



2023-24 Winning for children and families



Welcome from our Chair,

David Robb

I have been delighted to see how our bold and ambitious “Being Brave” Strategy (2021-2025) has been realised by our board, staff and volunteers making this a rather exceptional year.



The cost of living and economy continue to be challenging but our staff and volunteers will not be beaten; they work relentlessly to improve the lives of struggling children and families across Scotland. The campaign against poverty, disadvantage and discrimination has never been more marked and we continue to challenge the government to achieve positive change.

As life becomes more complex and challenging for children and families, there is an even greater demand for Aberlour's services. The expansion of our services and growth in income enables us to support more disadvantaged children, young people and families and reach more diverse communities.

Our strong values of Respect, Integrity, Innovation and Challenge are lived and breathed throughout the organisation. We stand up for what we believe is right in society.

Testament to our values, ethos and dedication are the results we have seen this year. We were absolutely thrilled to be awarded **UK Large Charity of the Year** at the Third Sector Awards in September 2023, and for our work and bravery to be recognised by so many eminent judges and sector leaders.

There is however so much more to be done. We remain committed to ensuring that our organisation is sustainable and can provide brighter futures for even more disadvantaged children, young people and families throughout Scotland.

From our CEO,

SallyAnn Kelly

OBE

Aberlour received great recognition for our work this year - which we are delighted about. This however cannot overshadow the ongoing financial hardship for families trapped in poverty and the surge in demand for help.



Our highly dedicated board, staff and volunteers strive to help alleviate poverty and disadvantage.

I am pleased to report that in the past year, we have:-

- Supported more children and struggling families with **1,853 families receiving emergency relief grants** through our Urgent Assistance Fund.
- Expanded our services including winning **four family support services in Glasgow** and launching a new Perinatal Befriending Service in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.
- Worked in partnership with Professor Morag Treanor and The Scottish Sun and persuaded the Scottish Government to **write off £1.5m school meal debt** for families across Scotland.
- Elevated the voices of children and families to **influence policy and practice**.
- Given our young people the opportunity to experience work through the introduction of the **Aberlour Family Firm**.
- Been **recognised for our commitment to fostering equality, diversity and inclusion** in the workplace.

We also welcomed Lynne O'Brien as our new Chief Officer for Children and Families, after the retirement of Jim Wallace who devoted nine years to Aberlour and enhanced the lives of literally thousands of children and families.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Aberlour this year. Your continued generosity has enabled us to reach more children and families in Scotland most in need.



Services



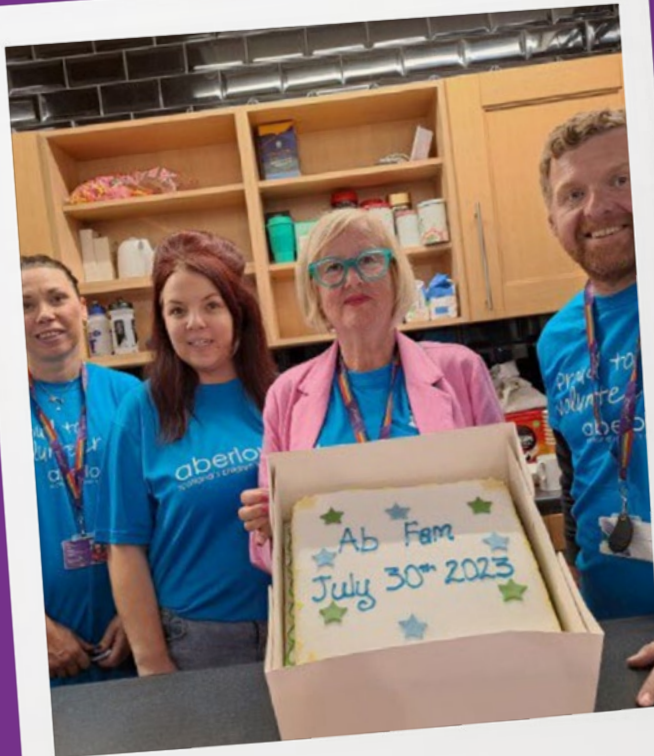


Glasgow Family Support Service

Aberlour was successful in winning four Family Support services in Glasgow with an annual value of £2.5m.

This included a citywide intensive service, and three early intervention family support services covering the North West, North East and South of the city.

This win has made Aberlour the largest provider of family support in Glasgow.



AbFam 2023

In July we held our first ever “AbFam” event in Glasgow for families with children under the age of eight. Families helped plan a day of fun activities and enjoyed getting together and meeting new friends. This was important for families, many of whom felt isolated and unable to afford leisure activities.

“Spending time with other families makes you realise that you’re not the only one in the world with these issues.”

“It’s not easy having the money to take the kids out to play and eat at the same time.”

We plan to roll out further AbFam events across the country to coincide with our 150th anniversary in 2025.



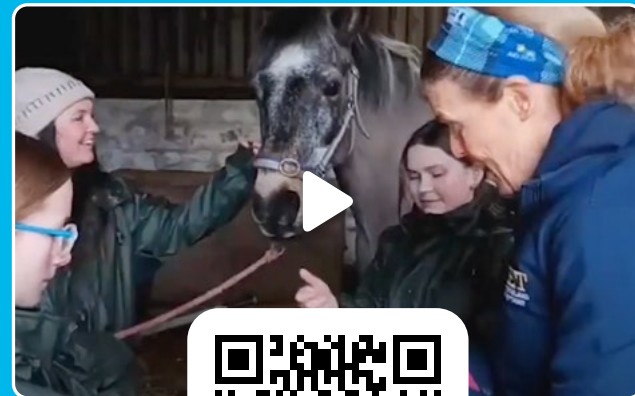
Routes Falkirk

We were delighted to partner with the Royal Highland Education Trust Forth Valley, which gave many of our children and young people the unique opportunity to experience agriculture and farming for the first time.

The visits and activities aimed to improve life chances of disadvantaged teenagers by introducing them to farming and food production including career and employment opportunities in the rural sector.

Activities ranged from learning how to feed lambs, and even seeing one being born, to making butter on a dairy farm as well as visiting a farm shop and butchery.

**Scan to watch
the video**





Perinatal



We know that parents impacted by neonatal experiences are at greater risk of increased anxiety and isolation.

In April we launched a new Perinatal Befriending service to offer vital emotional and befriending support to parents living in the Lothians whose babies are born at 34 weeks' gestation or later and have received neonatal care through the Neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

In Falkirk our Intensive Perinatal service offers support to pregnant women and new mothers affected by substance use who have a baby under 12 months of age.

Our practical and emotional support enables parents to provide a safe, loving and consistent family environment for their child.

Scan to watch the video



Megan, mother of Rosie, said:

“The help I got from the service and the relationship with my befriender was unique. When I look back, I’m a totally different person now, when I have rough times, I can get through a day at a time.”



Aberlour Adventures

hōu canoes
MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN

We enable young people with a range of complex needs and disabilities to enjoy activities and adventure breaks they would not be able to access otherwise. This benefits them as well as providing respite for family members and carers.

Adventures are matched to individual needs and help our young people learn new life skills, build confidence, and make friends.

Activities range from canoeing and archery to theatre trips and visits to safari parks.

“Thank you so much, just to be able to sit down and read my book has been so beneficial.”

Parent

“I’m good at this now, can I do it again?”

Young person who managed to hit the target at archery.

“This is awesome.”

from several of the young people when participating in canoe games on Lake Bassenthwaite.



**Playscheme
Ayrshire**

In partnership with East Ayrshire Council, we supported 130 children with additional support needs during the holidays. Our summer activity programme helped to relieve the pressure on families and carers.

Children benefitted from routine and structure with familiar staff and surroundings. Indoor and outdoor activities such as baking, arts and crafts, sand and water play, football, swings, and basketball were enjoyed as well as visits from the music man, ponies, and alpacas

A background image of two young women with long hair, one with braces, smiling warmly. A large blue circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'Equally Safe'.

Equally Safe

In November we promoted 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

Survivors of domestic abuse at our Equally Safe services in Falkirk and Glasgow highlighted the support they and their children have been given to get them back on their feet.

Scan to watch the video





**Speaking
truth to
power**

School Meal Debt



We were thrilled that our campaign to cancel school meal debt persuaded the Scottish Government to **write off £1.5m in school meal debt for 30,000 children** in December 2023.

In June 2022, our research carried out by Professor Morag Treanor of Heriot-Watt University, revealed that over £1M in school meal debt was owed by struggling Scottish families. The report, based on Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, highlighted how families were being legally pursued for as little as £10 arrears.

Working with Heriot-Watt University and The Scottish Sun, we successfully used press coverage, social media and influencing to persuade the Government to write off Scotland's existing school meal debt.

We continue to campaign so that school meal debt becomes a thing of the past.

Financial Wellbeing



One parent said:
“I felt like I was stuck in a hole, and I was getting deeper into it, and I wasn’t going to be able to get out of it.”

Parents tell us how their mental health and wellbeing is affected by financial hardship.

Already struggling with the stresses and challenges of parenthood, rising costs have tipped them over the edge.

Our Tayside Families Financial Wellbeing Project was set up to help families struggling with public debt (such as council tax and school meal debt). It explored what the long-term outcomes for families would be if we assist them with their finances and debt.

By working in partnership with funders and local authorities, to test new and innovative approaches to financial advice and support, we have successfully delivered positive change for **25 Tayside families** including **56 children** involved in the pilot.

The three-year project has been generously funded by the CORRA Promise fund and The Robertson Trust (Partners in Change).

Urgent Assistance Fund



Our Urgent Assistance Fund is a lifeline for many families across Scotland. Running our successful “Poverty Relief” TV-led campaign for a second winter meant we were able to **raise over £206K from public donations and trust funds for the Urgent Assistance Fund.**

We provided cash grants to pay for necessities such as food, children’s clothing, bedding and energy costs to support a further **1853 struggling families** over winter and spring.

Some of the families we were able to assist have shared their stories and provided feedback on the difference our support has made:



Laura*, mum to Cara*, was delighted with the speedy response to her Urgent Assistance Fund application and the washing machine she purchased with the funds awarded.

“I am thankful to Aberlour for the funds to buy a new washing machine. It’s saved me stressing and worrying how I’m going to be able to wash my little girls, and my, clothes. I am very grateful.”

Whitney*, mum to Gracie*, Bobby* and Charley* said;

“On behalf of us all, thank-you so much for giving us the gift of food, heat and warmth, it is sincerely appreciated, and a welcome respite from the stress and anxiety we are experiencing at the moment.”



Aberlour remains committed to making real change and improving the experience for children living in care as part of The Promise.



the promise
scotland



“My
Journey”



In celebration of Children in Care Day our care experienced young people launched a new book titled “My Journey.”

The book empowers care leavers to record important information about themselves and reclaim their personal stories.

Care experienced young people in The Highlands, created the book in collaboration with Aberlour, Barnardos, Highland Council and The Promise Scotland. The Corra Foundation provided funding for the journal, and the aim is that every care-experienced young person in Scotland will receive a copy.



One of the creators,
Lyndon said,

It’s going to help me keep record of important things that I might forget – like things I’ve achieved!”



**Aberlour
Family
Firm**




One of our young people said:

The Family Firm has helped me prepare for a career in the care sector by providing good training such as the mental health first aid course that we did.”

We know our young people have incredible talents and skills, however their life experiences may have created additional barriers that prevent them from securing and maintaining employment, so we launched the Aberlour Family Firm.

This provided five young people, aged 16 years and over, with the opportunity to work and learn. They were given a 12 week fully paid internship in a range of services across the organisation. Due to its success this will become a regular opportunity for our young people.



Reaching More Children and Families

Our business development team had a highly successful year with tenders and strategic funding applications. This success is testament to the quality of services we deliver.

Key achievements include:



Being awarded a
multi-year contract

(£2.5m per annum) to continue and expand our **locality and Intensive Family Support services** in Glasgow.



Establishing a new

Sustain

Family Support service in
Clackmannanshire (£150k).



Being **awarded** an additional

£1.5m

from the Scottish Government to
increase capacity of our **National
Guardianship service** in partnership
with the **Scottish Refugee Council**.

A young man and a woman are smiling warmly at the camera. The man, on the left, has dark hair tied back and a nose ring. The woman, on the right, has dark hair with bangs and is wearing glasses. They are both wearing grey hoodies. The background is a solid, warm orange color.

Launching two new
Hearts and Minds

services that support mental health
and wellbeing of children and families in
South Ayrshire and Renfrewshire (£340k).



Securing a grant of
£550K
to provide our
Options Fife disability service.



Rights and Participation



16 28 17

16 28 17

Guardianship Scotland



In March, Guardianship Scotland joined the Scottish Youth Parliament as an Associate National Voluntary Organisation.

This ensures that the views of young asylum seekers, as well as victims of trafficking, are represented and heard as part of the Scottish Youth Parliament's work.

Catriona MacSween,
Head of Guardianship Scotland:

“Our young people are passionate, intelligent and motivated and have experienced a lot of personal challenges and adversity in their lives.

We welcome the opportunity for them to amplify the voices of refugee children in the Scottish Youth Parliament and ensure that issues that are important to them are heard.”

together
United Nations to
Children's Rights

**RIGHTS
DETECTIVES**



One of our young people, Vange attended a parliamentary event as part of the Rights Detectives Project – a group of children aged 11-17 years across Scotland supported by Together and other organisations.

The event held in March celebrated the countdown to incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Scots law and highlighted the crucial involvement of children and young people in the UNCRC (incorporation) (Scotland) Bill receiving Royal Assent and passing into an Act.

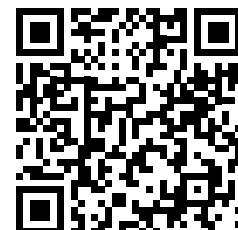
Reflecting on the event **Vange** said:

“Looking to the future, the Scottish Government should continue to involve children and young people in lived experience groups, so they know that the people that inherit the aftermath of their decisions have their say.”

Our People

Our “working together” recruitment advertising was one of our most successful TV campaigns enabling us to recruit significant numbers of new staff.

Scan to watch the video





We were proud to reach number 23 in the **2023 Top 100 Most Inclusive UK Workplaces Index** recognising our commitment to fostering equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

SallyAnn Kelly OBE

expressed her delight saying:

“This award celebrates the remarkable achievements of everyone who has committed themselves to building inclusive cultures ensuring that we have effective workplace approaches towards equality, diversity and inclusion is key to our team feeling valued and more able to support young people and families from many different backgrounds and life experiences.”

Final word



Lindsay*, mum supported by the Aberlour Urgent Assistance Fund

I would like to say a very big thank you for the support you gave us. Like many families we are really struggling to manage the limited budget we have...

Knowing there are people out there supporting and caring for us gives me hope and reduces the level of anxiety and stress experienced when times are hard. The children and I managed to have a happier Christmas knowing that we could heat our home. **Thank you so much again.**







Thanks to all our supporters



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