



THE SCOTTISH FA McDonald's

GRASSROOTS AWARDS 2026





OVERVIEW

The Scottish FA McDonald's Grassroots Awards celebrate the people, clubs, and projects that make grassroots football the beating heart of communities across Scotland. These awards recognise the dedication, passion, and commitment of volunteers, coaches, clubs, and organisations who go above and beyond to create positive, inclusive, and inspiring football experiences for players of all ages and abilities.

From youth and adult football to the women's and girls' game, community and para football, the awards shine a spotlight on those who use football as a force for good—promoting inclusion, wellbeing, development, and lifelong participation. By celebrating outstanding contributions at grassroots level, the Scottish FA McDonald's Grassroots Awards highlight the vital role football plays in strengthening communities and inspiring the next generation both on and off the pitch.





REGIONAL AWARDS CATEGORIES



BEST VOLUNTEER IN ADULT FOOTBALL



This nominee is an outstanding example of what makes adult grassroots football thrive. Giving countless hours behind the scenes, they play a vital role in ensuring football remains inclusive, welcoming, and well-organised for players of all abilities.

They consistently put people first, creating a positive environment where players feel valued, supported, and motivated to stay involved in the game. Their dedication has strengthened clubs, improved participation, and helped overcome challenges with patience and passion.

[Nominate here](#)





BEST VOLUNTEER IN ADULT FOOTBALL

2025 WINNER - JOHN MCKNIGHT

Football was John McKnight's life. A Scottish schoolboy international playing at professional youth level, with a promising future, his world collapsed when he was released from the game. With no support system, he fell into addiction, eventually losing everything to alcohol and drugs.

But in 2023, John turned his life around and got clean. Just two months into recovery, he played in a charity match at Fauldhouse United—his old club—rekindling his love for the game. Now clean and sober, football gave John something that no substance ever could: clarity, connection, purpose, and pride. Within months, football was helping him regain fitness, confidence, and purpose.

Driven by the belief that recovery through football works, John founded Fauldhouse United Sundays – Clean & Sober / Second Chances, West Lothian's first recovery based amateur team. He now manages and mentors players who are overcoming addiction or rebuilding their lives.

The team is more than a squad—it's a support network, a source of pride, and a second chance for men who've lost their way. John's tireless work has transformed lives, including his own



BEST VOLUNTEER IN YOUTH FOOTBALL

A volunteer that has gone above and beyond in children's, youth and schools football to ensure young people are provided with the chance to play the game in a safe, fun and friendly environment.

Their enthusiasm, patience, and genuine care for young people encourages participation, builds confidence, and helps players enjoy and stay involved in the game.

[Nominate here](#)





BEST VOLUNTEER IN YOUTH FOOTBALL

2025 WINNER - CHRISTOPHER MALONE

Christopher Malone is a devoted grassroots football coach whose passion, resilience, and leadership have made a lasting impact on Drumchapel Amateurs Football Club and the wider community. With over 10 years of coaching experience and a lifelong connection to the sport, Chris embodies everything youth football stands for: commitment, development, and heart.

Chris has grown into a central figure at Drumchapel Amateurs, currently coaching both the Caledonian League Amateur Team and the U16s Team. His weekly schedule is a testament to his dedication, balancing multiple squads with energy, enthusiasm, and care.

Beyond football, Chris's strength as a leader was profoundly evident during the most difficult year of his life. Following the tragic loss of his 19-year-old daughter, Chris continued to show up for his team's leading training, attending matches, and making sure the boys were okay. His courage and compassion during this time moved everyone around him. In her memory, he helped organise a community charity event, which received overwhelming support and reflected the deep respect he's earned.

Whether guiding young players through their first steps in football or supporting them through life's challenges, Christopher Malone continues to inspire with every session, every game, and every act of kindness. He is the heart of grassroots football and a shining example of what it means to give back.

BEST VOLUNTEER IN GIRLS & WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



This nominee has made an exceptional contribution to the growth and development of girls' and women's football at grassroots level. Through their passion, dedication, and tireless volunteering, they have helped create inclusive, welcoming, and empowering environments where females of all ages feel encouraged to participate and thrive in the game.

They consistently go above and beyond to remove barriers to participation, support player development, and champion equal opportunities.

[Nominate here](#)



BEST VOLUNTEER IN GIRLS' & WOMEN'S

2025 WINNER - VICTORIA COUPAR



Since the founding of EKYC Girls three years ago, Vikki has been an outstanding and irreplaceable volunteer, serving as the team secretary and the driving force behind the smooth running of the club. Her dedication, organisation, and passion have helped shape the foundation of the club and ensure that every girl who joins is set up for success both on and off the pitch.

Despite working full-time as a nurse, a role that already demands compassion and resilience, Vikki is present at every training session, welcoming new players and supporting parents through the joining process. She also leads fundraising efforts across all age groups, helping to sustain the club and make activities accessible to everyone.

One of Vikki's favourite roles is planning events that bring joy and unity to the team. Importantly, she works tirelessly to make sure these events are free of charge, removing financial barriers for families and allowing every girl to simply enjoy being part of the club.

Vikki's impact goes far beyond administration she is a mentor, a cheerleader, and a community builder. Her selfless commitment and tireless energy make her a true role model and a deserving nominee for recognition. EKYC Girls would not be the same without her, and her contributions continue to leave a lasting legacy in the lives of the players, their families, and the wider community

BEST YOUNG VOLUNTEER



This award recognises the contribution young people make in community grassroots football.

The category is open to young people from 16 to 26 years of age that make a significant impact in helping to support and develop opportunities for people to participate in the game.

[Nominate here](#)



BEST YOUNG VOLUNTEER

2025 WINNER - TAYLOR HAY



Taylor Hay is a passionate and committed young football coach whose journey with Airdrie Community Club began over three years ago at just 17 years old.

Now aged 21, Taylor is the head coach of the club's 2012s team, who compete in the Central A League (CSFA). His players admire and look up to him, not just for his football knowledge, but for his dedication, kindness, and leadership. He commits at least three hours each week to training and consistently goes above and beyond to support the club and its wider initiatives.

Beyond his team duties, Taylor plays a key role in the club's Friday Night Project, a partnership with Police Scotland, the Fire Brigade, North Lanarkshire Council, and the Scottish Alcohol Partnership. This initiative provides free football sessions to help reduce antisocial behaviour and offer young people a safe, welcoming space to play and connect. Taylor also volunteers with the McDonald's Fun Football programme, giving up his Sunday mornings to deliver free sessions to children across the community.

Taylor Hay is everything a community club could hope for—an inspiring young volunteer who leads with heart, gives without hesitation, and uplifts everyone around him. His journey from curious apprentice to respected head coach is a testament to his character and dedication.



BEST COMMUNITY FOOTBALL FOR ALL PROJECT

A community-based project which has succeeded in encouraging Football for All which may include creating opportunities for people from underrepresented backgrounds, disadvantaged areas and/or has demonstrated strong growth in participation.

By removing barriers to participation, the project reaches individuals who may not otherwise engage with the game, promoting physical activity, wellbeing, confidence, and social connection.

[Nominate here](#)





BEST COMMUNITY FOOTBALL FOR ALL PROJECT

2025 WINNER – BLAIRGOWRIE & RATTRAY COMMUNITY FOOTBALL TRUST

Blairgowrie & Rattray Community Football Trust (BRCFT) uses football to improve health, wellbeing, and opportunities for people in Eastern Perthshire. Based at Davie Park in SIMD 1-ranked Rattray, BRCFT tackles barriers to sport and physical activity through a person-centred, inclusive approach.

With three full-time staff, a purpose built facility, and a growing network of partners—including NHS Tayside, Social Flock, and the local foodbank—BRCFT delivers inclusive programmes across sport, education, and community wellbeing. These include clothing support, school uniforms, emergency food parcels, and plans for healthcare drop-ins at the stadium.

Their flagship alternative education programme uses football to engage pupils needing extra support, while the Extra Time Programme combats food poverty and supports families through meals and childcare.

Recreational pathways support all ages, abilities, and genders from walking football to McDonald's Fun Football sessions, free holiday camps, and women's football programmes. Female participation stands at 30.9%, more than double the national average. The Trust's innovative £1-to-play initiative encourages inclusive access to its facilities, with all proceeds reinvested into the community. BRCFT is a shining example of how sport can drive meaningful, lasting change creating a healthier, more connected, and more resilient community.



BEST PARA FOOTBALL ACTIVITY/PROJECT/PERSON

This award recognizes an activity, project or person that has made an outstanding contribution to para football, demonstrating how the game can be truly inclusive and accessible for all.

Through their dedication and passion, they have created meaningful opportunities for participants with disabilities to enjoy football in a safe, supportive, and empowering environment.

[Nominate here](#)



BEST PARA FOOTBALL ACTIVITY/PROJECT/PERSON

2025 WINNER – MELROSE FUN FOOTBALL CENTRE



When Melrose FC's Communities Officer, Rob Jahoda, noticed that there was a dropout rate in the first year of training at Primary1 among neurodivergent children, he and the club decided to act. Over six months, club volunteers researched best practices, trained with Team United, and secured funding from SportedUK, McDonald's, and the Scottish FA to create an inclusive, flexible, and nurturing environment for kids who struggle to thrive in traditional sports settings. This hard work resulted in Melrose FC launching a McDonald's Fun Football centre specifically for neurodivergent children in Spring 2025. #

Now supporting 20 children weekly, the programme reflects the club's core values: Have Fun, Try Hard, Show Respect. Sessions are tailored to allow autonomy and learning through exploration, while fostering a strong sense of belonging.

Parent feedback has been overwhelmingly positive: "I never thought I'd be taking Felix to football... and he'd be absolutely loving it." "Fantastic to see our children thrive without fear of exclusion." "An inclusive, supportive space — so appreciated and far less anxiety-provoking!" The most recent block concluded with the children proudly participating in the club wide Melrose Festival, collecting medals and celebrating as valued members of the community — a powerful reflection of the joy and impact created by a dedicated team of volunteer coaches.

BEST GRASSROOTS REFEREE



We want to recognise the great work our Grassroots officials do in Scotland to help make sure we have games that are played in the correct way.

We are asking you to nominate that Grassroots Official that has made a difference, maybe the person that has helped young people enjoy the game, maybe the person that has given up time to help with local activity or maybe that person who just makes the game fun and enjoyable.

It so important we recognise everyone in our sport that allows the games to take place.

[Nominate here](#)



BEST GRASSROOTS REFEREE

2025 WINNER – LAUREN COLE



Lauren Cole is a trailblazing grassroots referee whose commitment to football and youth development is making waves across Scotland. At just 22 years old, Lauren has already built a strong reputation as a reliable, passionate, and highly capable official, breaking barriers as the only female referee produced by Baljaffray FC, and possibly the first from the wider Bearsden and Milngavie area.

Lauren's refereeing journey began in her final year of high school, when a PE teacher suggested she take the course as part of her subject choices. With encouragement from her family, she completed the qualification and has now been officiating for over four years. Her experience spans local league matches, school tournaments, and high-profile cup finals.

Lauren's profile has grown significantly in recent months, with invitations to officiate at major events including two Cup Finals and Girl's School tournament. Her presence at these prestigious fixtures highlights the respect she's earned within the football community. Lauren is not only a skilled referee but also a role model for young girls in sport—proving that with passion and perseverance, barriers can be broken.

Baljaffray FC is proud to support Lauren's journey and celebrate her achievements. Her story is one of dedication, trailblazing spirit, and a love for the game that continues to inspire players, coaches, and fellow officials alike.



NATIONAL AWARDS CATEGORIES



BEST COMMUNITY CLUB



A Quality Mark Community or Legacy Football Club that is an example of what it means to be at the heart of its community.

The club goes beyond the game itself, working closely with local partners, families, and volunteers to create opportunities that promote participation, wellbeing, and personal development.

From grassroots pathways to community programmes, it consistently removes barriers and ensures football is accessible to everyone.

[Nominate here](#)



BEST COMMUNITY CLUB

2025 WINNER – POLLOK UNITED



Pollok United are a Platinum Quality Mark Club who are truly at the heart of their local community. Operating three previously redundant Glasgow City Council facilities Nethercraigs Sports Centre, Dennis Donnelly Park, and Corkerhill Community Centre the club has transformed these spaces into vibrant community hubs, open seven days a week.

Pollok United delivers a wide range of programmes for all ages and backgrounds. These include McDonald's Fun Football, Cashback for Communities, Scottish Gas Holiday Programmes, Women's Recreational Football, Walking Football, New Scots integration sessions, and early years programmes like Mini Kickers and Tiny Tots. Every initiative reflects the club's ethos of Football For All.

Through the Scottish FA's Extra Time programme, the club offers after-school care to 40 local children each week, providing healthy snacks and diverse activities—from football to arts and crafts. Their work reaches beyond football, addressing community wellbeing in a holistic way.

Pollok United maintains strong partnerships with Active Schools and other grassroots clubs, sharing facilities and fostering collaboration. A long-standing community champion, the club was previously visited by UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin in 2017.



BEST FUN FOOTBALL CENTRE, ACTIVITY OR COACH

A Quality Mark Community or Legacy Football Club that is an example of what it means to be at the heart of its community.

The club goes beyond the game itself, working closely with local partners, families, and volunteers to create opportunities that promote participation, wellbeing, and personal development.

From grassroots pathways to community programmes, it consistently removes barriers and ensures football is accessible to everyone.

[Nominate here](#)



BEST FUN FOOTBALL CENTRE



2025 WINNER –

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THANK YOU
SUMMER OF FOOTBALL

