



Being Brave

For children, young
people and families

Aberlour Strategy 2021 - 2027

aberlour
scotland's children's charity



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Foreword

From Aberlour Board of Trustees

Since 2021, Aberlour has successfully delivered our Being Brave Strategy - a name carefully chosen to reflect the ambitions of the charity. This strategy has been our guiding principle: encouraging us to be Brave for the children and families we support, Brave in speaking truth to power, and Brave in developing a workplace where all staff feel proud to belong. Over the past four years, we are pleased to report that Aberlour has met and exceeded the majority of our Being Brave targets.

Our achievements under this strategy have been significant. Aberlour has grown both in the range and number of support services offered, allowing us to support more children, young people and families than ever before. Financially, the charity has nearly doubled in size. In every sense Being Brave has led to this success, and we see more potential from this strategy. Some targets remain to be fully realised, and our senior team has developed clear, sustainable plans to achieve them.

Looking ahead, we are now refreshing and extending the Being Brave Strategy to ensure

we fully realise its benefits. This strategy will now guide us until 2027, propelling our growth and driving us toward excellence. Revised and ambitious targets have been set for the next two years, designed to increase our impact for children, young people and families.

This period is particularly significant as we prepare to mark and celebrate Aberlour's 150th anniversary in 2025. This milestone provides a moment to reflect on where we have come from while positioning the charity for a secure and thriving future.

In 2025–2026, we will initiate wider consultations for a new strategy to launch in 2027. In the meantime, our focus remains firmly on realising the full potential of Being Brave.



Introduction

“Aberlour needs to keep doing what it is doing and more. Keep it at 110%.”

-Young Person supported by Aberlour

At the heart of Aberlour’s 2021-2025 strategy was our ambition to support children and families earlier. This ambition remains a core aim of the charity as we extend our strategy through to 2027.

Although our values remain the same, we have reviewed our priorities and statements of intent to aim even higher for children and families.

This extended strategy takes stock of our achievements (see page 4) since 2021. We have achieved a lot during a challenging period for third sector providers. Our services have continued to grow and innovate so that they make a difference for children and families everyday.

“Aberlour is doing a great job. If it could do more, it would be to get even more people involved, support more young people and families.”

-Young Person supported by Aberlour

Aberlour's Achievements

April 2021 - April 2024



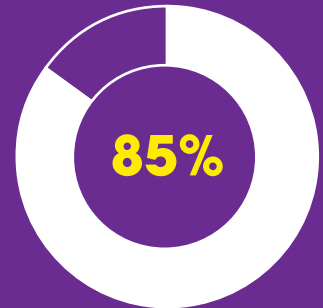
24

new service developments

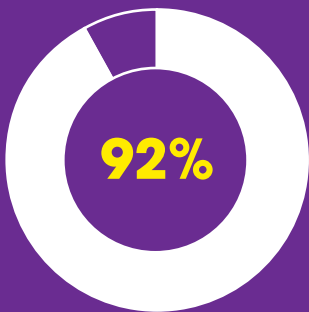


16,841

hours contributed by Aberlour volunteers



of children and young people in Sustain services avoided being taken into care



of services scored GOOD or above by the Care Inspectorate



48%

total income growth



165

young people attended our AbJam participation events



6,558

families supported and provided with

£2,174,004

worth of cash grants through our Urgent Assistance Fund.

Our Vision, Our Values

“Our values inform the way the organisation lives and breathes, how we work with one another and the people we support.”

- SallyAnn Kelly OBE, CEO

Our Vision

Not all children are born with an equal chance. We will work together to beat poverty and discrimination.

Our Values

Aberlour continues to be committed to addressing the effects and prevalence of poverty in our society. We remain concerned about the impact of chronic poverty on generations of families. We will work with others to ensure every child and every family is freed from poverty and can live life to the fullest.

We believe that providing an adequate income to families is the best route out of poverty. We trust that families overwhelmingly will make the right decisions with the money they have. We will work with families that need extra support to ensure that their strengths and skills are respected: by building trusting, compassionate relationships and walking alongside them on their journey.

Our values remain the guiding principles that underpin all we do. They inform our interactions with the children, young people and families we work with, external partners and stakeholders, and importantly, with one another as colleagues. We use them every day and hold key decisions

against them to ensure we live up and work to them. They guide and support us to respond compassionately as an organisation and ensure that the environments we create for our children and young people are loving and safe.

Respect

We care about one another's feelings and opinions. As an organisation that stands up for every child's right to thrive, a culture of respect is inherent in our work.

Integrity

We recognise that to represent the concerns of Scotland's children and families fully, we may have to make difficult decisions. We strive to always act with integrity.

Innovative

We are committed to improving how we help Scotland's most disadvantaged children and families earlier and faster. We know that they are experts in their own lives and can help us become the best possible innovators. We use this expertise to drive our ideas and our thinking.

Challenging

We challenge ourselves to be the best we can be and we listen carefully to children and families about their experiences. Externally, we use our campaigning voice to strengthen policies that promote equal opportunity and equality. We make sure the voices of children and families are heard.



Our Core Priorities

Our refreshed strategy will see us continue to offer support to a diverse range of children and families. We reaffirm our commitment to:

- Supporting children and young people and their families earlier.
- Providing high-quality care and support in our children's houses and our foster care within a loving, homely environment where children and young people have a genuine sense of belonging and connection.
- Supporting children and families affected by disability to live life to the full free of discrimination.
- Offering compassionate support to families affected by domestic abuse and problematic substance use in their efforts to recover from trauma.
- Offering young people support to regain control of their lives through building trusting and respectful relationships with them and their families.
- Drive change and improvement and ensure that key areas of public policy are enshrined in our approach.

Responding to change

The environment we work in is rapidly changing. Some of this is shaped by new opportunities – for example, the opportunity presented by Scotland's commitment to **The Promise** to transform the lives of infants, children, young people, and their families in Scotland.

Some of it is shaped by challenges – including those which are unforeseen. Before COVID-19, around 1 in 4 children in Scotland were living in poverty. Having come through the pandemic and entered a period of economic uncertainty, many more families are at risk of falling or being pushed deeper into poverty. Increasing numbers of families across Scotland are struggling to make ends meet as child poverty rises. We are pleased that ours and other's calls to introduce the Scottish Child Payment has been met, but there is much more to do.

“Our staff do not want to innovate for innovation's sake; they want to pursue change led by children, young people and families.”

- Aberlour Staff Member (Staff Survey)

Our staff have told us they are proud to work for an organisation that speaks truth to power.

Being brave for children, young people and families

To continue to be successful, we must build on our previous strategy. And we must be bold and ambitious. **That is why the cornerstone of our strategy for 2027 – and objectives within it – is a continuing commitment to Being Brave – for children, young people and their families.**

Underpinning everything we do is our ambition to ensure the children we work with have an equal

chance regardless of their start in life. We will work relentlessly to ensure that the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** is fully embedded, is visible across our organisation and obvious in what we do and how we work with children, young people and their families.

Working together

We can only achieve change by working together. Our new strategy recognises that if children and families are to beat poverty and discrimination, we must be fearless in supporting them and working alongside them. They are the experts in their own lives and we respect that.

If something is not working, we must stop, let go and restart. If something is working, we must find ways to amplify and invest in it. And our decisions must always be informed by evidence and experience.



"We will ensure that children's rights are at the heart of all we do. Being bold and brave so that more children and young people have their rights realised."

- SallyAnn Kelly OBE
CEO



"We know our goals cannot be delivered alone and that collaboration is vital."

- Lynne O'Brien,
Chief Officer

Our Statements of Intent

2021-2027

Being Brave

for children, young people and families

Delivered by strong leadership, values and support
for innovation and change



Grow our services to support more children and families earlier.



Reach more diverse communities.



Influence policy and practice by elevating the voices of our children and families.



Be nimble and encourage change and innovation.



Strive to be the best employer we can be - somewhere that people choose to stay.



Ensure that our organisation is sustainable - financially, socially and environmentally - and is focused on children and families.



Achieve digital confidence, maturity and capability for a modern sustainable organisation.



Statement of Intent:

We will grow our services to support more children and families earlier

We will do this by expanding our offer as the key provider of excellent care and support in Scotland, including:

- Extending holistic family support services to ensure that more children and families across Scotland get the help and support they need, when they need it.
- Extending and remodelling our Children's Houses with children, families and key partners to ensure the quality and design of care provides the best possible outcomes.
- Increasing our disability and short breaks services, helping more children and young people with additional and/or complex needs and their families access rights based care, support and planning.
- Developing and co-designing leaving care services to ensure young people continue to access the right help, care and support.
- Continuing to provide dedicated and high quality support for children and young people in foster care as well as their carers.
- Building on the success of our two Mother and Child Recovery Houses. We will expand the model and increase opportunities for women in recovery and their children to get the support they need to stay together.
- Supporting more children and families to thrive, helping them to access help and support on issues such as mental health and wellbeing, education, finances and housing.

Our growth ambitions will be backed by fundraising to support our services to families. We will continue to use our **Urgent Assistance Fund** to deliver vital emergency support to families living in poverty and in desperate need. We will also invest in the development of key strategic and operational partnerships to consolidate our efforts.



"We will continue to grow our services in a sustainable way to meet the needs of more children and families."

- David Grant
Director of Growth and Marketing



Statement of Intent:

We will reach more diverse communities

We know that currently, the children and families we work with are not sufficiently representative of Scotland's population. Our partnership with the **Scottish Refugee Council** will be developed further to help address this.

Through this strategy extension we will continue to work to diversify our organisation by:

- Embedding inclusion for children and families affected by disadvantage and discrimination in all our services.
- Strengthening the diversity of our people by recruiting more staff and volunteers from LGBTQ+, disabled, minority ethnic and disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Deepening our partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council, through delivery of Guardianship Scotland and related Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children support services.
- Ensuring our public campaign activities include a focus on those communities furthest away from support. We will work with the policy team at The Scottish Refugee Council to influence both the Scottish and UK governments to improve support for asylum seeking children and young people



"Learning from the integration support we provide to asylum seeking children and young people will be used to ensure other marginalised groups have a voice and get the support they need."

-Dawn Ward
Director of Children and Families



Statement of Intent:

We will influence policy and practice by elevating the voices of children and families

We want to effect positive change for disadvantaged and marginalised children, young people, and families across Scotland. We will provide platforms that enable them to share first-hand experiences and express their views.

Using this approach, we will continue to influence legislative and policy development nationally and locally. In particular, we will:

- Campaign to end child poverty through maximising incomes of families experiencing financial hardship or living in poverty by influencing change at a local and national level.
- Seek to influence national policy on the development of holistic family support to realise the ambition of **The Promise**, ensuring the inclusion of young people affected by disability.
- Ensure that children with and affected by disability are at the heart of our influencing work.
- Embed the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, ensuring that children and young people's rights are the foundation of what we do.



"We can only ensure change is meaningful and sustainable if children, young people and families are at the heart of Aberlour's influencing and campaigning work."

- Martin Canavan
Head of Policy and Participation



Statement of Intent:

We will be nimble and encourage change and innovation

We know that delivering our objectives will require us to be agile and adaptable. We need a culture that encourages new ideas, celebrates innovation, and fosters learning.

To ensure our systems and processes are aligned to our values, we will:

- Provide choice for our children, young people, and families in the ways we support them, and how they engage with us.
- Create smaller houses with fewer children and excellent standards of care and support for children nearer to their communities.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Mother & Child Recovery House services (Falkirk and Dundee).
- Improve the use of data to benefit our services and inform fundraising.
- Support our staff teams to embrace improvements, innovation and change to allow them to be more adaptable and responsive to children and family needs.



"We have a learning culture that encourages change and innovation in the ways we support children and families."

- Liz Nolan
Director of Children and Families



Statement of Intent:

We will strive to be the best employer that we can be – somewhere people choose to work and stay

Aberlour's people are our biggest asset and our most precious resource. We want to champion employment and volunteering relationships that are transparent, mutually supportive and meaningful.

We will do this by:

- Offering terms and conditions that staff can recognise as being excellent in the care sector.
- Ensuring that Aberlour is a welcoming employer to all sectors of society, including Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups, those affected by disability and those identifying from LGBTQ+ groups.
- Enabling a full range of employee voice and engagement opportunities including staff forums and specific interest groups.
- Delivering training to meet professional development requirements and personal development opportunities.
- Building increased organisational understanding of the impact of adversity, discrimination and trauma.
- Developing plans, policies, and procedures to support a balanced approach to office and home working.
- Supporting our managers to enhance both their management and leadership skills enabling them to support and inspire their teams.
- Reviewing and nurturing our internal talent pool as part of our succession planning.



"Everyone working and volunteering for Aberlour needs to know their contributions matter and make a difference to what we do."

- Allan Kerr
Director of People and Quality



Statement of Intent:

We will ensure that our organisation is sustainable - financially, socially and environmentally - and is focused on children and families

Our financial, social, and environmental health is critical to the organisation's long-term success and our ability to deliver our objectives. To ensure continued sustainability, we will:

Financial Sustainability

- Manage our assets effectively and ethically, forming partnerships that maximise efficiency.
- Manage our free reserves to support options for inward investment in services for children and families across Scotland.
- Balance growth in crisis support with increased development in early intervention activity.
- Grow our brand awareness and understanding among key influencers and the general public.
- Grow our donor base and engage supporters through the lifetime of their giving with Aberlour.
- Attract innovative income sources through our policy engagement and campaigning activity.

Social Sustainability

- Build an efficient operating model, able to take advantage of opportunities, which has people at the heart.
- Make our contribution to the achievement of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**.
- Inspire and grow support for Aberlour and nurture our supporters by building satisfaction, trust and loyalty.

Environmental Sustainability

- Seek advice and set realistic targets for improving our environmental impact.
- We will listen to children's voices about the environment through engagement activities, such as the annual AbJam residential.



"We will utilise our financial resources in a sustainable way, challenging ourselves to take positive risks for children, young people and families."

- John Coe
Director of Finance and Resources



Statement of Intent:

We will achieve digital confidence, maturity and capability for a modern sustainable organisation

We will achieve this by ensuring the children, young people and families as well as our commissioners lead our digital developments. Supporting staff to deliver the highest quality of care possible through data insights and analysis, with the use of technology to help identify service improvement opportunities and organisational efficiencies.

Specifically, we will:

- Ensure all our core systems are secure, efficient and fit for modern purpose.
- Invest in our staff's capability and support our care provision.
- Continue to promote and ensure Aberlour's cybersecurity awareness, capability, and resilience. Despite challenges, we recognise the absolute need to remain vigilant and focused on cyber threats in all we do.
- Invest in our staff's digital capability through high quality inductions and focused ongoing training.

- Remain deeply committed to collecting, managing, and using the data we hold responsibly, while always protecting it and respecting the rights of those it represents.
- Use our systems, skilled staff, and data help us support children by giving them a deeper understanding of their experiences, both now and in the future.

We will develop the **Aberlour Digital Strategy** in early 2025 to guide us over the next three to five years. This process will involve engaging with children, staff, commissioners, and external partners. Together, we will shape our aims, objectives, and plans for delivering the strategy. Through this effort, we will strengthen our long-term digital plans across all aspects of our work.



"We will invest in staff and systems to create sustainable digital services. Using digital tools we will develop business insights that help us make the right decisions for children and families."

- Lawrie McDonald,
Director of Digital and IT



Our Success Measures

Our organisational performance will continue to be monitored against four key measures over the period of the Being Brave Strategy 2021-2027 - quality, impact, sustainability, and growth.

Quality

- We will aim for all registered services to achieve scores of four or above by the Care Inspectorate.
- We will aim to achieve 90% or above in our Aberlour employee satisfaction score.

Sustainability

- We commit to reducing staff turnover by 2% over the period 2025-2027.
- We will aim to maintain public funding at a minimum of £25m.

Impact

- We will aim for 80% of SHANARRI indicators - Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included - to score as either maintaining or improving.

Growth

We will set annual targets to achieve the following by 2027:

- Increase overall revenue by 60%.
- Continue to grow and diversify our residential care placements.
- Increase support for women in recovery and their children. We aim to reach a capacity of 12 placements by 2027.
- Grow the percentage of individuals supported by our early intervention services by 25%.



“Aberlour’s core purpose is supporting children, young people and their families compassionately and respectfully - working with them to change their lives. Our dedicated staff provide a wealth of support across Scotland every day. Service provision is not an end in itself - it is how we provide relationship-based support and drive social change.

This strategy is about how we continue to support and work alongside children and families to make sure their voices are elevated and listened to. It describes our ambition to be better at what we do - to learn, adapt and innovate. It also sets out our goals. These goals will stretch us - that’s what ‘Being Brave’ means. It is not simply a slogan. It is a commitment to challenge ourselves, to challenge others - and to be challenged by the children, young people and families we support.”

-SallyAnn Kelly OBE and David Robb
Chief Executive and Chair of the Board of Trustees



Aberlour Children's Charity

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