their families at risk for our entertainment…
>
> (Respondent #3)

Being powerless to do much during lockdown other than follow the rules set down by the Government, whilst also unsure about political decisions being made, fans expected their football club by proxy to at least be able to make good choices. Of course, it was recognised that, "Everton, I suspect, had little autonomy to act independently…" (Respondent #591) but, for this respondent, to have failed to abandon the league shows negligence on the part of those involved in making such a decision – including Everton Football Club.

> I would like to have seen Premier league clubs in general, and Everton in particular, put the obsession of resuming the season to one side and concentrated on more important matters. That way, clubs wouldn't have had to worry about keeping their players 'match fit' and, instead, ask them to join in with a concerted effort of helping in the community. As expected, I think Everton players and Everton as a club did more community work than most but all could and should have been in a position to do more.
>
> (Respondent #590)

In holding their football club to account, fans tend to focus on their league position. Demonstrations have been seen in protest against club owners and general vocal disapproval of managerial decisions can be commonly heard at grounds around the country when performance levels fall short of expectations (not least amongst the Everton fanbase in the period since this research was conducted). Furthermore, over recent years, identity politics has forced clubs to listen to self-interest groups whose members were under-represented within the fanbase and often felt unwelcome (and in some cases still do) so that fan groups representing women, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ communities and people with disabilities became more apparent and able to present their views to club hierarchies. What emerged within this research was the potential role of the football club in voicing fans' views about the governance and leadership of the sport's structures more widely.

Of course, the problem is that because football has such a significant position within national culture, it is sometimes guilty of trying to be all things to all people. As discussed already, even within the relatively short timeframe of the first COVID-19 lockdown (though at the time it felt incredibly long), politicians were accusing the football industry of not doing enough and being guilty of disrespecting the needs of the country to then requiring them to find the best ways to restart as soon as possible for the good of the country's morale. Moreover, in general terms, football clubs have, since the birth of the Football in the Community schemes in the 1980s, been expected to arguably go above and beyond other businesses in caring for and serving members of their community.

Recognition that football stadia and the cultural practices surrounding the sport were unwelcoming and undesirable to people with disabilities, to women, to people from ethnic minorities and to the gay community has been essentially important. However, while we can of course 'Say No To Racism' and try to 'Kick It Out', the football authorities and associated organisations, can only do so much to challenge such prejudice when other leading national bodies, such as the Government, right-wing media establishments or commercial entities with the power to intervene in public discourse seem to promote the opposite within the social body more widely. Football clubs and the industry as a whole can do more in the fight for social justice in pursuit of the common good, as can we all, but the ethical principles on which the common good is founded possibly need better articulation. Or we as individuals who both represent different stakes in such definitions and hold those in power to account for their definitions of the common good need better training in how we can articulate and allow others to counter such articulations as part of our everyday encounters with each other and relevant governing bodies.

Returning to the focus of this research around the responsibility of football, and more specifically, Everton FC during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were those who, reflecting the wider debate about the purpose of a football

club and its social responsibilities, did not feel Everton had a case to answer; that such a question was not relevant because, "How the club and players have behaved or acted is not something I have any idea about and very little interest in. It is and was not Everton's place to 'do more' – they are a football club. 'Do more' applies to the Government – national and local." (Respondent #315) Which of course returns us to the very essence of the who, what, when and where of virtue within contemporary living.

## Conclusion: Loss of Social Routine, Devotional Leisure and Football's Welfare State

> …it might be better for fewer season tickets to be available and for more fans to make a conscious buying choice each and every time they attend. In that way the whole experience will hopefully improve as all fans have consciously decided that's where they want to be rather than just blindly keeping to old routines even when they bring no enjoyment.
>
> (Respondent #6)

> It's not necessarily the footy that you miss, it's going every week home and away with your mates, having a pint and a chat. I miss all the people that sit round me in the Park End chatting shite.
>
> (Respondent #87)

Football fandom is about routine, ritual and habit. Enjoyment for the majority, though, is defined by more than simply consuming the match day experience. Watching matches is important but only in as much as it provides a source for a sociality that extends throughout everyday life. Respondent #87 sums up the views of many fans who were keen to extol the virtues of being part of a football crowd and what the sudden cessation of the season meant during the lockdown period. Respondent #6, however, provides a barely hidden critique of what he perceives to be overwhelming disgruntlement amongst the regular match goers, and perhaps a more latent self-criticism of his own devotion. In some respects, he is acknowledging a change in the way football must be consumed in liquid modern times. Too many supporters holding on to the solidly modern modes of fandom make for a less entertaining experience because attendance emerges from a sense of duty rather than a conscious choice to attend for a specific set of reasons and with a specific set of desired outcomes from the experience. In liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), choosing becomes an act of everyday necessity such that those choices define everyday lives that are less static, less routine, less defined by ritualistic sociality. The thin relationships that seem so important to many fans in defining what they were missing most about not attending football matches regularly become even thinner for the more 'consumer orientated' fans (Brooks, 2019). However, they also become more numerous and arguably more accessible

within everyday lives that incorporate the much broader and more selective spaces of online communicative forms and digital communities (often alongside more conventional interactive relationships).

When reflecting on how important football is to them in the face of the life-threatening situation that was affecting people on a daily basis, fans struggled to rationalise their feelings. Not being able to watch football was seen as irrelevant compared to people's mortality, their livelihoods, their isolation from and loss of loved ones. Yet, the sudden breach of such familiar behaviours and social connectivity that football provides, in traditionally solid modern forms, led to a realisation that football was significant for many people's wellbeing. Responses provided in this research support existing work exploring the benefits of attending football matches on emotional wellbeing and mental health (Pringle, 2004; 2010; Southby, 2013). It would seem that, following Bouwer and van Leeuwen (2017, p. 158), football as leisure, "not only contributes to the physical and mental health of people, but also to recuperation from [other] stressful conditions such as work."

Yet, there is an ambivalence to the role that football plays in the welfare of Everton fans. The 'sacred seriousness' is implicitly acknowledged as football is endowed with important qualities for the successful management of everyday life but fall short in relation to the threat to life that COVID-19 initiated. Football is not a matter of life or death in the literal sense. When faced with the mortal challenge imposed by the pandemic, Everton supporters decide to 'Choose Life'. But to do so is to recognise the significance that their fandom plays in that choice. The suggestion is that that choice is not actually freely chosen. Life is most important, but football or Everton FC is (an extremely significant part of) their life, imposed upon fans by the weight of their family tree or some such nostalgic, invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) to which they are now bound by routine and ritual, by crucial social mores and communal connections. Through the way that respondents described their allegiance to Everton FC, for a significantly large proportion their fandom fits with the theoretical construct of 'serious leisure' (Ertaş, 2022; Gibson et al., 2002; Jones, 2000; Stebbins, 1992). Supporting their football club involves commitment. That commitment is manifest in many ways but takes the form of various interactions as part of fans' everyday lives (Stone, 2007; 2017). The kind of commitment described by the notion of 'serious leisure' is not, though, the kind of commitment that is appropriate for the contingencies of living in liquid modern times (Blackshaw, 2010; 2018). Everyday leisure has become less routine. It has become more individualised. It has become less 'permanent'. Less passive.

Gardiner (2000, p. 2) describes the everyday as:

> …the largely taken-for-granted world that remains clandestine, yet constitutes what [Henri] Lefebvre calls the 'common ground' or 'connective tissue' of all conceivable human thoughts and activities. It is the crucial

> medium through which we enter into a transformative praxis with nature, learn about comradeship and love, acquire and develop communicative competence, formulate and realise pragmatically normative conceptions, feel myriad desires, pains and exaltations, and eventually expire. In short, the everyday is where we develop our manifold capacities, both in an individual and collective sense, and become fully integrated and truly *human* persons.

In other words, everyday life is comprised of combining and competing actions and interactions that often go unnoticed because they form an embodied understanding and way of being in the world. It is the highlights and lowlights of which we become most aware but our interpretations of and reactions to which are informed by daily reinforcement of who (we think) we are and our moral, practical and intuitive actions. The highlights and lowlights are also less (able to be) planned (for). In liquid modernity, traditional 'highlights' attached to grand occasions of family holidays or celebrations, occasional (work-related) personal achievements, large national festivals have been added to in various ways. City breaks and travel experiences are more frequent to greater numbers. Wider social connectivity leads to more frequent and wider variety of 'celebrations'. Personal achievements are recognised more and personally marked for posteriority – or for as long as social media timelines allow. And the relationship between football and its fan-base is no longer founded on representations of localness (though that may be part of it) and cultural expectations attached to appropriate leisure pursuits as a respite from work but in choosing football, and (most often) a particular football club (which may or may not be local), and an appropriate form for following the sport (and said club) from a number of competing options. Such choices, or lack thereof, weigh heavy on the 'flawed consumers' (Bauman, 1998) who struggle to fulfil their desires. The shift from a production-led society to the consumption-led world of contemporary times means universal comparison governs our sense of self and our purpose in life is defined by devotional praxis.

For Blackshaw (2010, p. 141) devotional leisure, such that liquid-moderns invoke, gives 'meaning' to life through 'active commitment' that 'signifies obligation, responsibility and especially desire'. He defines his presentation of leisure practices in this way as follows:

> What I have in mind when I use the term leisure as a devotional practice is something like [Max] Weber's idea of a value-sphere, which suggests that not only is leisure governed by a particular set of norms, rules, ethics and obligations that are inherent to it, but also that those who commit themselves to leisure do so as a vocation; the relationship between their life and their leisure is fundamental. In other words, and to paraphrase what Zinzendorf (cited in Weber, 1930: 264, note 24) said about work:

> in making an existential commitment to leisure men and women not only leisure in order to live, but live for the sake of their leisure, and if there is no more leisure to have they suffer or go to sleep.
>
> (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 142)

Thus, where once it was through our (forced) commitment to employment-based activity that we sought authenticity of meaning for our self-perceptions and our actions, such legitimacy is now generated and fulfilled through our leisure. But that authenticity is fleeting and challenging for football fans. It is everything in the moment, in the emotional commitment during the match or in the process of interaction with fellow fans (of one's own team or a rival). The 'illusion of sport' (Black, 2021) was revealed as fans questioned their own commitment. The performativity associated with traditional football fandom is a reflexive process and fans were lamenting its loss – as the country collectively lamented the loss of loved ones and numerous unknown others (who could also have been their own loved ones but for the vagaries of fate; or more likely socio-economic position) as well as the loss of a well-functioning national health service. But at the same time fans realise the self-referential 'sacred-seriousness' of such self-identifications.

The liminal qualities of football's 'carnivalesque' remain in that, "the match and the time around it [is used] to 'get away from' the norms of everyday working and family life" (Pearson, 2012, p. 60), and without the regular attendance at matches, the realities of life during lockdown were not only incomprehensible they were also inescapable. However, the carnival fandom is, as Pearson acknowledges, expressive of only a minority of fans. For the majority in this research, the sociality surrounding match day was expressed in allegorical and analogous terms to that of the broader narrative which prevented families from being together. Football may be used to 'get away from' everyday life but it also is part of what everyday life is. And everyday life changed enormously during the lockdown period leaving people to consider what was of value to them – not least in the social experiences and meanings attached to their leisure lives.

To try to understand football as a 'practice' in MacIntyrean terms (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]), we must include the myriad ways in which it is part of fans' everyday lives. From the fans' perspective, the virtue of the football club is its role as social anchor and interpersonal connector, but as everyday lives become less predictable (less solid) and connections with the club and other fans become more varied (more liquid) the minutiae of fan expectations leave the virtuous tradition open to question. A moral code built up in recent years around the work of Everton in the Community is only a virtue whilst business practices remain successful. Fans will accept occasional dips in form and seasonal performances that underachieve in terms of competitive success. But whilst there is a great sense of pride amongst Everton fans about the club's support for 'communities of need', using that as a distinctive identification with

the club is not as strong, in the long run, as that related to competitiveness on the pitch. Thus, the common good of sport at the service of humanity must include competitive structures through which fans can maintain a relative source of identity with their perceived 'other' (however that is defined and manifests itself). Communities of fans have different needs for which the club must cater if excellence is to be achieved. For Everton FC, their virtuous tradition includes a consistency of performance that has maintained their presence at the top of English football (relatively speaking) for nearly three quarters of a century.

As the club's level of performance has suffered in recent years leading up to the production of this text, fans' commitment has become tested – in terms of expecting more from their football club but not in relation to the wider sociality associated with that commitment. Being forced to reflect on such aspects of their lives through engaging with this research, fans questioned their choice to spend so much time engaging with Everton FC and welcomed the lack of associated 'stress' during an enforced period of abstinence.

The ambivalence then becomes centred on how the importance of attending matches revolving around a sociality that Blackshaw (2003) might argue has been rendered obsolete in other areas of everyday life is so much part of the attraction for the majority of fans – at least of a certain generation. These fans are, though, an important part of the 'institutional memory'; of the "symbolic dimensions made and remade by fans, players, and their relations with remembrance of previous fans and players" (Cleland et al., 2018, p. 184). The 'consumer fans' (Brooks, 2019) for whom football's role in more liquid modern everyday lives is part of a more conscious choice and more deliberate identity formation will have different expectations. The question is how can football, or individual football clubs, make it easier and more purposeful for different kinds of fans to benefit from and contribute to the collective that is not simply about 'being entertained' but sharing in emotional journeys and supporting those less fortunate (however that may be defined) whilst maintaining multiple 'value spheres'?

Blackshaw (2010, p. 149) contends that we should be, "finding new ways for making our leisure more meaningful." In doing so we, "have the potential to transform individual contingency into collective destiny; and we might even make a better world possible." The COVID-19 lockdown led to plenty of introspection, not least from football fans, about what was meaningful. Amongst those Everton fans involved in this research, there was a feeling of despondency as their collective destiny seemed to be that of failing to compete in playing terms but that was countered with pride at how Everton in the Community was making a better world possible for those most in need.

In general terms, the pandemic provided opportunities for different relationships to be formed amongst neighbours who both committed to and performed their civic duties within their more immediate geographic communities. Everton FC provided an opportunity for fans to add to that through financial contributions which were, previously, already set aside in lieu of

match attendance and its associated enjoyment. With no matches to attend, fans were given the option of diverting that money to support the common good. Thus, they are doing their duty in their role as consumers. Without football in its most familiar form, it was Everton's duty to provide alternative forms of engagement. While other clubs provided 'silliness' in Black's (2021) words, Everton provided their fans with the opportunity to more literally 'buy-into' the club's humanitarian exploits. In so doing, fans could take comfort in the support that EitC were providing, giving them a vicarious sense of solidarity through some kind of direct welfare provision.

In a society of consumers (Bauman, 1998; 2000), of course, welfare is not a specific state but an individual task for us to accomplish. Our welfare is our responsibility – each and every one of us. It is a task that is laid at sport and leisure's door to facilitate. It is also misconstrued to mean the pursuit of happiness as the ultimate teleological outcome of one's life. A good life is a happy life. But in MacIntyre's (2007 [1981]) understanding, a good life is a virtuous life. A virtuous life is one in which our eudaimonic achievements amount to us saying we have done our best to become that which we were able through the pursuit of the common good. The 'Everton Family' is a metaphor for some common purpose.[11] A teleological signpost that inherently has a common purpose.

The common good for 'consumer fans' might well be different to 'traditional' fans. And each and every fan between these 'ideal' types will see football in a different way within self-definitions of football as a devotional leisure practice. Within and across these personalised hermeneutical value spheres (Blackshaw, 2018; Weber, 2008) emerge understandings of and debates about the 'common good'. The common good of the game overall and the common good which the football club serves within competing definitions of and discourses surrounding football clubs and their communities. It was clear that the majority of supporters placed little trust in the (football) authorities but remained loyal to their football club. The fan voice (in all its plurality) has, in many ways, become increasingly multi-vocal and impactful over the course of the sport's modern history. Yet, when decisions needed to be made about the return of football, fans were significantly absent from the discussions despite, in the case of those involved in this research, being generally against the proposed plans to restart. At the time, collective action was of course difficult to achieve due to the very nature of lockdown-induced isolation, but Everton fans were disappointed that their club did not do enough to challenge Project Restart. Just three months after the country's initial encounter with this new virus that caused such upheaval, including the cancellation of sporting events and leagues, The Premier League, The Football League and the Government were ready to restart – in empty stadia. That the fans were not was unimportant.

> The most important thing that is created in many leisure activities is not the event (as a collection of occurrences) itself, but the shared experience that emerges in the interaction of all participants: the event's logistic context

> created by the organiser, the experience components offered in the artist's performance, and the appreciation and participation of the attendees that constitute the atmosphere of the event.
>
> (Bouwer & van Leeuwen, 2017, p. 191)

What is needed is further research across generational divides to explore the transition from serious leisure to devotional leisure within football fan culture and the expectations that supporters have of their football club, as (virtuous) consumers and citizens. The 'conventional' common good that is shared by the organiser, artists and attendees is one of succeeding within the structure of competitive professional sport – to beat opponents, win trophies and provide entertainment (however that is perceived from the consumer's perspective). If younger generations are generally more attuned to social responsibility and humanitarian issues (Amnesty International UK, 2022; Birdwell & Bani, 2014; Bocking-Welch, 2016), is Everton Football Club better placed to benefit from such attitudes through their virtuous narrative? Or does football fandom remain primarily a 'distraction for the masses'? Fundamentally, both may be true and it is for football clubs, fans and the authorities to engage in pluralistic dialogic debate across intersecting value spheres in a transparent and egalitarian way if football as a practice is to be at the service of humanity – rather than seek to maximise profits for the benefit of the few and at the exclusion of groups that continue to be or have become increasingly powerless.

## Notes

1 This is a representation of the seven-day rolling average. Due to varying protocols and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death, the number of confirmed deaths may not accurately represent the true number of deaths caused by COVID-19. https://ourworldindata.org/covid-deaths
2 This refers to discursive rendering by fans and media of certain clubs that are 'bigger' than others based on a combination of competitive success and spending power in recent years. This used to be expressed as the 'big 4' (Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United), to which have been added two more clubs (Manchester City and Newcastle United).
3 This has of course been seen in the past when the Merseyside rivalry was set aside following the tragic circumstances surrounding the events at Hillsborough in 1989 that resulted in 97 lives being lost. And more recently with the tragic loss of a construction worker's life on Everton's Bramley Moore Dock stadium project being marked separately by both Liverpool supporters at Anfield and Everton supporters at Goodison Park during respective home matches following the incident.
4 The respondent mostly agreed with the statement: "I have realised that football is not as important to me as I thought."
5 One of the limitations of the research is that the opportunity to undertake follow-up research has not arisen in order to explore respondents' actual behaviours following the early days of the pandemic compared with their initial thoughts and concerns during the midst of the first lockdown.
6 In order to show that such responses are not simply because of fanatical allegiance to their club, it is worth noting that in a pilot survey that also included

responses from a sample of 378 Liverpool fans (recruited through their following of a Liverpool FC blog), only 48% of reds' supporters strongly agreed that their club provided crucial support for local communities and 46% strongly agreed that Liverpool FC had looked after their players and staff. It should be acknowledged that the validity of the Liverpool fan sample (due to the way participants were recruited) may not be as high as the Everton sample (see Appendix 3 for sampling information) as followers of the blog may represent a specific type of supporter. The figures are, however, indicative of a critical engagement by fans with clubs' responsibilities beyond the field of play.

7 The label was first used by David Moyes in an early press conference introducing him as the club's new manager in 2002. The moniker has been taken on by Everton fans who make the distinction between their club's identity as rooted in the local community, with a (relatively) local fan base and a more distinctly 'traditional' association with the local area compared with Liverpool FC whose community engagement work is perceived to be more superficial (regardless of the actual work that Liverpool Community Foundation undertake), who are more interested in courting overseas and 'tourist' fans and whose roots are the consequence of 'unmoral' desire for expansion amongst Everton FC's own founding members.

8 Early work by Walker and Kent (2009) about the influence of corporate social responsibility on consumer attitudes in the sport industry as well as more recent work by Son et al. (2023) on the relationship between corporate social responsibility, team identification and behavioural intention amongst spectators of the Korean Professional Baseball League offer possible directions for such work. As explained in Chapter 1, though, using the lens of CSR in the context of English football clubs' community engagement is arguably insufficient.

9 There is literature spanning 50 years which discusses how sports fans' motivations are related to the concept of Basking In Reflected Glory (BIRG) – that a team's success has a vicarious effect on fans' social identity.

10 Notwithstanding the exemplar extraordinaire represented by the formation of FCUM by disgruntled fans of Manchester United.

11 It is important to reiterate that Everton FC is the case study club for the purpose of this research and that other clubs and the fanbases may similarly invoke the family metaphor. More than occasionally, the term 'football family' is utilised to refer to a whole range of football stakeholders from fans to clubs to national and international governing bodies.

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Chapter 7

# Solidarity, Civil Welfare and Football at the Service of Humanity

## Reflections on the Meanings of Football and Its Future for the Common Good

### Introduction

> Everton need to do more to actually win football games—that's the primary purpose of the club. Since this growing focus of charity and community, there has been a significant drop-off in success on the field and that is unacceptable.
>
> (Respondent #384)

> Does a football club have to do it? The answer is no. But then a football club that's based in an area where, you know, there's high deprivation… can you just ignore what's on your doorstep? And I would say there is more of a moral responsibility to not just ignore that, particularly if you are a multi-million pound business, based in that area… I don't think that clubs have to do it, but, personally, if I was the owner of the club, I would feel a moral responsibility to not just close my eyes when I walked into the ground, and ignore what was around me…
>
> (EitC staff member)

The two perspectives expressed in the above quotes highlight the difficult position in which football clubs at the elite level find themselves. Respondent #384 is an Official EFC member, who classified themselves as someone who 'Watches all matches live on television/stream'. They live in the Southwest region of the UK (which would suggest they live anywhere between 150 and 350 miles from Everton's home stadium). This indicates a relationship with the football club that is based on the consumption of matches for entertainment and whose identity as an Everton fan is likely to be defined in relation to fans of other clubs with whom they engage either in similarly dislocated physical space or through social media channels in digital spaces. Consumer fans such as this are an increasing part of many football clubs' fanbase, whose views are likely to be different to more 'traditional' fans (see Brooks, 2019; King, 1998; Millward, 2011; Stone, 2022 for more insight about the arguably false distinction between 'traditional' and 'consumer' fans).

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Understandably, the EitC staff member, who is far more embedded in the social context that surrounds Goodison Park (see Chapter 5) where Everton (at the time of writing) play their home matches, and for whom social justice is likely to be a driving force behind their career choices (as explicated in Chapter 4), is forthright in suggesting the moral obligations attached to the football club. As the discussion in Chapter 4 shows, there is a consistency of feeling about EFC and EitC from within that upholds a desire to exist for the common good – which includes meeting the needs of local people, supporters and staff to the best of their ability. There is though tension at the heart of football when its practices include both civic responsibility and competitive success (both as a business and as a sporting entity – which are of course interlinked) as an historical facet of the way in which many football clubs were founded: as part of the rational recreation movement and emergence of mass leisure consumption.

Through reflection on the extended period of research and more specific investigation carried out during the first lockdown period at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Spring of 2020, this concluding chapter will try to show the potential for football clubs to be part of a societal reconfiguration process rooted in solidarity for social justice and the common good. Returning to my sociology nay-sayer who questioned the value of such a study (Chapter 1), I would point to Matthewman's (2022, p. 7) postulations about the resurgence of the social and the social sciences as a consequence of the pandemic. He points out that, "The strengthening of social bonds during times of disaster has been long observed by social scientists," outlining several reasons for that to be the case:

1 Disasters are social phenomena. Threats and damage are public and collectively experienced. Shared risk and suffering bonds survivors.
2 Collective action is fostered as current power structures are nowhere near as robust as is commonly thought. They often dissipate or disappoint. Mutual aid from within this 'society of equals' may be the only resource available.
3 This pronounced sense of agency is seen as a vital sense-making activity which yields both affective and applied benefits. Adjustment to the 'new normal' is a coping strategy which enhances both individual and collective wellbeing.
4 Another major driver for collective action comes from the realisation that disasters (at least those triggered by natural hazards) are often experienced as 'uncontrollable'. No one can be blamed or, if they can, those persons, groups and organisations reside beyond the community. Instead of internal scapegoating and community division, there is a sense of togetherness, a 'democracy of common disaster'.
5 Undergirding all of this is the fact that we are essentially social beings. We cannot exist alone. We are products of culture and collective labour.

> We exist within networks of mutual dependency. We share norms and relations and, to a degree unknown in any other life form, we are remarkably altruistic… Disasters throw this aspect of our species into the sharpest relief.

Matthewman goes on to highlight that the primary role of sociology in this context is its commitment to responsible speech in predicting social futures, assessing public opinion, advocating social justice and identifying the mechanisms through which another world can be made possible. Thus what follows is an attempt to comment responsibly on how football, and one football club in particular, managed during the COVID-19 crisis by assessing various stakeholders' opinions and placing them within a framework of social virtue, of common good, in order to identify the extent to which football clubs are in a position to support the possibility of alternative forms of social justice and ways of being in the world.

To do so is to draw on the work of Bruni and Zamagni (2016) in moving football clubs towards being civilly responsible and Chouliaraki (2013) in helping to understand how solidarity with the subjects of suffering is conveyed in post-humanitarian society. Before that, let me return to Beck's (1992) 'risk society' thesis as an explanatory paradigm for the collective experience of the COVID-19 pandemic across football. Because, whilst Matthewman (2022) might indicate various reasons for the strengthening of social bonds during times of crisis, the question is the degree to which those social bonds are preserved once the situation becomes less critical and the precarity faced by individuals in the 'risk society' re-establishes itself to fragment rather than unite society.

## Football in (a) Crisis and the Commonality of Need

It would seem like football is all at once in a persistent state of crisis within the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) whilst also remarkably resilient (if not resistant) to social change. Financial precarity, for which the recently introduced Football Governance Bill and Premier League Profit and Sustainability Rules (with which the case study club have become very much familiar) have been recently designed to mitigate and/or sanction, looms large. As do threats from global realignment or new forms of power structures in the form of the European Super League or Saudi Pro League. More localised challenges associated with community relations, supporter dissatisfaction, player unrest and competitive balance are rarely far away. They are all contributary risks to the historical traditions and potential futures of football and the precarious existence of professional football clubs in the 21st century. As are crises from beyond the practices of football itself – global pandemics, climate change, the world economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic represented a crisis that was unique at the time for modern-day sport in the UK. This book has explored the reaction to this

crisis from the perspective of various stakeholders within the sphere of operation of a professional football club. In such unprecedented circumstances, it might be argued that football clubs were in a particularly strong position to provide support for numerous people due to both the importance they have in their everyday lives and the recent history of providing support for local communities in a whole variety of ways. Nonetheless, as highlighted in Chapter 2, although the football industry was struggling to come to terms with the situation, unlike other businesses, social institutions and individuals, football clubs' and players' responsibilities and actions were very publicly called into question. Much of the evidence provided in Chapters 4–6 shows that for the case study club there was a collective effort to build on its reputation for 'doing good' and looking after its 'family' as it quickly readjusted to the emerging situation. At the time, in contrast to other large businesses, football clubs which explored the possibility of using the Government's furlough scheme were heavily criticised, by politicians and the public in general. Players, who were struggling to come to terms with the situation like everybody else, were accused of reacting too slowly. On reflection, it might be considered that due to the football industry's close relationship with a vast array of stakeholders and because of football clubs' history of community engagement and players' charitable exploits within an industry that is less restricted than that of public services, they were able to rapidly pivot to provide support where they were able and where it was needed. They were, though, due to the affective power of the system of celebrity (Marshall, 2014; see Chapter 2 of this book), also more easily (or sensationally) held to account for their actions when compared with other large industries, or the Government itself.

As the crisis unfolded and the 'new normal' extended further and further, there was the possibility that the pandemic and the public's response to it represented a watershed moment in the collective consciousness. Various public surveys at the time evidenced a desire for a different post-pandemic world, that the sense of community promoted during lockdown would persist and a perception that the lessons learned would permanently alter our social systems for the better moving forward (Matthewman, 2022). Whilst the tragic consequences were a daily reminder of systems struggling to cope with excess demand and of a greater need for strong leadership, there also seemed to be a surge in collective compassion and a feeling that the situation presented an opportunity to do things differently; to reflect upon how our social lives, political institutions and leisure activities were organised and given meaning. For a short period of time, humanity seemed to trump self-interest in very apparent ways. As Matthewman (2022) points out, this is not unusual during times of crisis. And yet, it is questionable the extent to which such attitudes and concerns prevailed into the 'new normality' that followed successive lockdowns.

Some would point out that sport's role in moments of crisis ends up being to service the reproduction and promotion of dominant societal values; that

'getting back to normal' means the reassertion of consumerism and/or nationalism and a reinforcement of the corporate-political role of sport in preserving the status quo (King, 2008; Millington & Wilson, 2020; Silk, 2013). Project Restart certainly seemed to be motivated by this. However, as the evidence in this book shows, the dominant social values that came to the fore within the case study football club and its charitable trust are those of collective action, compassion and moral responsibility. That said, if part of sociology's responsibility is to 'speak truth to power', the dissonance between the powerful elite dominating the controlling interests of football in the UK and clubs' local communities and fanbases needs to be recognised and taken seriously. Can football clubs be all things to all people? It seems like that is what they are trying to do instead of recognising their historical trajectory and building on it to represent an increasingly diverse local population and fanbase for whom sociality is key. Football at the elite level of the Premier League was made more accessible during Project Restart by broadcasting all games live on television. For those who prefer to meet up, to watch live in the stadium, access was not possible due to health risks that could not be mitigated against – the clubs and authorities invested in testing for players, whilst that was not an option for the masses. Of course, for some, access to the stadium has long been impossible for economic or perceived cultural issues. This is not though a concern for football. In our neo-liberal world, it is down to individuals themselves to take responsibility for and find solutions to their socio-economic position. And yet, the many and varied consequences associated with economic deprivation and cultural exclusion have become the responsibility of football in the form of organisations like EitC.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have highlighted the 'commonality of anxiety' (Beck, 1992), producing opportunities for 'solidarity from anxiety', but it also highlighted the 'commonality of need' that still exists within what Bauman (1998) would define as the 'new poor'. While some resort to the language of modern morality in suggesting this work is something that ought to be done, in this research, the overriding response is based upon need. There is a need for this to happen so how can we help meet that need in the best way possible. Furthermore, while this 'need' can be shown objectively, and regularly has to be, through recourse to census data, indices of multiple deprivation, post-positivist analyses of social value (e.g. Stone, 2018a) and individual case studies of life changing or life-saving interventions, it is as much about local knowledge and expertise. With regards to this case study, understanding the effect of the pandemic on local culture is related to the way in which many people exist: 'cash in hand', 'hand to mouth' and through the knowledge economy of 'word of mouth'. The Blue Family Campaign was in part about recognising how to meet the needs of people who exist in such a way. EitC was, like many other charities and community organisations, extremely well placed to react to the emerging needs of (certain) local people due to the strength of knowledge about local cultures of existence that had

been built up over years of supporting members of various communities in the area. However, as highlighted in Chapters 5 and 6, there is a clear distinction between the 'communities of need' who EitC support and 'communities of support' who EFC need. Both groups were affected by the pandemic and its consequences in various ways but for the former it magnified existing anxieties and needs whilst in the latter it highlighted hidden anxieties that are more ably managed on an everyday basis – not least by the very acts involved in their football fandom.

A key criticism of Beck's 'risk society' is his (early) claim that, "The commonality of anxiety takes the place of the commonality of need" (Beck, 1992, p. 49). Bovenkerk (2003) and Mythen (2005) in particular accuse Beck of oversimplifying or ignoring class-based distinctions when it comes to individual experiences of the risk society. This is in part the result of Beck's concentration on 'catastrophic risks' to heuristically defend his thesis rather than empirically examining the interconnections between socio-economic inequality and anxiety as a consequence of those risks at the local level. His insinuation seems to be that the risks faced by individual actors are democratically distributed regardless of socio-economic position. As many of Beck's critics have argued, this is clearly not the case. The consequences of both manmade and non-manmade risks are more likely to impact individuals in deprived communities and those without the economic and social means to more adequately mitigate the consequences (Bovenkerk, 2003). His thesis is not, though, that individual needs are inconsequential in material terms or that common experiences do not exist but that, "Social inequality and the many potential conflicts tied to it are simply individualized away in second modernity" (Sørensen & Christiansen, 2013, p. 45). His idea of 'radicalised individualisation' is the process whereby the commonalities that class-based distinctions exposed, which might once have led to collective action in challenging those inequalities, have become submerged and fragmented preventing such class consciousness emerging. However, Beck (2007, p. 692) proposes that, "the end of national class society is not the end of social inequality, but precisely the opposite, the birth of more radical, new 'cosmopolitan' forms of social inequality, to which (so far) there are no institutionalized answers (trade unions, welfare state)." Other than 'institutionalised individualisation', that is.

Institutionalised individualisation has meant that solutions to problems which are global in nature have become the responsibility of individual agents themselves – rather than through recourse to traditional structures of support. Industrial modernity aimed to meet the needs of the population through reducing reliability on pre-industrial ties to kinship, primitive belief structures and religious institutions, gendered economic distribution of wealth and nationalised prosperity. In what Beck (1992) terms 'second modernity' the pay-off for having more freedom to fulfil one's potential through increased access to education and the protection provided by the welfare state has led to a feeling of loss as every aspect of our lives, consciously

or sub-consciously, comes down to the illusion of self-determination. The point is that individuals are forced to make choices where once they were made for them by the social and economic circumstances into which they were born and/or socialised. The positive of this can be seen in terms of less restrictive practices for many formerly more oppressed groups and certainly more freedom for many people to express themselves in multiple forms, to create composite identities. However, it also means that decisions have to be made where once they did not exist. Choice implies agency meaning that responsibility for the decisions people have made rests with individuals themselves – even though those decisions may have been (invisibly) forced by the hand they were dealt.

Beck's individualisation thesis has been challenged for, "ignoring the pernicious impact of differential access to resources," and, "of attempting to universalize the very particular experiences of the affluent middle classes" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 350). With support from the theoretical ideas of Bauman, Giddens and others, Beck has revised and clarified his thoughts, explaining that, "Individualization implies no (final) state, but a process, more precisely: a process of the transformation of the grammar of social inequalities" (Beck, 2007, p. 680). This could almost be a metaphor for EitC and the work they undertake. It has been about transforming the grammar of community sport engagement and using the language of football – in terms of its cultural penetration – to challenge social inequality by raising individuals' aspirations and expectations for themselves and others. At one level, if a player's attendance at school parents' evening means that potentially disengaged fathers (or mothers) are more likely to attend then that is a good thing. What is important, however, is engaging that parent so as to maintain an interest in their child's educational welfare beyond the 'external goods' they may associate with meeting a famous celebrity. At another level, building trusting relationships with young people because they are initially attracted to attending sessions as a result of the brand association with a professional football club (rather than a 'social service') is a good thing. Once more, though, it is the potential to raise aspirations and/or overcome anxieties related to their living conditions that is important. Fundamentally, where an individual feels they have exhausted other structures of support, associate those structures with authoritarian regimes that are unwilling or unable to help, fear the stigma attached to public services or are not aware that they need such support, EitC offers an alternative mechanism for managing the deleterious pressures brought about by social inequality. It is just one more option on the menu of social support. It is not necessarily that participants have looked at that menu and chosen EitC, though for some that may be the case. It is more that in a world of 'institutionalised individualisation', in Beck's understanding, for some participants all the other options have sold out. EitC provides surplus stock to help those individuals take responsibility for the situation they find themselves in and for which solutions are not immediately apparent.

This potentially creates the illusion of solidarity but in reality, is very much a neo-liberal response. Where perhaps this research shows a potential way forward is in seeking a 'solidarity of agonism' (Chouliaraki, 2013) that recognises football's theatricality and utilises its 'spaces of appearance' (Arendt, 1958) in the "[regulation of] both our affective proximity to and contemplative distance from vulnerable others" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 192). A solidarity, in other words, that may be illusory but can also be productive.

## Solidarity and the Ironic Spectacle of Football

Solidarity has a long sociological and philosophical history, from Rousseau (1762) to Rorty (1989), by way of Durkheim (1893) and Scheler (1970). Solidarity within football is invoked through its historical tradition as clubs' symbolic representations of newly forming communities coping with industrial upheaval and the alienating effects of mass urbanisation through to instrumental and charitable support for 'communities of need' who were no longer necessarily allied to their local football clubs due to increasing hypercommodification and more fragmented social lives. Common across this history is a discursively constructed responsibility that football clubs have towards their (local) communities. EFC's existence is the result of Methodist inspired responsibilities for the physical and moral wellbeing of the local community (see Chapter 3 and Kennedy, 2011). EitC owes its foundations to the Football in the Community programme and its inception to encourage football clubs to take responsibility for urban unrest and inequality of opportunities in the 1970s and 80s, which although often manifest within football cultures were the consequence of much deeper social division (see Chapter 3 and Stone, 2018b). The solidarity demonstrated by Everton fans during the COVID-19 pandemic was closer to what Chouliaraki (2013) might describe as 'ironic solidarity' as it appealed to their consumerist tendencies (see Chapter 6).

Chouliaraki's (2013) work explores the communication of solidarity with regard to humanitarianism, the global division of power and unequal distribution of resources. Whilst her work is focused on international humanitarian aid and the means through which emotional responses to the suffering of distant others are invoked in order to garner support for charitable donation, it is instructive in trying to understand certain moral relationships that exist, or might be performatively produced, between different stakeholders across the football landscape.

Much of the discussion around sport as a force for good has focused on participation in sport and the intrinsic qualities that that provides (see Chapter 1). Participation can directly provide positive outcomes. It can also be an attractive motivator that leads to indirect outcomes. Arguably, EitC provision is not necessarily putting sport directly at the service of humanity, in the commonly understood sense. What it is doing is putting a sporting commercial entity to work for the betterment of certain local populations based on the power of

said institution to do so. This does not change the moral foundations for the work or the principles on which it is built but it is changing the structural focus. Not unlike many other professional football clubs, EFC has a history and a social context through which it has developed to become a significant emblem of English football tradition, modernisation, local pride and community support. The crucial thing about the latter is that much of it has been driven by wider structural processes that allowed and encouraged EitC to grow and develop. The primary connection between the club and community engagement arm is not financial but emblematic.

EFC, like other football clubs, has become a nexus for community development – inspired by its muscular Christian roots but furthered through modernised practices, that themselves need to be vigilantly monitored. Monitored not just for evaluatory purposes as the Third Sector has become increasingly professionalised and dominated by 'M&E'[1] but in normative and foundational terms for the betterment of interactive processes and relations that lead to systemic social change – both in terms of local need and civic responsibilities that can be uniquely claimed by football clubs and the football industry. It is the possibility of such systemic social change that rigorous sociological engagement such as this research is simultaneously able to reinforce and challenge. Should we expect football clubs and/or their trusts/foundations to be concerned with systemic change? When they are organisations the size of EFC and EitC with the power to influence decision making within the sport and beyond,[2] I propose the answer should be yes. The difficulty is trying to do so in a way that does not alienate a large proportion of stakeholders that may hold a similar opinion to that of Respondent #384 (and echoes around football fan culture in the common enough opinion that politics should be kept out of sport – as if that were even possible). It is for this that Chouliaraki's (2013) post-humanitarian theatricality may be of relevance.

As Chouliaraki (2013, p. 3) explains, the study of humanitarian communication explicates,

> the move from an objective representation of suffering as something separate from us that invites us to contemplate the condition of distant others towards a subjective representation of suffering as something inseparable from our own 'truths' that invites contemplation on our own condition.

More simply put, "it signals the retreat of an other-oriented morality, where doing good to others is about our common humanity… and the emergence of a self-oriented morality, where doing good to others is about 'how I feel'." She acknowledges that there has always been an element of 'egoistic altruism' in charitable solidarity but firmly positions, "the pleasures of the self at the heart of [contemporary] moral action," which has moved the focus of charity away from, "the political conditions of human vulnerability" (Chouliaraki (2013, p. 4).

Chouliaraki (2013) draws attention to shifts in the morality of solidarity and how it is communicated, performed and ultimately performatively produces publics of a certain compassionate disposition (rather than as response to changing moral sensibilities). This is explained as the gradual replacement of 'solidarity of pity' with 'solidarity of irony'. She explains how pity, rooted in the Aristotelian definition of tragedy and a response to undeserved suffering, manifests within modern capitalist societies in two forms: solidarity as salvation and solidarity as revolution. The former is based on a morality of altruistic benevolence with both Christian and secular roots (Boltanski, 1999), the latter a morality of social justice informed by Marxian and anti-colonial theory (Calhoun, 2009; Moyn, 2010). This shift from pity to irony is evident in, "a shift in the moral agency of suffering from a disposition that is oriented towards the distant other, acknowledging human vulnerability as a cause for our action, to a disposition that is oriented towards the self, acknowledging consumerism as a key motivation…" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 173).

Through her analysis of how 'spectacles of suffering' are communicated, Chouliaraki (2013, p. 179) suggests the emergence of a post-humanitarian logic, arguing that at the heart of its ethics of solidarity is, "a shift from the idea that doing good to others without expecting a response is both desirable and possible to the idea that doing good to others is desirable when there is something to gain from the act." This 'lifestyle solidarity', emergent through digital communication, celebrity advocacy, wearing wristbands and various other consumer related acts, is the result of increased sophistication amongst the audiences of distant suffering as they have been constituted through the theatricality of humanitarianism. The production of compassionate publics, as localised and direct acts of charity have gradually been supplemented and supplanted by cosmopolitan forms of charitable aid, through increasingly neo-liberal, market-led interactions, has led to compassion fatigue and individualised suspicion around the authenticity of suffering in said publics. The solidarity of irony produced through these processes is conceived as personal benefit within individuals' own life projects and consumed in the here and now, "replacing an ethos of longer-term commitment with a closer-to-life altruism of the everyday" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 180).

Whilst this solution to the suspicion of grand narratives amongst humanitarian audiences is effective in engaging their attention about human suffering and desire to help, what is missing within the communicative strategies is a political commitment to, "seeing suffering others as human others [whilst] recognising ourselves as actors upon their suffering" as well as the provision of a space whereby, "distant others can be seen and heard but also where we are all able to consider the question of *why* we should act on their vulnerability" (Chouliaraki, 2013, pp. 23–24; emphasis added).

For the staff of EitC, as represented by the quote at the beginning of this concluding chapter, why we should act on their vulnerability is unquestionable.

But for EitC staff, the 'new poor' are not 'distant others' but very much part of a proximal culture of need. The moral position to be addressed is other stakeholders' recognition of these needs and how their actions might be co-opted 'in order to' serve the common good. It is also about recognising why such needs exist and how the root causes can be addressed.

Whilst the views of Respondent #384 may be prevalent within football audiences the fact that Everton fans collectively donated £400,000 to the Blue Family campaign suggests that the solidarity as salvation discourse emerged from the commonality of anxiety that the pandemic prompted in the population. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 6, there is room for a more open discussion about what solidarity between a football club's fans and its 'communities of need' might look like, economically, socially and politically. Especially, if fandom as devotional leisure (Blackshaw, 2010) takes on an ethical commitment implicit in people's identity formation attached to their football club.

Chouliaraki (2013) notes the distinctions between solidarity as salvation and solidarity as revolution and the critique of each that the solidarity of irony invokes. Within football and its discursive practices of community engagement the solidarity of salvation discourse presides. Solidarity as revolution would be more associated with fan activism. The question is whether the two can be combined in the name of agonistic solidarity whereby fan communities and the 'communities of need' (however, they may be defined) can be brought together through the communicative, discursive and engaged practices of EFC and EitC both as a resource and as a way of challenging persistent forms of inequality.

This requires the football industry, and clubs such as EFC and their charitable partner EitC, to embrace "a spectatorial imagination that both engages us with the humanity of the other and invites judgement on moral argument about this other" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 204). To borrow further from Chouliaraki (2013, p. 205), I would suggest that,

> we [the football public] need to be invited, time and again, to engage both with the other and with the plurality of values that might inform our action on her/his suffering. Rather than denying it, we need to acknowledge the existing politicization of [football] and to render its systemic paradox even more visible than it already is.

To some extent, this invitation was extended time and again throughout the first COVID-19 lockdown period. Without the routine everydayness of match results, player performances, transfer sagas, press conferences and celebrity football gossip (other than the occasional lockdown breach) to occupy the sport media and fans' social worlds the moralities of life and football within it were far more prevalent (see Chapter 2).

As demonstrated in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, there remains a desire from fans for football clubs to remain apolitical, detached

from social concerns and concentrate on 'winning football matches'. There is though, given certain circumstances, the potential for football clubs to be representations of a moral message and a desire from fans for such a vicarious association (see Chapter 6). Throughout the world, football clubs are historically tied to socio-political ideals: left-wing, right-wing, catholic, protestant, militarist, socialist, communist, anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, authoritarian, liberal. Politics is rarely absent from football. Soft power and sports washing have become part of football's lexicon. And in relation to such terms, the exploits of football clubs' community trusts and foundations have so far been framed as corporate social responsibility (Anagnostopoulos & Shilbury, 2013; Breitbarth & Harris, 2008; Kolyperas et al., 2015; Walters & Panton, 2014) with a significant ethical disjunction between how 'parent' club and charity view their responsibilities. Where we still lack understanding is fans' perspectives on the ethical aspects of their football clubs' operations and the degree to which football clubs have an awareness of, and/or desire to engage with, communities of need to the extent that systemic change is possible. This is in part due to the combination of a paternalistic approach from clubs and their charitable partners based on a solidarity of pity (and its invocation within the football consumer base).

## Responsibility, Reciprocity and Civil Welfare through Football

In their discussion of corporate social responsibility, Bruni and Zamagni (2016) recommend moving on from socially responsible companies to civilly responsible companies. Drawing on Acemoglu and Robinson's (2012) work, they distinguish between extractive and inclusive institutions. Fundamentally, the former retain wealth and power within a small elite to the exclusion of the majority (meaning anyone with a stake in the consequences of the organisation's business) being able to benefit from wealth accumulation. The latter have a more distributive logic which serves to avoid alienating any stakeholder from the economic process. Bruni and Zamagni (2016, p. 131) note that, "History persuasively points out that the decline – to the point of collapse – of a nation begins when extractive institutions predominate over inclusive institutions to the point of suffocating them." We might begin to consider the extent to which Football Clubs are extractive or inclusive and why it would be more useful to explore, within MacIntyre's (2007 [1981]) framing of virtue and conceiving football as a more holistic practice, the extent to which they are socially or civilly responsible. If football clubs become increasingly more extractive then the football nation (the league of national structures in the professional game) faces collapse.

Bruni and Zamagni (2016, p. 4) attempt to offer a critique of dominant contemporary capitalist structures through their explication of the civil economy,

which they are keen to point out does not necessarily represent an alternative system but, "a laboratory of thought and practice in which we can attempt to imagine it." They go on to describe their work as,

> an inclusive and open process in which there is room for all not content with today's financial capitalism and who, within a few broad cultural co-ordinates, seek a deeper understanding that can give rise to more radical and penetrating questions against our current system than those currently posed from within it.

Here is not the place for a thoroughgoing examination of the economics of football – that is far better left to others within and beyond academia – and I certainly do not proclaim to have such expertise. Rather, I want to pose the idea of the civil economy as useful in realigning the lens on football clubs and their community engagement work from a focus on corporate social responsibility to that of civic responsibility because, as pointed out in the Football Governance white paper, "The free market does not properly account for the importance of clubs to their fans and communities" (DCMS, 2023, p. 5). EFC were very quick to condemn the attempts at forming a European Super League (EFC, 2021), calling on those involved to remember their responsibilities as custodians of their clubs and of the sport more widely. It was fundamentally seen as an abuse of the reciprocal arrangements that had sustained the national structure of football throughout its modern history. A point at which football institutions were potentially becoming predominantly extractive was challenged by a significant enough number of stakeholders for the motion to fail – in this particular incarnation at this particular time, anyway.

EFC's (2021) communication was important in signalling a virtuous response in terms of football's common goods and the club's image as being that of the people, that looks after its own, is embedded in the local community, but is self-aware enough of the reciprocity that is needed across the practice of football (as MacIntyre, 2007, would see it) to fulfil its teleological purpose. As already noted in this text, that purpose is dependent on numerous factors but from this research emerges a 'narrative quest' for excellence in being at the service of humanity. At this moment in time, that is to some extent undermined by an ownership model that has been fundamentally aligned to the pursuit of soft power[3] and the commercial necessities of the competition being such that sponsorship deals seem to be at odds with the transformative narrative attached to EitC projects that, for example, work with (young) people at risk (of addictive behaviour).

Rather than corporate social responsibility as the operating model for football clubs' engagement with 'communities of need', I have suggested that it should rather be seen as the legacy of an early attempt by the Government of the day to invoke a now common-place policy of devolving social responsibility from the state to private companies (see Chapter 1). As the community

engagement structures of football clubs have developed and evolved over the past 40 years or so, a tripartite system has emerged that metaphorically mirrors wider socio-political arrangements. That being, the market or means of production (i.e. football clubs as corporate entities), the welfare state (football clubs' charitable trusts or foundations), civil society represented by the people or workforce (football clubs' fanbase or consuming public). I recognise that this is an imperfect simile, but I introduce the comparisons as a thought experiment in trying to move the football industry closer to the civic ideals to which it is so regularly held accountable.

The original FitC model on which the likes of EitC are built was based on the assumption that the disruptive elements in clubs' local communities and those suffering social exclusion were one and the same and were accessible to football clubs due to them also being allied to the club as fans. Thus, in the allegorical model, the unproductive (football) citizens were supported by football clubs' community departments in lieu of the welfare state or public services to be able to contribute more positively as part of a productive society (in general and as football fans).

The welfare state model has been found wanting in recent years, arguably contributing to the creation of the 'new poor' (Bauman, 1998). These are the 'flawed football consumers' (Stone, 2022a) that have become the responsibility of football club community trusts and foundations. In their defence of the 'civil economy' as the most responsible way forward in challenging the dominant 'profit model' of the capitalist system, Bruni and Zamagni (2016) examine the failings of the welfare state within this model. Through their discussion of contractualism, they conclude that it is necessary to find a new ethical basis for welfare because a 'decent' society, "cannot consent that the excluded should be offered either state paternalism or anyone's pity" (Bruni & Zamagni, 2016, p. 117).

The root failure they suggest is that the welfare state implicitly accepts the separation between economic and social spheres. The capitalist market is assigned the task of producing as much wealth as possible. The state then has the task of redistributing the wealth fairly. This is where the analogy falls down, because although football clubs contribute to the wealth generation of the Premier League, some of which is redistributed through the Premier League Charitable Trust (as part of the Premier League's CSR), much of football's 'welfare state' is financed by other funding through local partnerships and grant aid provided by the likes of the Big Lottery, Children in Need or similar[4]. This has had the benefit that Brown et al. (2006) hoped for in separating football club charities' ability to carry out community work from fluctuations in clubs' performance and success on the field. However, it also releases the football clubs themselves from the redistribution logic. Bruni and Zamagni (2016, p. 120) note that at the heart of the reformist strategy is that when the state intervenes to mitigate the harmful effects of the capitalist market it does so retrospectively without touching the system so, "undesired effects are

corrected, but without interfering, except marginally, in the processes that cause them."

Their solution is the adoption of a 'civil welfare model' in which, "the entire society, and not just the state, must take responsibility for those that live in it" (Bruni & Zamagni, 2016, p. 121). In the football analogy, and MacIntyrean-inspired virtuous model, the football authorities, football clubs, football trusts, football fans, media, sponsors, agents and players have a responsibility to uphold the common good of the sport and contribute to the social welfare of those most in need by examining their place in the system of inequality as well as involving themselves in the discussions of what to do about it and why. Bruni and Zamagni (2016, p. 121) summarise their ideal thus:

> If society as a whole should take care of all those who live in it, without exclusions of any kind, it is clear that it is necessary to bring together the three spheres that make up the whole of society: the sphere of public authorities… the corporate sphere… and the sphere of organized civil society.

In their version of this 'circular subsidiarity', they note that, "the three spheres must find ways to systematically (not occasionally) interact when planning and fielding interventions, as well as managing them" (Bruni & Zamagni, 2016, p. 122).

I would suggest that the Blue Family campaign represented a form of civil welfare in its circularity as it was unhampered by bureaucratism and was financially sustained by the direct donation of profit (from the owner) and (relative) 'excess' wealth (from the fans). Thus, it brought together the community trust (representing the public body), the football club (or corporate sphere) and fanbase (as part of organised civil society) to develop, manage and fund the intervention that was felt to be necessary based on 'specific knowledge' and 'means of governance' that was, "capable of raising the relational quality of services provided" (Bruni & Zamagni, 2016, p. 122).

## Football at the Service of Humanity?

A common enough trope within football culture is how the sport transcends social, cultural and political differences. On the field, success is idealised on meritocracy, a 'level playing field', the only arbiter being the complete neutrality of the rules of play and the application of those rules by the refereeing team. Football, it is argued, can be played by anyone regardless of economic situation, cultural background or political persuasion. Likewise, bankers and bricklayers, Sikhs and secularists, young and old, politically left or right leaning, male, female and non-binary rub shoulders in support of their club through the contingencies of inclusion (Back et al., 2001). This is important because otherness operates in clearly distinct spheres. Those others

'suffering' from a lack of opportunity as a consequence of socio-economic demographics are the preserve of football community trusts and foundations. Those 'suffering' as a consequence of socio-cultural differences are addressed by centralised campaigns – Kick It Out, Say No To Racism, Football Against Homophobia, Fans For Diversity.

Football in the UK has repeatedly responded, with varying levels of success, to calls to address problems within the sport and utilise its popularity to make a difference more widely. The origins of EitC in the Football in the Community scheme are very much the result of such a call. Though commercially dominated by the Premier League, the sport is populated by diverse and numerous sets of interest groups, from community partners in towns and cities, small and large, to fans with varying protected characteristics at one end of the spectrum and stereotypically straight, white, male working class at the other; from grassroots clubs and their volunteers, members and governing bodies through to elite level club sponsors, owners, benefactors and ambassadors. Schemes to challenge racism, misogyny and homophobia, and increase inclusion for groups and individuals with various protected characteristics have emerged across all levels of the sport in recent decades. Within this virtuous trajectory, progress has been made but the extent to which understandings of difference are embedded within football clubs' working practices and fan cultures is still open to question. Invoking MacIntyre's (2007 [1981]) understanding of virtue is to ask the question of whether at this point in time within the teleology of (modern) football those involved can claim an overall effectiveness in existing for the common good.

Where football is strong, and this is evidenced in the history of EFC as a case study and the testimony provided by staff, community programme participants and fans, is in looking after its own. It is invoked time again through the metaphor of the family. This is of great virtue. But there remains a lack of hospitality at times in opening up to other(nes)s. That said, there is also evidence of how 'contingent insiders' become included due to the nature of sporting rivalry inherent within football fan culture (Back et al., 2001; Stone, 2022b).

What the evidence in this study presents is an internal consistency in the case study football club's social identity as a caring organisation attempting to work for the common good. From interviews with the CEO at the time, employees of EFC, including players and coaches, administration staff, marketing personnel and support staff working in the training ground kitchens, estate management or stewarding, across to EitC employees, volunteers, participants and significant numbers of fans, EFC is a good organisation with which to be associated as it looks after its own. This is not necessarily unique within the football industry and as I have reiterated throughout this book, EFC, EitC and the Everton fanbase simply represent a case study from which further studies can be developed and to which they can be compared. How 'their own' might be defined, especially in relation to the 'common good',

needs to be regularly interrogated. Stone and Hough (2020, p. 72), for example, point out that whilst those involved with the youth engagement activities of EitC can be framed as accurately reflecting the diversity of local demographics when using monitoring measurements at the basic level, when examined in depth, they reveal a lower retention rate amongst ethnically minoritized young people which might be addressed through, "Positive action around the employment of a more ethnically diverse work force." Critiques such as this need to be engaged with positively rather than defensively if a virtuous narrative is to be authentic. Likewise, the Premier League and its charitable trust – a much better example of football CSR in action – needs to engage more thoroughly in the debates around football as a common good and for the common good.

This book has provided the first thoroughgoing academic examination of a football club's community engagement. It has as its basis a number of research projects over a three-year period prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic but focuses in on a three-month period coinciding with the UK's first period of lockdown brought about as a consequence of the pandemic. Conceptualising football as a practice befitting of Macintyre's (2007 [1981]) holistic understanding of the term, his work is used to frame a discussion about a football club's virtue. In doing so, it responds to the club CEO's provocation of putting sport at the service of humanity when interviewed about the purpose of football.

Consequently, what I have attempted to do is illustrate an alternative way of looking at football by focusing the sociological lens on elite-level football clubs (and their associated trusts or foundations) as conveyors of humanitarian values (at the extra local level at least) rather than as multinational organisations in a global marketplace that has come to dominate popular social discourse and academic scholarship. The latter represents a crisis of governance and greed, reactions to which from political leaders have not been rapidly congruent enough with the repercussions of hypercommodification that were taking place in parallel with postmodern forms of globalisation. The former highlights the position of football clubs to respond to crises (as a hybrid consequence of historical compliance to top-down solutions surrounding football violence and inner-city unrest alongside a unique relationship with local communities that results from decades of bottom-up engagement). However, whilst the organisational structure of the response has developed and matured, become increasingly professionalised in recent years, the form of said response remains within the discourse associated with the 'solidarity of pity'. For the common good, the increasing maturity and sophistication of football clubs' community engagement should be moving towards a 'solidarity of agonism' in which they can use their role to engage in more purposeful debate with their publics about civic responsibility, communities of support and the purpose of their existence in ways that do not alienate fans, sponsors or their paymasters. The point though is that there is a contingency in terms of

what is possible for each individual's own teleological journey and that viewing EFC and EitC through the prism of Aristotelian ethics and the MacIntyrean interpretation thereof points towards the Blue Family campaign being a culmination of, though not the terminus for, an internalised, historical trajectory for this particular football organisation.

Do I think this research evidences sport at the service of humanity? Not entirely. It offers an analysis of how various stakeholders view a football club's role in society when the starkness of suffering is made plain due to an extreme global situation. It furthers that, though, to explore the virtue of football over the duration of a football club's history – particularly its recent history as more demands have been made on maintaining social order and providing a welfare service to local communities as public spending on such has repeatedly been cut.

The next step, I suggest, would be to lead the revolution of solidarity, engage their fanbase more thoroughly through their humanitarian imaginary, commit as a business to becoming civilly responsible throughout, without losing their competitive position within the market – which at this point may have been skewed too far by what Bruni and Zamagni (2016) might see as an extractive disposition (hence the introduction of the Independent Football Regulator). By definition, this needs other elite level football clubs to recognise what their civic responsibilities should be and also act in the interests of the common good so that football remains internally competitive.

If the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has, as Matthewman's (2022) claims suggest, bonded survivors (whether fans, EitC participants, or staff) through collective experience. If it has raised awareness of the vulnerability of current power structures (within football and beyond) and promoted mutual aid. If the collective experience of adjusting to the 'new normal' retains its beneficial legacy, then this text is part of the sociologist's responsibility to remind other scholars of football culture about the consequences of that crisis and how football's stakeholders met the challenges they faced, through the construction of an alternative paradigm for viewing a football club's purpose. This is because the legacy of the pandemic should be to:

> work with our networks to expose the ways in which the catastrophic loss of livelihoods, spread unevenly within and between societies, is not just the outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic, but results from how societies are organised—around exploitation, inequality and pervasive neo-liberal ideology… we need to be mobilising for a radical reconfiguration of society.
>
> (Kenny, 2020, p. 702)

For Kenny (2020), there should be no possibility of a 'return to normal'. Matthewman and Huppatz (2020, p. 676) suggest, it is part of the sociologist's role to, "identify the factors responsible for the production of vulnerability."

I would extend such an argument to propose that, if football clubs and their community engagement trusts or foundations really want to uphold the notion of being an embedded and responsible part of their civic locales, they need to use their resources and/or be further resourced and encouraged to make better use of their unique position within local socio-cultural spaces and attentive heterogeneous consumer bases in order to address *and raise awareness about* social inequality and vulnerability, and challenge the structural causes.

The commentary I have provided in this text shows that there is a self confidence in the services being provided by EitC, epitomised by the ability of staff to adapt to the situation enforced by lockdown. The compassion and humanity expressed by staff is rooted in a praxis that is evidenced by the reaction of programme participants. It is, though, underwritten by a subtle search for legitimacy. From the top of the organisation, in the form of the CEO's reflections to the practitioners facing the daily needs of local people, there is a recognition that there are both limits on what can be achieved as well as expectations placed upon the charitable exploits of the football club. For fans, this is often secondary to expectations of the club's on-field performance. For politicians and the wider public, expectations are related to historical civic duties for the health and welfare of local communities and the perceived wealth accumulation associated with a traditionally viewed form of low-brow entertainment. In trying to maintain their service to participants that the organisation and its staff realised was necessary for their wellbeing, certain inequalities were arguably reinforced. What emerged from the participants themselves is the way in which their relationships with both the staff and other participants are perceived through a metaphor of the family. This was utilised to good effect by the football club in branding their supportive initiative throughout the pandemic as the Blue Family. This was though an extension of the organisation's own specific interpretation of an 'ethic of care' (Barnes, 2012; Murray & Barnes, 2010; Williams, 2004) based on building enduring and trusting relationships amongst participants and between them and the staff (as discussed in Chapter 4).

EFC's telos is subject to the cultural milieu in which it operates. Consequently, humanity is constructed in the image of the club, its history, the personnel at its helm and who it employs. There remains a legacy of implicit racism (Brown & Chaudhary, 2000; Cates, 2017) potentially morphing into organisational 'racial colour blindness' (Apfelbaum et al., 2012; Yi et al., 2023), that is difficult to shake despite positive attempts to do so by the club and its fans (The FA, 2020; ToffeeWeb, 2019), which is not by any means unique to this particular football club. There is conflict between humanitarian values and the pursuit of success in what many would consider to be the club's primary business, in the form of external goods emanating from winning matches and trophies – and consequently increasing the value of the club for shareholders. It cannot be ignored that football clubs at the highest

level are institutions that facilitate the accumulation of vast amounts of individual wealth and act as vessels for investment by global mega rich. Fundamentally, the work of EitC, as with other football club trusts and foundations remains a privatised affair. Much of the funding is allocated for this work through the Premier League Charitable Trust or English Football League Trust without recourse to publicly open democratic processes. Other monies are public, in the sense that they are provided by charitable grant giving authorities raised by public donations (such as Comic Relief or the Big Lottery). The publics who gain from these funds are denoted by the funding parameters and/or the articles of operation set out by those running the charity. None of this is to deny the compassion and authenticity of staff involved but to question the structures of solidarity that arguably remain paternalistic rather than organic.

Nonetheless, to paraphrase Bernaccio (2018), whose defence of MacIntyre's canon explicates the importance of charity above and beyond its faith-based traditions:

> … the picture of modern [football] society as ethical wasteland is importantly incomplete; it fails to account for the often invisible forms of care that sustain families, workplaces, and communities of various sorts.

## Notes

1 A common abbreviation, particularly in the Third Sector, for Monitoring and Evaluation processes and requirements that have become ever more sophisticated with increased professionalisation across the sector.
2 As a member of the Premier League, EFC has an input into football-related decisions. The new stadium development at Bramley Moor Dock involved numerous multi-stakeholder meetings with Liverpool City Council, as did the planning for the new Community Campus that will be developed on the site of Goodison Park. Everton in the Community has been recognised by the Premier League Charitable Trust, amongst others, as a leader in the field and the organisation works with numerous local partners across sectors such as health, employment, education, social services and youth justice.
3 This may change imminently as the club was put up for sale by owner, Farhad Moshiri, during the writing up of this work.
4 EitC's accounts returned to the Charities Commission (EitC, 2020) for the period 31 May 2018 to 30 June 2019 (the accounting period prior to that effected by COVID-19 and so most reflective of operations in 'normal' times) show charitable funding from the following: The Premier League (£1,224,713), The Big Lottery (£10,000), Mersey Care NHS Trust (£23,975), Sport England (£7,250), Merseyside Police Authority (£502,870), The Royal British Legion (£40,473), Children in Need (£27,192), Education and Skills Funding Agency (£198,702) and Other Sources (£84,638). Donated goods and services from EFC amounts to £374,381 which is the equivalent of 16% of the charity's total income for that period. The football club's accounts for 2018/19 (EFC, 2020) record the second highest annual turnover in the club's history to that point equalling £187.7M though as has been well reported the club generated a loss of £107.0M.

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Appendix 1

# List of EitC Programmes (in Operation as of March 2020 at the Time of Lockdown Due to the Spread of COVID-19)

| *Programme* | *Type* | *Participants* | *Delivery mechanism* | | *Funding profile* | *Delivered in partnership with…* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Engagement details* | *Schedule* | | |
| Everton Walking Football | Physical health | Adult males (aged 35–50) | Sport & physical activity | No official end/start date | | Walking Football Association |
| Home is Where the Heart Is | Young adults | Aged 16–23 (outreach); 18–23 (residential) homeless or at risk of homelessness | Bespoke support plans focusing on acquiring and maintaining their own tenancies. 1:1, small group sessions, signposting | 24/7 | Fundraised | |
| Disability Programmes | Disability | Adults & children with disabilities | Sport & physical activity social interaction opportunities | Ten special schools, nine disability football teams, four community sessions, Alder Hey hospital, holiday activity, sports leaders awards | Premier League; Children in Need; Halton Council; Schools Spirit Foundation | Halton Council; Premier League; Children in Need |
| Girls On Side | Mental health/ gender | Adult females | Gym sessions; informal social support; coffee mornings; monthly social trips | Three sessions per week. No official end/start date | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust |
| Healthy Blues | Mental health/ physical health | Adults over 40 | Multi-sports (age appropriate) | Twice weekly (Garston and Southport) | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust |
| Imagine Your Goals | Mental health | Adults 18+ | Physical activity; football therapy coaching sessions; competitive football opportunities; social support groups | Six sessions per week across Merseyside. Monthly mental health football league. No official end/start date | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust |

(*Continued*)

| *Programme* | *Type* | *Participants* | *Delivery mechanism* | | *Funding profile* | *Delivered in partnership with…* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Engagement details* | *Schedule* | | |
| Impact 41 (Part of @41 Goodison) | Mentoring | 8–19 years old | 1:1 and small targeted group sessions | | PLPFA | N/A |
| Footsteps 41 (Part of @41 Goodison) | Multi activity | 8–19 years old | 1:1, small targeted group sessions, physical health and personal and social development | 2× week – for 12 weeks | PLPFA | N/A |
| New Futures | Employability | 16–24 years old (NEET) and 15+ at risk NEETS | Employability sessions; focused sessions based on area of interest (i.e. sport or construction) | 12-week programmes | ESFA | Greenbank College/VOLA |
| Pass on the Memories | Dementia | Participants experiencing dementia and carers supporting loved ones | Reminiscence workshops; social groups; monthly social and cultural enrichment trips | Weekly sessions including 1-1's, range of activities, workshops, etc. | Premier League | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust |
| PL Inspires | Education | 11–25 years old | Bespoke in-school and extra-curricular support | Ongoing support | Premier League/ Steve Morgan Foundation | |
| Pathways Programme (Part of PL Inspires) | Education | 14–16 years old | Exposure to specific sectors including site visits to meet real employers, including try-a-trade activities | 8-week programme plus 1-day large group activity | Premier League/ Steve Morgan Foundation | |
| PL Kicks | Young People | 8–19 years old | Multi-activity; youth-work | Daily 2-hr evening sessions | Premier League | Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner |
| Primary Stars | Education | 5–11 years old | In-school support for key skills (literacy, numeracy, emotional) | Daily | Premier League/ Steve Morgan Foundation | |

(*Continued*)

| *Programme* | *Type* | *Participants* | *Delivery mechanism* | | *Funding profile* | *Delivered in partnership with…* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Engagement details* | *Schedule* | | |
| Safe Hands (Part of @41 Goodison) | Youth offending & multi-activity | Aged 11–19 (in or on the cusp of custody) | Bespoke programmes of mentoring and social support; Pathways to ETE | Weekly | Premier League | N/A |
| Apprenticeships | Adult education | Age: 16+ | Apprenticeship programme - commercial training | Weekly | SFA/commercial | |
| Everton Free School | Education | Ages 13–19 | Alternative education provision | Daily (week days) | DfE | |
| Neighbourhood Team | Community engagement, from child to older adult | 5 months –93 years old | 12 neighbourhood projects providing activities such as yoga – sit and knit, through to area regeneration and redevelopment activities to enhance the look and feel of the area. Virtual delivery in care homes, supporting social isolation through check in calls, community days to tackle ongoing reported issues in the area and to boost resettlement, employability and education. Stay and Play project to support with food, toy and clothes banks | 1 hour sessions per week for each initiative spread across Monday-Friday | Small pots of funding are gained for specific projects. Riverside Housing, Mersey Care Trust, Hemby Trust, Lil-Let, Loan Sharks. Projects do not rely on funding to run | Mersey Care Trust, Hemby Trust, Loan Sharks and Birmingham Council, Alpha Taxis, Lil-Let, Merseyside Police, EFC |

(*Continued*)

| *Programme* | *Type* | *Participants* | *Delivery mechanism* | | *Funding profile* | *Delivered in partnership with…* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Engagement details* | *Schedule* | | |
| NCS | Young people, personal development, community engagement. | 15–17 years old | Summer, autumn & school programmes aimed at providing young people with the opportunity to develop personal skills, gain qualifications and volunteer in their community through social action. | Summer & autumn holidays. School term time delivery | DCMS, NCS Trust, Growth Company | Growth Company, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, NCS Trust |
| Tackling the Blues | Mental health | 6–16 years old | Sport, physical activity, arts, education and mentoring | Weekly | PLPFA/Office for Students | Edge Hill University/Tate Liverpool |
| Kicks Targeted | Children & Young People | 8–18 years old | Bespoke extra-curricular programme for cohorts of referred YP who have a number of risk factors | Weekly sessions including 1-1's, range of activities, workshops, etc. | PLCF | |
| Clock View | Adults experiencing mental health problems in psychiatric hospital | Adults aged 18+ | Personalised physical activity sessions based in Clock View hospital | Weekly sessions. Indefinite engagement cycle (no official start or end date) | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust | Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust |

(*Continued*)

| *Programme* | *Type* | *Participants* | *Delivery mechanism* | | *Funding profile* | *Delivered in partnership with…* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Engagement details* | *Schedule* | | |
| Everton Veterans Hub (EVH) | Health and Wellbeing support programme for ex-military veterans | Military veterans aged 18+ | Personalised physical activity, mental health and social enrichment activities to support military veterans to transition well from military to civilian life | Weekly sessions | The Big Lottery 'Reaching Communities' Fund | Big Lottery |
| Royal Blues | Health and Wellbeing support programme for middle-aged military veterans | Military veterans aged 18+ | Personalised physical activity, mental health and social enrichment activities to support military veterans to transition well from military to civilian life | Weekly sessions | The Armed Forces Covenant Trust | The Armed Forces Covenant Trust |
| Aged Veterans Programme (AVP) | Health and wellbeing support programme for elderly military veterans | Military veterans aged 18+ | Personalised physical activity, mental health and social enrichment activities to support military veterans to transition well from military to civilian life | Weekly sessions | The Veterans Foundation | The Veterans Foundation |
| Stand Together | Health and wellbeing support programme for elderly military veterans | Socially isolated older people | Personalised physical activity, mental health and social enrichment activities to support isolated older people to reduce feelings of loneliness and improve overall quality of life | Weekly sessions | PLCF | |

(*Continued*)

| *Programme* | *Type* | *Participants* | *Delivery mechanism* | | *Funding profile* | *Delivered in partnership with…* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Engagement details* | *Schedule* | | |
| Welcome through Football | Health and wellbeing support programme to help refugees and asylum seekers integrate into community | Refugees and asylum seekers | Personalised physical activity, mental health and social enrichment activities to support refugee and asylum seekers feel at home in the city and make new friends through football | Weekly sessions | UEFA Foundation | European Football Development Network (EFDN) |
| Out of the Blue | Cancer rehabilitation | Adults living with a cancer diagnosis | Personalised physical activity, mental health and social enrichment activities to support adults living with a diagnosis of cancer to remain active and improve their overall health, wellbeing and quality of life | Weekly sessions | Fit For Me, Liverpool City Council | Sport England |

Appendix 2

# Timeline of Football-Related News Stories during the UK's First Lockdown Period Associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic

| | |
|---|---|
| 9 March 2020 | All Serie A matches in Italy suspended (initially until 3 April). |
| 10 March 2020 | Olympiakos and Forest owner, Evangelos Marinakis, announces he has coronavirus.<br>Announcement that Spanish La Liga and French Leagues will take place behind closed doors until 22 March and 15 April, respectively. |
| 11 March 2020 | Manchester City v Arsenal match becomes the first Premier League match to be cancelled (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/11/arsenal-self-isolation-postpone-game-manchester-city-premier-league-coronavirus-covid-19) as a result of the coronavirus. Arsenal players go into self-isolation as a precaution due to contact with the Olympiakos owner who had announced he had contracted the virus.<br>Two Europa League Last-16 ties postponed due to the coronavirus (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/11/europa-league-coronavirus-wolves-manchester-united-inter-milan-sevilla). Sevilla v Roma and Inter Milan v Getafe first legs postponed. Spanish authorities refuse landing permission for Roma's flight. Other matches set to take place behind closed doors. |
| 12 March 2020 | Arsenal manager, Mikel Arteta, is diagnosed with coronavirus – the first in English football. The club go into lockdown and the weekend's match against Brighton is postponed.<br>The Premier League and EFL intend to complete the weekend's fixtures with contingencies of playing behind closed doors if necessary.<br>German Bundesliga and French Ligues 1 and 2 postponed until April.<br>Champions League match involving Manchester City v Real Madrid is postponed after the latter place all their players in quarantine.<br>Three Leicester City players in self-isolation after showing symptoms of the coronavirus.<br>Juventus defender Daniele Rugani is first player in Italy to test positive for the coronavirus. |

(*Continued*)

| | |
|---|---|
| 13 March 2020 | All weekend's football matches postponed as a result of the health crisis and no further competitive football in England will go ahead before 3 April. Scotland and Wales also announce such plans.<br>UEFA announce postponement of remaining Champions League and Europa League ties.<br>Players from Everton, Watford and West Ham, as well as Hammers manager David Moyes, are among those self-isolating.<br>Euro 2020 is under threat, with Uefa to meet next week to discuss the tournament's destiny.<br>England's international friendlies against Italy and Denmark have been cancelled. Wales v Austria is also off.<br>Watford manager, Nigel Pearson, hits out at Boris Johnson for his 'lack of leadership' on coronavirus.<br>All Champions League and Europa League games next week are called off.<br>Jürgen Klopp sends a message to Liverpool supporters in which he describes football as, "the most important of the least important things," and urges people to follow expert advice over the coronavirus threat instead of regretting the suspension of the league season (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/13/premier-league-and-football-league-suspended-until-4-april-coronavirus) until April.<br>Chelsea winger Callum-Hudson Odoi becomes the first Premier League player to test positive for coronavirus. The rest of the team and club personnel who had close contact with the player go into self-isolation. |
| 14 March 2020 | National League matches go ahead despite suspension of other football higher up the pyramid. |
| 15 March 2020 | *No relevant news stories.* |
| 16 March 2020 | The FA advises that, "all grassroots football in England is postponed for the foreseeable future."<br>Karen Brady, West Ham's vice-chair, declares in her newspaper column (in The Sun) that the Premier League should be declared null and void. An opinion that receives criticism from various corners primarily accompanied by accusations of self-interest as West Ham remain perpetually just outside the relegation zone so long as the suspension of this season's competition remains. |
| 17 March 2020 | Stevenage Borough (EFL2) and Stenhousemuir (SFL2) both launch carelines (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/17/stevenage-stenhousemuir-football-clubs-coronavirus) designed to provide those who might otherwise slip through the usual safety nets with help in confronting the practical, logistical and mental challenges of life behind closed doors. |

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| | Barnet FC lay off all non-playing staff as club counts cost of coronavirus (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/17/barnet-lay-off-all-non-playing-staff-coronavirus-national-league).<br>Euro 2020 postponed. |
| 18 March 2020 | EFL announces £50m relief package for clubs in response to coronavirus (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/18/efl-announces-50m-relief-package-for-clubs-in-response-to-coronavirus). |
| 19 March 2020 | Professional football in England is further postponed until, "no earlier than 30 April." In a joint statement the Premier League, English Football Leagues and FA, with the Professional Footballers' Association and League Managers Association, said: "We are in unprecedented times and our thoughts are with everyone affected by COVID-19. We are united in our commitment to finding ways of resuming the 2019–2020 football season and ensuring all domestic and European club league and cup matches are played as soon as it is safe and possible to do so." https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/19/premier-league-efl-and-wsl-football-will-not-restart-before-30-april<br>It is noted that for Everton, development plans for the new stadium seems unlikely to be knocked off course (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/19/everton-new-stadium-coronavirus-crisis-northern-powerhouse), but the club have had to suspend their community programmes. However, they are still reaching out to the most vulnerable fans. Season-ticket holders, based on age, disability and other information the club hold, have received phone calls checking on their wellbeing and any specific requests such as shopping needs. There has also been closer contact maintained, via telephone and WhatsApp, with those people involved in Everton in the Community's programmes dealing with acute social issues, mental health and youth engagement.<br>Arsenal reopens their training facilities after initial lockdown as a result of their manager Mikel Arteta contracting the virus and a number of players showing symptoms. |
| 20 March 2020 | Think pieces begin to emerge on the significance of football: Barney Ronay – Far from the gladdening crowd: live sport is our collective therapy (https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/mar/20/far-from-the-gladdening-crowd-live-sport-is-our-collective-therapy).<br>Haircuts to a kit-off: how Premier League clubs are filling void for fans (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/20/how-premier-league-clubs-are-filling-void-for-fans-twitter-football). |
| 21 March 2020 | |
| 22 March 2020 | Everton FC promote the Blue Family campaign by bringing media attention to a welfare phone call made to a long-standing elderly supporter. |

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| **Lockdown Wk 1** | |
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| 23 March 2020 | Spanish football is postponed until further notice amid coronavirus crisis (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/23/spanish-football-postponed-until-further-notice-coronavirus-la-liga-spanish-fa).<br>Yeovil Town FC ask players and staff to take 50% pay cut to safeguard club's future. |
| 24 March 2020 | Gillingham Town chairman, Paul Scally, urges Premier League clubs to pay £2.5m each into a solidarity fund (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/24/premier-league-clubs-urged-by-gillingham-chairman-to-give-50m-to-struggling-teams-paul-scally) to help some of the English Football League's most vulnerable clubs as the game's authorities discuss how to cope with the financial implications of the coronavirus crisis. |
| 25 March 2020 | Portsmouth FC becomes the first British football club to have multiple cases of the virus amongst their staff announcing that five players have tested positive for coronavirus. https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/mar/25/football-does-seem-a-bit-irrelevant-how-covid-19-left-portsmouth-reeling |
| 26 March 2020 | All English non-league football in steps three to seven ended with no promotion or relegation. |
| 27 March 2020 | World Players' Union FifPro announces it will "employ extra resources" to provide assistance to its members during the coronavirus and have warned "most football players outside the world's biggest leagues" would be "severely affected by salary decreases."<br>Chelsea's senior squad make a "sizeable donation" to the club's foundation supporting the community during the coronavirus.<br>Southampton FC and their Saints Foundation have joined forces with charitable food re-distributors FareShare to cook and deliver a range of 1,000 meals each week for people in need across Southampton and the surrounding community during the pandemic. |
| 28 March 2020 | Premier League training grounds are shut down.<br>Aaron Ramsey has donated £10,000 to the Cardiff and Vale Health charity to ensure they hit their £10,000 target in raising money for local NHS workers to spend on vulnerable members of the community. "We really appreciate all of your hard work," Ramsey wrote on the charity's JustGiving page.<br>Manchester City's German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan is supporting people in the Heinsberg district – which has been badly affected by the coronavirus (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-51835856) – with private donations towards a shopping service for those in need and thank-you packages for the nursing staff in the intensive care units of the Heinsberg hospitals. |
| 29 March 2020 | The Premier League release a video encouraging fans to stay at home. |

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| **Lockdown Wk 2** | |
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| 30 March 2020 | Newcastle United become the first Premier League club to furlough non-playing staff.<br>EFL League One club Bolton Wanderers have placed a number of staff on furlough, while senior management have taken a "significant pay reduction."<br>Manchester City and Manchester United have come together to provide aid for those affected by the virus, donating a combined £100,000 to help foodbanks in Greater Manchester. |
| 31 March 2020 | The three divisions of England's National League are indefinitely suspended.<br>"Fifa is working on possibilities to provide assistance to the football community around the world after making a comprehensive assessment of the financial impact this pandemic will have on football." (BBC Sport)<br>EFL League 2 side Cambridge United have announced their intention to furlough the "vast majority" of staff, including coaches.<br>Burnley FC's Turf Moor facilities – starting with the Elite Training Centre adjacent to the stadium – will be made available to the East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust.<br>Tottenham Hotspur's 550 non-playing staff, including chairman Daniel Levy (annual salary £4m) will take a 20% pay cut. The club will also use the Government's furlough scheme in an attempt to "protect jobs." |
| 1 April 2020 | Julian Knight, the chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) committee, is critical of Premier League football clubs furloughing staff: "It sticks in the throat. This exposes the crazy economics in English football and the moral vacuum at its centre."<br>Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, tells BBC Radio 5 live that highly paid footballers should be the first to take responsibility and sacrifice their salaries for the benefit of less well-off non-playing staff. |
| 2 April 2020 | In the Government's daily press briefing, Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, focuses attention on Premier League players: "Given the sacrifices that many people are making, including some of my colleagues in the NHS who have made the ultimate sacrifice of going into work and have caught the disease and have sadly died, I think the first thing that Premier League footballers can do is make a contribution, take a pay cut and play their part."<br>This provokes a hostile reaction to such suggestions from within the game and amongst social commentators.<br>Brighton chief executive, Paul Barber, director of football, Dan Ashworth, and manager, Graham Potter, decide to take "significant pay cuts." |

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| | Norwich City's players, owners and directors donate £200,000 to be used to buy and distribute food and essential toiletry packages for those in need in the Norwich and wider Norfolk community. Funds will also be released to a selection of local charities and organisations.<br>Chelsea have teamed up with the domestic abuse charity, Refuge, to help provide support for people forced to self-isolate in vulnerable situations because of the coronavirus pandemic (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/apr/02/chelsea-team-up-with-refuge-to-help-those-at-risk-of-domestic-abuse). |
| 3 April 2020 | The Premier League recommends that clubs cut player wages by 30% and will advance £125m to the EFL and National League, as well as donating £20m towards the NHS.<br>Club captains discuss the creation of a charitable fund to help the NHS.<br>Players including Andros Townsend, Gary Neville, Gary Lineker and Wayne Rooney comment on the targeting of their profession, suggesting the Government are "deflecting blame."<br>Sports Minister, Nigel Huddleston, said: "It is important that the Premier League helps the national effort in response to the coronavirus pandemic and I will continue to work closely with the football authorities." https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2020/apr/11/julian-knight-rishi-sunak-furlough-furore-premier-league-ignores-aim-protect-jobs<br>The PFA make statement that 30% pay cut would cost exchequer £200m. The Guardian explores the numbers: https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/apr/08/would-a-premier-league-pay-cut-really-cost-the-government-200m |
| 4 April 2020 | Liverpool FC announce their intention to furlough some non-playing staff. |
| 5 April 2020 | Liverpool challenged by Spirit of Shankly fan group over staff furlough (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/apr/05/liverpool-challenged-by-spirit-of-shankly-fan-group-over-staff-furloughs).<br>West Bromwich Albion CEO takes 100% pay cut. |
| **Lockdown Wk 3** | |
| 6 April 2020 | Liverpool FC reverse furlough decision – https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52191140<br>Manchester United have told staff members the club will not be using the government's furlough scheme.<br>The English FA cut England Manager Gareth Southgate's wages by 30% whilst senior management agree a 15% cut and other employees earning £50,000 or more a year will take temporary pay reductions of 7.5%.<br>Culture secretary Oliver Dowden comments on football clubs' furloughing staff. |

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| 7 April 2020 | EFL League One club Sunderland AFC and League Two leaders Crewe Alexandra have both announced that they have furloughed players because of the coronavirus pandemic.<br>In a letter to the DCMS parliamentary select committee the chief executive of the Premier League, Richard Masters, defends the furloughing of staff (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/apr/07/premier-league-chief-executive-claims-very-real-threat-of-its-clubs-going-bust-furlough).<br>FA chairman, Greg Clarke, suggests clubs and leagues could fold further down the pyramid. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52191973<br>PFA chief executive, Gordon Taylor, says that Premier League players are "mindful of their social responsibilities" and "prepared to step up to the mark" during the coronavirus pandemic. Players are understood to be wary of agreeing pay cuts that would help billionaire owners save money which may subsequently be spent on transfers. He also donates £500,000 to NHS and charity in lieu of not taking a pay cut. |
| 8 April 2020 | Launch of #PlayersTogether initiative. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52219771 |
| 9 April 2020 | The UEFA Foundation for Children has announced plans to contribute to the Common Goal's Response Fund to help the world's poorest communities cope with the pandemic. The Response Fund was set up on Tuesday by Common Goal – a group of 150 players, managers and leaders who have pledged 1% of their annual earnings from football to charities working with some of the world's most vulnerable children (https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/50084170).<br>Manchester United have announced a package of measures to support the NHS (https://www.manutd.com/en/news/detail/press-release-man-utd-offers-support-and-appreciation-to-nhs?utm_campaign=ManUtd&utm_medium=post&utm_source=twitter).<br>Southampton FC has announced that the club's board of directors, the first-team manager, his coaching staff and the first-team squad have agreed to defer part of their salaries for the months of April, May and June (https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52228542). The first Premier League club to do so. |
| 10 April 2020 | The Arsenal Foundation has joined forces with registered charity HIS Church to deliver 15 tonnes of emergency supplies to the local Islington area. Working with Islington Council as part of the borough's emergency response plan, the donation will provide more than 30,000 free meals, as well as essential items such as sanitary and personal hygiene products to those most vulnerable in the local community. The Arsenal Foundation has also pledged £100K to local organisations and redirected a further £50K of partnership funding with Islington Giving towards their COVID-19 Crisis Fund. |

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| | Chief executive of the League Managers Association (LMA), Richard Bevan, says that the football season in England should only resume once all players have been tested for coronavirus, and only once testing is sufficiently protecting NHS workers and patients. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52247400<br>Leicester City says they will not be using the government's job retention scheme and, after talks with their players and senior management, have announced a number of initiatives to help University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust and Age UK Leicestershire & Rutland.<br>SPL Celtic FC announce staff take voluntary pay cut.<br>A group of former Wolverhampton Wanderers players and managers have joined together to support a fundraising drive to help front-line NHS workers who are tackling the COVID-19 pandemic in Wolverhampton. |
| 11 April 2020 | West Ham United become the second Premier League club to announce that players will defer part of their wages because of the coronavirus pandemic. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52250498 |
| 12 April 2020 | |
| **Lockdown Wk 4** | |
| 13 April 2020 | Tottenham Hotspur retract decision to furlough staff. |
| 14 April 2020 | Bournemouth change decision to furlough staff.<br>The English Football League and Professional Footballers' Association have proposed that clubs could defer up to 25% of players' wages (if they earn £2,500/month or more) in April because of the coronavirus pandemic. |
| 15 April 2020 | The Belgian League becomes the first European professional football league to be abandoned, with one match of the season remaining. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52138270 |
| 16 April 2020 | Chelsea are to provide 78,000 meals to the NHS and charities supporting the elderly and vulnerable groups. The meals are being provided by the club's catering partner and the scheme will run for six weeks.<br>FifPro, the global players' union, has warned that women's football is faced with an "existential threat" as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/apr/16/womens-football-faced-with-existential-threat-from-coronavirus-pandemic |
| 17 April 2020 | At a meeting between Premier League clubs, there is a commitment to finishing the 92 remaining fixtures of the current season.<br>The Premier League announces plans for an ePremier League FIFA competition on 25 April to raise money for the #PlayersTogether initiative. Trent Alexander-Arnold and Raheem Sterling are amongst those involved.<br>Norman Hunter becomes the first high-profile former professional footballer to die of COVID-19. |

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| 18 April 2020 | |
| 19 April 2020 | |
| **Lockdown Wk 5** | |
| 20 April 2020 | Arsenal become the first Premier League club to reach an agreement with players over pay cuts: https://www.arsenal.com/news/club-statement. It is reported that all but three of the first team squad have agreed. |
| 21 April 2020 | UEFA are still planning for a June restart across its leagues but says in "special cases" some could be cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52372673 |
| 22 April 2020 | Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has been having "productive talks" with governing bodies from across British sport on restarting following the coronavirus shutdown. Resumption hinges on passing the Government's five tests as well as meeting social distancing guidelines (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-52374513). The Premier League is considering making some behind-closed-doors fixtures available free-to-air when the season restarts, the culture secretary said.<br>National League clubs have voted to end the regular season at its current point, with promotion and relegation outcomes "under careful consideration." https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52381612<br>Gareth Bale donates £500,000 to the NHS in Cardiff and €500,000 to the health service in Madrid. |
| 23 April 2020 | UEFA confirm that the Women's Euros will move from 2021 to 2022 |
| 24 April 2020 | The top two divisions in Holland have been abandoned with no promotion, relegation or declaration of Champions. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52418048<br>Four senior Arsenal players were pictured in violation of government guidelines on social distancing. Arsenal have reminded the first-team squad of their responsibilities. |
| 25 April 2020 | Chelsea announce that players will not be taking a pay cut but will "focus on further supporting other charitable causes": https://www.chelseafc.com/en/news/2020/04/25/club-update-on-coronavirus-initiatives-for-staff--supporters-and |
| 26 April 2020 | Arsenal announce that players will return to individual training at London Colney. |
| **Lockdown Wk 6** | |
| 27 April 2020 | Arsenal and Brighton open their training grounds to players for individual workouts.<br>Everton issue statement condemning the behaviour of striker Moise Keane who the Star reports held a party at his house and will fine the player two weeks wages.<br>FIFA makes a proposal that five substitutions will be allowed in matches to help ease the burden of potentially more intense season schedules between now and December 2021. |

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| | UK Culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, speaking at a parliamentary questions session for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), said: "I personally have been in talks with the Premier League with a view to getting football up and running as soon as possible in order to support the whole football community."<br>Labelled 'Project Restart', the Premier League is hopeful of a potential 8 June restart and finishing at the end of July to fit in with UEFA's European competition plans. This would require full training to begin by 18 May. All games are expected to be held behind closed doors and the league is considering making some available on free-to-air TV. One issue under debate on Friday will be which "approved stadiums" will be used and whether that will be a limited number of grounds or neutral venues. However, a return to action still depends on the government's five tests being met, especially an increase in testing, and meeting social distancing guidelines. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52439018<br>Questions are asked about how realistic it is (https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52443200). |
| 28 April 2020 | West Ham United and Tottenham Hotspur players return to individual training.<br>Reading Women become the first WSL club to furlough players.<br>France's Ligues 1 and 2 cancelled with 10 rounds of matches left to play following the French Government's intervention.<br>Michel d'Hooghe, head of FIFA's medical committee, says football should not return until the start of September at the earliest. "There is a risk and it is not a risk that has small consequences," d'Hooghe told the BBC. "My proposal is if it is possible, avoid playing competitive football in the coming weeks. Try to be prepared for the start of good competition next season." (https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52462233) |
| 29 April 2020 | AFC Fylde becomes the first Women's football team to fold.<br>Police recommend the use of neutral venues should Premier League matches resume. Playing all the remaining Premier League, EFL and FA Cup matches in the 2019–2020 season at their original venues would "present challenges" to the police, said DCC Mark Roberts. |
| 30 April 2020 | It is reported that Premier League clubs have invested in COVID-19 testing machines at a cost of £36,000 each that can turn around results in two and a half hours (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/apr/30/premier-league-confident-of-securing-covid-19-testing-kits-for-return).<br>Sergio Aguero (Manchester City) speaks out about the fear that players have of resuming the season. Likewise, Brighton & Hove Albion striker, Glenn Murray, criticises Premier League's 'Project Restart' proposals (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/apr/30/glenn-murray-condemns-premier-league-face-mask-guidelines-as-farcical). |

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| | After being 12 points clear at the top when the league was suspended with 10 rounds of matches still to play, Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) are declared Champions of French Ligue 1 on a 'points per game' basis. Lyon may appeal having dropped out of the European qualification places as a consequence of the system.<br>Liverpool city mayor suggests the Premier League should be ended amidst fears of fans congregating outside Anfield should Liverpool FC be announced as Champions. The football club issue a strong response. |
| 1 May 2020 | Following a three-and-a-half-hour meeting of Premier League clubs, there is further commitment to complete the season but matches will be played at neutral venues and "It was agreed that the PFA, LMA, players and managers are key to this process and will be further consulted." https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/01/premier-league-clubs-united-in-desire-to-find-way-to-finish-season-after-meeting |
| 2 May 2020 | Frank Lampard says that the idea of footballers being tested before NHS staff 'does not sit well'. |
| 3 May 2020 | Gary Neville is critical of the lack of official information from the Premier League and football clubs.<br>Manchester United player Marcos Rojo becomes the latest player to be caught violating lockdown, in Argentina.<br>Football Safety Officers claim that being left out of discussions about Project Restart could result in inadequate planning. |
| **Lockdown Wk 7** | |
| 4 May 2020 | Football Association chairman, Greg Clarke, has said it is hard to see fans returning to matches "any time soon." If the Premier League and Football League seasons resume, those matches will be played behind closed doors. The Premier League is also preparing for the possibility of playing the 2020–2021 season without fans. |
| 5 May 2020 | Speaking at Downing Street's daily briefing, Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said that restarting sport in Britain would "lift the spirits of the nation."<br>Premier League doctors express concerns over Premier League restart. |
| 6 May 2020 | Aston Villa Chief Executive, Christian Purslow, declares his opposition to playing remaining matches at neutral venues. Brighton & Hove Albion and West Ham United have also opposed the use of neutral venues.<br>Across Europe plans are being put in place for professional football to resume: German chancellor, Angela Merkel, grants governmental approval for Bundesliga to resume without fans in attendance. Turkey propose to resume football season on 12 June. Croatian football set to return on 30 May. |

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| 7 May 2020 | The league has taken further steps to enable the testing of players and staff for COVID-19. It is expected to agree a deal with a Hong Kong-based company, Prenetics, for the provision of 40,000 home testing kits. The testing plan, still to be approved by clubs, would involve players and staff being tested twice a week during a three-week training period and the expected seven-week match schedule. Tests would be ordered centrally before being distributed to the clubs and the total cost is anticipated to reach £4m. https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/07/players-concerns-premier-league-executives-over-project-restart<br>The Bundesliga is confirmed to return on 16 May. UEFA President, Aleksander Ceferin, said: "This is a huge and positive step to bringing optimism back to people's lives." |
| 8 May 2020 | The Korean K-League is the first major professional league to resume, kicking-off after coronavirus suspension since February.<br>Manchester United manager, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, says the club will not force players to return.<br>BAME footballers concerned about overrepresentation of ethnic minorities being affected by virus (https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/may/08/shock-fear-and-unease-loom-over-bame-athletes-before-return-to-action-covid-19). |
| 9 May 2020 | Watford have joined Aston Villa and Brighton & Hove Albion in voicing objections to the Premier League's plan to play out the season at neutral venues on police advice, claiming it would be unfair to relegate clubs on the basis of a competition that "bears no resemblance to the one that was started." https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/09/watford-chairman-questions-integrity-of-distorted-mini-league-at-neutral-venues<br>The Bundesliga restart suffers a setback after entire Liga 2 Dynamo Dresden team quarantined following two players testing positively but plans to restart still set to go ahead. |
| 10 May 2020 | |
| **Lockdown Wk 8** | |
| 11 May 2020 | Speaking in the House of Commons on Monday, UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said being able to hold sporting events without fans could "provide a much-needed boost to national morale."<br>The prospect of Premier League clubs getting the go-ahead to finish the season in their own stadiums increases after a meeting involving the police, league and government officials. The meeting on Monday night, also attended by representatives from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and EFL, has paved the way for a plan to use neutral grounds to be dropped, after Premier League clubs expressed a preference to play behind closed doors in their own stadiums. |

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| | Following Sergio Agüero's previous statements, teammate Raheem Sterling expresses concern on his YouTube channel about football's return. |
| 12 May 2020 | Premier League training protocols sent to clubs (https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52635005) – Corner-flags, balls, cones, goalposts and even playing surfaces will be disinfected after each session. Ongoing surveillance measures included in further guidance include twice-weekly testing, and a daily pre-training questionnaire and temperature check.<br>The BBC understands the PFA has heard from a number of players, especially those who have underlying health conditions like asthma or who are from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, that they have real concerns about returning to playing.<br>The shadow sports minister, Alison McGovern, has called for public scrutiny of the Premier League's Project Restart plan to help give confidence to athletes and the public alike. |
| 13 May 2020 | Premier League meeting with managers of clubs and LMA. Followed by meeting with player representatives.<br>Premier League's Project Restart in doubt as players air safety concerns (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/13/premier-league-football-project-restart-threat-coronavirus-safety). The Premier League is facing the possibility of having to delay its Project Restart after a pair of crucial meetings with players and managers provoked a series of robust exchanges and diverging views.<br>The Guardian reports that there are medical concerns about infected players suffering long-term damage as well as testing accuracy and general fitness necessary for an intense finale to the season (https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2020/may/13/many-serious-hurdles-remain-before-premier-league-can-return-safely).<br>Clubs say they want assurances over what would happen if a player tested positive for coronavirus and some players are equally unconvinced by medical protocols explained in a conference call on Wednesday between captains, league officials, and the deputy chief medical officer, Jonathan van Tam. |
| 14 May 2020 | Brighton & Hove Albion's Glenn Murray tells Sky Sport that he believes that Premier League football is being rushed back too soon following the conference call between players, managers and the Premier League. Three Brighton players have returned positive results from 14 tests for COVID-19 (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/10/brighton-restart-covid-19-premier-league).<br>Six League One clubs with hopes of promotion outline their determination to complete the season in a sign of deep divisions among clubs concerning the correct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. |

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| | The Premier League has been told by the government it must show some matches on free-to-air TV. The Premier League is in negotiations with its broadcast partners Sky and BT over finding a way of showing some matches free-to-air if and when the season resumes. The government's preferred solution is that the remaining 45 matches not already covered under the terms of existing TV deals are shown either on freely accessible TV channels or via a streaming platform such as YouTube. https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/14/premier-league-must-show-free-to-air-games-and-share-money-to-restart-government |
| 15 May 2020 | Clubs in League One and League Two of the EFL discuss their options, with a majority view said to be moving towards a decision not to try to complete the season. The practical and safety hurdles for training again and looking to play matches behind closed doors are not balanced in those lower divisions by a major financial benefit from playing.<br>League Two clubs have unanimously agreed to cancel the regular season with immediate effect but want to stage the play-offs, a decision that requires ratification by the English Football League and Football Association (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/15/league-two-clubs-agree-to-call-off-regular-season-but-want-play-offs). The clubs gave an indicative view during a conference call on Friday and agreed that curtailing the season was the only sensible outcome. The EFL's preferred framework for settling league positions would be on points-per-game, with clubs favouring a weighting to reflect home and away results. The decision would not alter the clubs that stand to be promoted automatically – Crewe Alexander, Swindon Town and Plymouth Argyle – or those in the play-offs. Significantly, a majority indicated they oppose relegation, with clubs understood to be deeply uncomfortable with relegating bottom-placed Stevenage without affording them the chance to play their way out of danger. The clubs came to an informal consensus that there should be "no further relegation" into the National League, with the shared expectation that Barrow should be promoted as National League champions to restore the EFL to 72 teams following the demise of Bury.<br>Watford's Troy Deeney has said he will put his family's health before football and has raised concerns about the Premier League's plans to restart the campaign disrupted by COVID-19. Players voice their concerns (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/15/troy-deeney-voices-fears-over-footballs-return-i-wont-put-my-family-at-risk-watford). |
| 16 May 2020 | German Bundesliga becomes first major European football league to resume. |
| 17 May 2020 | **Testing Round 1:** Premier League clubs begin testing<br>Raheem Sterling says weeks of training needed before Premier League can restart. |

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| **Lockdown Wk 9** | |
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| 18 May 2020 | Clubs vote unanimously to restart training in small groups from Tuesday in Project Restart – Phase One<br>Hearts have been relegated from the SPL following a decision in a league board meeting, after all 12 clubs agreed finishing the season was not feasible. Average points per game played has been used to determine final placings, with the only change to the table from when football was halted on 13 March being that St Johnstone move above Hibernian into sixth place. |
| 19 May 2020 | Hull City are the first Championship club to demand the season be voided and have set out their reasoning in a letter emailed to Rick Parry, the EFL chairman.<br>Watford captain Troy Deeney says he will not return to training because he fears for his family's health amid the coronavirus pandemic as well as the increased risk for black and ethnic minorities. The Professional Footballers' Association has asked the Premier League to conduct extra research into the possible effect of COVID-19 on black, Asian and minority ethnic players (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/19/pfa-asks-premier-league-to-research-covid-19s-impact-on-bame-players).<br>**Testing Round 1:**<br>Six positive Premier League tests for coronavirus. Players and staff who have tested positive will now self-isolate for seven days. A total of 748 players and staff from 19 clubs were tested.<br>The Welsh football season comes to an end.<br>The Football Association of Wales [FAW] have confirmed the end of their domestic leagues because of the coronavirus pandemic. Connah's Quay Nomads have been crowned champions of the Cymru Premier League for the first time under an unweighted points per game method and will take Wales' spot in Champions League qualifying.<br>PFA study reveals 22% of members depressed or considered self-harm during coronavirus pandemic (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/19/22-of-footballers-depressed-or-considered-self-harm-during-pandemic). |
| 20 May 2020 | Tottenham Hotspur are investigating an incident in which right-back Serge Aurier appeared to breach coronavirus social-distancing rules for the third time. The 27 years old posted a photo on social media of himself and a barber after getting a haircut.<br>Top-flight clubs were told last week they will have to give between £300m and £350m back to TV companies even if the 92 games still to be played take place and their anger deepened after discovering broadcasters are due an extra £36m in rebates for every week the 2019–2020 season extends beyond 16 July (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/11/premier-league-clubs-face-at-least-300m-bill-to-broadcasters-even-if-season-finishes). |

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| | Chelsea midfielder, N'Golo Kanté, was granted compassionate leave to miss the club's second day of phase one training because of his fears over the coronavirus.<br>Troy Deeney and several Watford teammates stay away as group training resumes.<br>Dowden hopeful of deal to show Premier League matches free-to-air. 'Productive discussions' held between government and football. |
| 21 May 2020 | The English Football League has said relegation is integral to the integrity of the footballing pyramid, after League Two clubs called for it to be abandoned. |
| 22 May 2020 | Two more Watford players have been forced to self-isolate after coming into contact with someone who has coronavirus.<br>Questions about the format of European competitions are raised after the government imposed a 14-day quarantine on people entering the UK. |
| 23 May 2020 | **Testing Round 2:** A Premier League statement reads: "The Premier League can today confirm that on Tuesday 19 May, Thursday 21 May and Friday 22 May, 996 players and club staff were tested for COVID-19. Of these, two have tested positive from two clubs. Players or club staff who have tested positive will now self-isolate for a period of seven days." |
| 24 May 2020 | |
| **Lockdown Wk 10** | |
| 25 May 2020 | |
| 26 May 2020 | Premier League players could be 25% more susceptible to injury when football resumes because of the intense schedule, according to research by artificial intelligence platform Zone7. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52754212<br>Fans of La Liga sides Espanyol and Leganes with season tickets for the current campaign will be given free passes for the entire 2020–2021 campaign to compensate for missing matches because of coronavirus. |
| 27 May 2020 | **Testing Round 3:** The Premier League announce that four more people have tested positive for COVID-19 during the third round of testing. The four positive tests came from three different clubs and 1,008 people were tested.<br>Premier League clubs approve return of contact training.<br>Clubs voted unanimously to pass "stage two" medical protocols on Wednesday, seen as a crucial step in the attempt to resume the 2019–2020 top-flight season. The league also announced four more individuals from three clubs had tested positive for COVID-19. |

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| | The chances of League One teams resuming the season seem increasingly doubtful with clubs bitterly divided. With assorted proposals being put forward, the absence of any sort of consensus led to an English Football League board meeting ending on Wednesday without any clear conclusions. The EFL had hoped to release a map detailing the pathway towards a League One vote on the matter on Thursday but, although a ballot will still take place, it has been delayed. The clubs are expected to eventually cast their votes on a series of options. These include whether to play on, opt to decide promotion and relegation on a points-per-game basis, potentially void relegation and, possibly, stage expanded play-offs. A 51% majority is required for the establishment of a new framework. Although six clubs – Fleetwood Town, Ipswich Town, Oxford United, Peterborough, Portsmouth and Sunderland – want to complete the season, around 15 want to stop now. Meanwhile, the relegation-threatened Tranmere Rovers and the promotion-chasing Peterborough have threatened legal action should points-per-game be used to decide the final table. https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/28/lower-division-clubs-rescue-package-mp-damian-collins-letter |
| 28 May 2020 | At a shareholders meeting Premier League clubs agree a provisional date of 17 June for resumption of the league. All of the 92 remaining matches in the season will be screened live on TV including, for the first time, games at 3 pm on Saturdays. https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/28/premier-league-restart-june-details-manchester-city-arsenal-aston-villa-sheffield-united |
| 29 May 2020 | Liverpool and Everton to oppose plans to play games at neutral venues (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/29/police-want-any-match-where-liverpool-can-win-title-played-at-neutral-venue). National police want the matches moved to reduce demands on officers during the public health crisis and to discourage fans from gathering outside stadiums. Merseyside Police, however, have confirmed they have no problem with matches taking place in Liverpool as scheduled, although the final decision rests with the local safety advisory group. |
| 30 May 2020 | The former England footballer Emile Heskey has called for extra precautions to be taken for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) footballers when the Premier League returns to screens in June, three months after the coronavirus pandemic forced it to a halt. |
| 31 May 2020 | The EFL has announced the Championship season is set to resume on 20 June and will end "on or around 30 July" with the play-off final. |
| **Lockdown Wk 11** | |
| 1 June 2020 | |

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| 2 June 2020 | Several Championship clubs have opposed the English Football League's planned 20 June restart because of concerns that players will be more likely to sustain injuries as full-contact training has not yet resumed (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jun/01/championship-qpr-appalled-by-restart-date-of-20-june).<br>Phil Foden has become the latest footballer to fall foul of physical-distancing guidelines during lockdown, after the Manchester City midfielder was pictured in an impromptu kickabout with members of the public on Formby beach. |
| 3 June 2020 | **Testing Round 5:** There was one positive result for COVID-19 from 1,197 players and staff tested across Monday and Tuesday, the Premier League has announced. There have now been five rounds of testing for COVID-19, and the total of positive results has increased to 13 from 5,079 tests. |
| 4 June 2020 | Premier League clubs discuss plans if the season has to be cancelled due to a second outbreak. A change to the rules around substitutions has been agreed to allow five substitutes to be used.<br>The fixture list for first three weeks of matches is released. |
| 5 June 2020 | Chelsea handed Women's Super League title on points per game basis.<br>Championship season set to resume on 20 June with play-off final at end of July. Season-ticket holders of Championship clubs will be able to watch any of their team's league matches live for the rest of the 2019–2020 season without an additional payment. |
| 6 June 2020 | Zero positives were found from a total of 1,195 players and club staff tested on Thursday and Friday. |
| 7 June 2020 | |
| **Lockdown Wk 12** | |
| 8 Jun 2020 | A decision on whether to allow the Merseyside derby to go ahead at Goodison Park on Sunday week has been postponed after safety officials said they needed more time to study documentation.<br>Spain's La Liga will use virtual images of stands in television broadcasts with added 'fan audio', produced by the makers of the FIFA video game, when it returns to action on Thursday. The stands will be "virtualised" and will offer to-scale images of seated fans wearing the home club's colours. A La Liga statement explained: "It will be adapted to the flow of the game as certain situations occur, such as a goal or a foul, creating what is known as Atmospheric Audio." |
| 9 June 2020 | EFL clubs have voted to retain promotion, relegation and the play-offs and to use an unweighted points-per-game system to decide the final table if the season is curtailed. |

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| | The English Football League have now confirmed that League One clubs have voted 'by an overwhelming majority' to formally end the 2019–2020 season. As stated, the final league standings have been confirmed on a points-per-game basis, meaning that Coventry City go up as champions and are joined by second-placed Rotherham United. Meanwhile, Wycombe Wanderers jump up to third and complete the play-off places with Oxford United, Fleetwood Town and Portsmouth.<br>League Two clubs have voted to end the season. This will mean Crewe Alexandra, Swindon Town and Plymouth Argyle are promoted. Stevenage are in line to be relegated to the National League but Macclesfield Town have an EFL charge and potential points deduction hanging over them.<br>Everton manager, Carlo Ancelotti, and a number of the first-team squad have joined senior club officials in accepting wage deferrals during the coronavirus shutdown. |
| 10 June 2020 | Merseyside derby given go ahead to be staged at Goodison Park (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jun/10/merseyside-derby-given-go-ahead-to-be-staged-at-goodison). |
| 11 June 2020 | Premier League clubs set for £500m collective loss due to coronavirus (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jun/11/premier-league-clubs-set-for-500m-collective-loss-due-to-coronavirus).<br>A number of League One and League Two clubs are uneasy about starting next season behind closed doors because of the financial shortfalls of playing without fans (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jun/11/efl-clubs-divided-over-kicking-off-next-season-without-supporters).<br>BT will attempt to enhance the viewing experience with artificial crowd noise and plans to build a sense of community by having supporters in studios when football returns to screens on June 17. |
| 12 June 2020 | |
| 13 June 2020 | **Testing Round 8:** A Norwich City player is set to miss the restart of the Premier League season after testing positive for coronavirus. The unnamed player was one of two positive results from the 1,200 checks across the division on Thursday and Friday and he must now isolate for seven days before being tested again. |
| **Lockdown Wk 13** | |
| 15 June 2020 | Before the return of top-flight football in England on Wednesday, the Premier League has issued official guidelines on how games should be staged, played and broadcast amid the COVID-19 pandemic. |
| 16 June 2020 | Government warns of neutral grounds in Premier League if fans go to matches (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jun/16/government-warns-of-neutral-grounds-in-premier-league-if-fans-go-to-matches). Club supporters also warned they will be dispersed by police. |

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| 17 June 2020 | Premier League football returns with two matches played in empty stadia: Sheffield United v Aston Villa and Manchester City v Arsenal.<br>National League clubs voted to decide final standings on an unweighted points-per-game basis. The decision, confirmed by a majority vote on Wednesday, sees Barrow confirmed as champions of the National League. Harrogate and Notts County, as the clubs second and third, go into the National League play-off semi-finals (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/20/harrogate-league-two-national-league-anxious-wait-promotion-football-league). The play-offs must start by 18 July and finish by 30 July, with teams made to pay for the testing of all players and staff, as well as the net costs of staging games. Testing is expected to cost about £100,000.<br>Partick Thistle are the biggest victims of Scottish football's vote farce. The Glasgow club are taking legal action after being relegated to League One and are facing an uncertain future (https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jun/16/partick-thistle-the-biggest-victims-of-scottish-footballs-vote-farce). |
| 18 June 2020 | Aston Villa's Jack Grealish is charged by police after lockdown car accident. |
| 19 June 2020 | |
| 20 June 2020 | |
| 21 June 2020 | |

Appendix 3

# Fan Survey Segmentation Details

The survey was carried out in partnership with Everton Football Club. The survey was sent out to fans from an Everton FC email address to encourage fans to engage with the questionnaire. A covering letter made clear that the purpose was for research being carried out by an independent academic body in collaboration with the club and that the responses would go direct to the university and Everton FC would have no way of tracing responses to individual fans.

Fans were categorised into the following groups:

1 Season Ticket Holders
2 Official Members
3 Match Ticket Purchasers
4 International Fans
5 Passive Fans (active in last five but not last three).

For each group, anyone without a valid email or under the age of 16 years old were removed. The remainder were then stratified into small batches representative of the sample by age and gender.

This equated to the following:

Season Ticket Holders – 20 batches of 1,286 each
Official Members – 10 batches of 1,128 each
Match Ticket Purchasers – 25 batches of 1,284 each
International Fans – 35 batches of 1,260 each
Passive Fans – 40 batches of 1,206 each

Questionnaires were sent out to five batches at a time until, within the limited timeframe of one week during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, the response rate for each group achieved a statistically significant number relative to the overall proportion of each group within the overall fan database as held by Everton Football Club.

The final number of responses for each group was as follows:

Season Ticket Holders – 290
Official Members – 155
Match Ticket Purchasers – 102
International Fans – 7
Passive Fans – 42
Total – 596 responses

The click through rate to the survey link from those receiving the email from Everton FC was 25%. Of those that clicked through to the questionnaire, it was completed by 23%.

# Glossary

**ABCD** Asset-Based Community Development (increasingly common strengths-based approach to community development)
**ADHD** Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
**BAME** Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
**BTEC** Business and Technology Education Council (optional post-16 work-related qualifications in UK)
**CCPR** Central Council of Physical Recreation (forerunner to the UK Sports Council)
**CMS** Culture, Media and Sport
**COS** Charitable Organisation Society
**COVID** Coronavirus Disease
**COYB** Come On You Blues (often used as a sign-off by Everton fans in messages)
**CSE** Certificate of Secondary Education (UK qualification)
**CSR** Corporate Social Responsibility
**CST** Community Sports Trust
**DCMS** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (UK Government Department)
**DfE** Department for Education (UK Government Department)
**DWP** Department for Work and Pensions (UK Government Department)
**EFC** Everton Football Club (English professional football club)
**EFDN** European Football for Development Network
**EFL** English Football League (governing body for tiers 2-4 of men's professional football in England)
**EFITC** Everton Football In The Community (early incarnation of Everton FC's community engagement arm before becoming EitC)
**EitC** Everton in the Community (Everton Football Club's charitable trust)
**EPL** English Premier League (top tier of men's professional football in England)
**ESFA** Education and Skills Funding Agency (an executive agency of the DfE)
**FA** Football Association (governing body for football at the amateur, grassroots and national representative levels)
**FCUM** FC United of Manchester (football club formed by disgruntled Manchester United fans)
**FFE & VTS** Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Scheme
**FIFA** Fédération Internationale de Football Association (governing body of football at the global level)
**FitC** Football in the Community (national scheme introduced in the 1980s through which professional football clubs would support targeted groups within their local communities)
**GCSE** General Certificate of Secondary Education (UK qualification at the end of compulsory education)

**GNVQ** General National Vocational Qualification
**IMD** Index of Multiple Deprivation
**IAG** International Airlines Group
**IOC** International Olympic Committee
**LFC** Liverpool Football Club (English professional football club)
**LMA** League Managers' Association (trade union for Premier League, EFL and national football team managers in England)
**LSOA** Lower layer Super Output Area (smallest sample for analysis of National Census data)
**M&E** Monitoring and Evaluation
**MUD** Moral Underclass Discourse (one of three discourses operating within New Labour politics according to Levitas, 2005)
**NCS** National Citizen Service (national voluntary scheme for 16- to 17-year-olds introduced by the UK's coalition government and operated between 2011 and 2025)
**NEET** Not in Education, Employment or Training (referring to young people in these categories)
**NVQ** National Vocational Qualification
**PFA** Professional Footballers Association (trade union for all current and former players in the men's professional English football leagues and the FA Women's Super League)
**PL** Premier League (used in abbreviations of schemes organised by the PLCF)
**PLCF** Premier League Charitable Fund (organisation formed to distribute monies ring-fenced for charitable programmes as part of the Premier League broadcasting deals)
**PLPFA** Premier League and Professional Footballers' Association Community Fund (one of the funds distributed by PLCF)
**PTSD** Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
**QOF** Quality and Outcomes Framework (for medical practices in England)
**RED** Redistributionist Discourse (one of three discourses operating within New Labour politics according to Levitas, 2005)
**RSA** Royal Society of Arts
**SAMHI** Small Area Mental Health Index
**SDP** Sport for Development and Peace
**SFA** Skills Funding Agency (executive agency of the DfE)
**SID** Social Integrationist Discourse (one of three discourses operating within New Labour politics according to Levitas, 2005)
**SPL** Scottish Premier League (governing body for top tier of football in Scotland)
**UEFA** Union of European Football Associations (governing body for football across Europe)
**VCS** Volunteer and Community Sector
**WSL** Women's Super League
**YTS** Youth Training Scheme (former training programme for young people)

# Index