The Scottish Professional Football League Trust is an independent registered charity associated with the Scottish Professional Football League.

We work in partnership with Scotland’s 42 member clubs and external agencies to promote, support, fund and administer activities which inspire SPFL clubs to help meet the identified social needs of the people of Scotland.

Our purpose is to use football’s unique presence to assist Scotland’s people to achieve their goals and improve their life chances.

Our vision is to work with SPFL clubs to use the unique power of football to engage with communities.

The SPFL Trust welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

Do you consider that the Scottish Government’s health and sport budget for 2017-18 reflects its stated priorities (as set out in the National Performance Framework, the LDP standards and the National health and wellbeing outcomes)? If not, how could the budget be adjusted to better reflect priorities?

With physical inactivity costing the Scottish Government around £91 million per year there is a need to recognise the convergence between the Sport agenda other portfolio areas – most notably, but not at all limited to, Health. Research shows that increased physical activity can positively impact physical and mental health outcomes and as such, its bearing on health inequalities.

Given the move towards Sport for Change in recent years and the impact that sport and physical activity has on, not just, health inequality, we would be pleased to see a budget that details this.

We recognise that the low level of detail noted in the Sport Budget is likely a reflection of how that budget is managed once approved, however it does not allow for any scrutiny to be given at this stage.

For the health and sport budget for 2018-19 where do you suggest any additional resources could be most effectively deployed and where could any further savings be found? What evidence supports your views?

An increase in preventative spend should be considered to allow for a long-term approach to improving health outcomes and reducing in equality across Scotland.

Consideration must be given to the wider landscape around physical activity, using creative solutions in the heart of communities.

For example, research shows that 710,000 people engage with their local SPFL football club each year – that’s a third of Scotland’s population. Clubs are delivering projects that contribute to a wide variety of National Outcomes, with a focus on areas such as, but not
limited to, mental and physical health, employability, education and attainment, criminal justice and dementia.

Physical inactivity, sedentary behaviour and poor diet increase the risk of obesity, chronic illness and premature mortality. Football Fans in Training (FFIT), a weight loss and healthy lifestyle program gender-sensitised to appeal to men, attracts and engages men (BMI≥28, 35-65yrs) at high risk of future ill-health. A randomised control trial showed that FFIT was effective and cost-effective. FFIT process evaluation and additional qualitative data show the crucial importance of: the professional football setting; group dynamics during FFIT; men’s support for each other, including in renegotiating health-related ‘performances of gender’; and the impact of, and on, families of men’s efforts to change health behaviour practices.

We are grateful for the support of the Scottish Government in running FFIT. It demonstrates the potential to achieve national outcomes using alternative creative, effective and cost effective approaches – however more could be done across other departmental areas.

We are aware of the challenges associated with professional football in Scotland, however we would encourage that these do not impact decision making when looking at the potential professional football clubs have to meet the identified social needs of the people of Scotland. Clubs already work in a wide variety of national outcome areas and making a significant and positive impact in the lives of people across Scotland. Clubs continue to commit themselves to their local communities, with 22 of the 42 clubs now having their own independent regulated charities through which they delivery community engagement and development activities.

Is sufficient information available to support scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s health and sport budget? If not, what additional information would help support budget scrutiny?

Whilst recognising that the health budget is far reaching and as such, warrants a more detailed budget, the very limited level of detail regarding the sport budget makes it difficult to provide any particular scrutiny.

Given the increasing impact that physical activity and sport is having across sectors of society, such as health, education and community safety, it would be useful to better understand the allocation of this budget and the integration of budgets and potential for collaboration.

What impact has the integration of health and social care budgets had on ensuring resources are directed at achieving the Scottish Government’s desired outcomes.

There is no denying that, when effective, the integration of health and social care budgets offer an opportunity for far greater collaborative working. Increased partnership working offers the chance for greater quality of care and should lead to a healthier, more active Scotland.

We would encourage local Health and Social Care Partnerships to give greater consideration to their wider local landscape; and explore the potential to engage with ‘alternative’ organisations that could offer creative approaches to tackle health and inequality.
We would also encourage the same approach be taken across all portfolios and provide organisations like, but not limited to, SPFL Clubs and their associated charities, the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to support the delivery of National Outcomes.