

# FOOTBALL SCORES

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## GOAL SCORERS

Hibernian Football Fans

## TACTICS

Work in partnership with the Hibernian community to pay tribute to those who have died

## TEAM PLAYERS

Health Promoting Palliative Care Project

GameChanger Public Social Partnership

Enable mutual support through shared experiences of dying and bereavement

Maintain a football theme throughout

## RATIONALE

“Because dead ordinary people live on in the stories of the living”  
www.toabsentfriends.org.uk

Hibernian Football Club fans frequently request support from the club in paying tribute to loved ones who have died.

A ‘To Absent Friends’ event facilitated the coming together of a community in remembrance and celebration of lives, particularly in the achievement of a Scottish cup final win for the club.

Such an event brings the subject of death, dying and bereavement into an open arena, reducing stigma and promoting conversation.

Conversation can lead to mutual support, awareness of mortality and the need to plan for the future.

## METHOD

The memorial event was advertised on the Club website and included:

- ♦ A video by the club's historian
- ♦ A moving memorial by a bereaved daughter.

130 posters, with marker pens, were put up around the stands in the stadium.

A twig tree was placed in the bar area with tags, pens, and an invitation to participate.

The Project Support Manager attended on the first Saturday to assess:

- ♦ Effectiveness of materials
- ♦ Fans' response.

Posters and tree were displayed over 4 Saturday home games then taken down.

All comments were documented and analysed.

Posters are preserved in 4 large portfolios.

Part of a national ‘To Absent Friends’ festival of storytelling and remembrance which takes place across Scotland the first week of November every year

*“it was a very powerful and emotive event which certainly captured our supporters interest”*

## RESULTS

36 tags were placed on the tree  
130 posters were filled with tributes  
541 individual commemorations  
50% of tributes referred to Hibs  
81 tributes included a photograph  
46% named family members  
56% sent love and/or kisses

- ♦ Fans embraced the event from the first proposal on the website.
- ♦ Online videos received over 60,000 hits within a week.
- ♦ All comments online were positive.
- ♦ Many tributes had been prepared in advance.
- ♦ Language specific to Hibernian FC was often used to articulate feelings, e.g. ‘To the angels high above’ and ‘Glory, glory to the Hibeers’ (GGTTH).
- ♦ 2 word clouds were created (the footballer and his football) depicting the most commonly used words and phrases.
- ♦ Posters and tree tags are preserved in 4 portfolios that will be treasured in the Hibernian museum, available to view on request and displayed during tours.
- ♦ GameChanger plans to hold this event annually.
- ♦ SPFL Trust has recommended the event to 42 clubs across Scotland.

## CONCLUSION

The general perception that death is the ‘elephant in the room’ was challenged by the manner in which this opportunity was embraced by so many people.

- ♦ It is not possible to quantify the number of people who did not participate as they may have read tributes or had relevant conversations; the impact via ripple effect may be much wider.
- ♦ There is no evidence to support reasons for non participation as people were free to engage or not, according to their personal wishes.
- ♦ Timing of event was significant for Hibernian fans as the team won the Scottish cup for the first time in over a hundred years.
- ♦ Simple methods and materials facilitate repeat of event on an annual basis, and increases transferability to other clubs.

The community development approach ensures events are carried out ‘with’ people, rather than ‘to’ people

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Strategic Framework for Action on Palliative and End of Life Care 2016-2021  
The Scottish Government

Scottish Community Development Centre  
www.scdc.org.uk

www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk

www.gamechangerpsp.co.uk

www.toabsentfriends.org.uk

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Hibernian Football fans

Laura Montgomery: GameChanger Project

Tom Wright: Club Historian

Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL) Trust