

# CHILDHOOD MATTERS

Creating a brighter future for Scotland's children.



**CHILDREN FIRST  
SUPPORT LINE,  
WE'RE HERE FOR YOU**

Scotland's National Children's Charity  
September 2025

**CHILDREN  
FIRST** Protecting  
Scotland's  
Children

# ARE YOU BRAVE ENOUGH?

Are you ready to swap your comfort zone for a harness, a helmet, and an unforgettable view?

**SIGN UP  
TODAY!**



This is your chance to abseil from the top of the Port of Leith Distillery – the tallest distillery in the world – all while raising vital funds for Children First. Whether you're an adrenaline lover or a first-time thrill-seeker, this is your moment to support Scotland's children. Sign up today and join us on **Sunday 10 May 2026**.



**childrenfirst.org.uk | 0345 10 80 111**



## WELCOME

### Dear friends and supporters

A warm welcome to the latest edition of Childhood Matters.

For over 140 years Children First has been trusted by thousands of parents and carers to help keep babies, children and young people safe and well.

Every year our incredible support line team puts millions of pounds back into the pockets of families by helping them claim the benefits and entitlements they are due.

But bringing up children is tougher than it's ever been. Our support line offers a lifeline for families who desperately need help, but we recently discovered 85 percent of parents don't know where to turn for advice.

We want every parent and carer in Scotland to know our support line is here for them and for anyone who is worried about a child.

You can read more about the Children First support line over the page and a moving story about how our team made a huge impact on the lives of one kinship carer family on page 6.

In other news, we have recently launched the 48th Banchory Bangle draw, a unique opportunity to win a magical piece of Scottish treasure by acclaimed designer Malcolm Appleby, while supporting Children First.

Find out more on page 12 and make sure you get your ticket!

We can't thank you enough for your support. Without it, we wouldn't be able to continue our vital work to protect Scotland's children.

**Mary Glasgow**  
Children First Chief Executive



# CHILDREN FIRST SUPPORT LINE IS HERE TO HELP

In June we revealed that a staggering 85% of parents in Scotland feel they have nowhere to turn when bringing up children becomes tough.

Every day our support line team hears from parents and carers across Scotland that raising their babies, children and teenagers is harder than ever.

We are encouraging parents and carers to get in touch with Children First's free support line and webchat service which provides emotional, practical and financial help for families.

Almost nine out of ten parents don't know where to turn for support.

**1 IN 4** children are living in poverty in Scotland.

"I don't think I'd still be here if it wasn't for Children First's support line."

Lauren



At Children First we understand that all stages of growing up bring their own unique challenges. From worries about baby milestones and toddler tantrums to concerns about social media, bullying, exam stress or mental health we are here for parents and carers, whatever their concern about their child.

Lauren, mum to Jack, has been calling support line regularly for the past few years. She said:

*"I don't think I'd still be here if it wasn't for Children First's support line. Their support has been outstanding through the hardest times for us as a family."*

*"When things are tough, I can always turn to them. They give a different perspective on things and have helped me be a calmer parent. My son and I have a stronger relationship thanks to their support."*

Our support line is also available to anyone concerned that a child in their community may be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Around **100 REFERRALS** a day are made to child and adolescent mental health services.



**9,400** people were helped by support line in 2024.

If you are a parent or carer that needs someone to listen, or you have a feeling that something isn't quite right and are worried about a child, call our support line on **08000 28 22 33** or start a webchat at [childrenfirst.org.uk](https://www.childrenfirst.org.uk).



# WEIGHT LIFTED OFF GRANDAD'S SHOULDERS

thanks to Children First  
support line

Tony\*, who is in his 50s, became a kinship carer for his granddaughter Cara after she was born, because her mum has serious mental health issues that prevent her from being able to care for her.

Cara is now two years old. Tony had been struggling to make ends meet and give Cara everything she needed because he was not getting the benefits he was entitled to.

Tony had tried applying for child benefit four times but had not been successful owing to an administrative error.

Louise, one of Children First's support line financial wellbeing experts was able to help Tony get his benefits sorted and the payments backdated.

Tony also had debts he was paying off. He had been advised he owed HMRC tax credits and had been paying these back through his universal credit.

Louise looked into it and on discovering Tony had gone bankrupt in 2016 realised that this debt should have been written off. Tony tried to get this corrected without any success. Thanks to help from Louise, the debt has now been written off and the payments Tony made have been refunded.

Tony said: *"If it had not been for Louise making sense of the issues I don't know where I'd be now. She has helped me so much and I feel without Children First support line's help I would still be fighting for what was due to my granddaughter."*

*"It was only when Louise got involved that things started to get better. I feel like a massive weight has been lifted off my shoulders, it's such a relief."*

*"I can now focus on quality time with Cara who is such a joy, without the money worries I had before. I don't need to worry about struggling to buy the essentials that Cara needs and paying the bills anymore."*

## Kinship Care Advice Service:

Children First is now providing the National Kinship Care Advice Service for Scotland. Any kinship carer who needs support can call Children First to access individual support for children and young people, family support, group-based peer support and financial wellbeing advice including managing debt, energy bills and benefits.

The charity has been providing support to kinship families like Tony and Cara for over 30 years across Scotland and is a trusted provider of kinship care support services.

Call **08000 28 22 33** today if you need support or visit **childrenfirst.org.uk**

\* Names have been anonymised to protect the identity of the family.





# FUNDRAISING SUPERSTAR

## Brave youngster with fear of heights abseils down the world's tallest vertical distillery

Fourteen-year-old Jessica Wallace from Livingston faced her fear of heights in May to fundraise for Children First after they supported her family through a difficult time.

The brave teen raised more than £700 in vital funds to protect Scotland's children by taking on her biggest charity challenge yet – abseiling more than 100ft down the Port of Leith Distillery.

Children First worked alongside Jessica's family when her nephew, Lucas, now nine, was placed into the care of Jessica's mum Alexandra when he was just 18 months old because his mum could no longer look after him.

When Lucas was born, he faced serious health challenges and needed a lot of care and support. As he's grown, his learning disabilities have continued to shape his journey and the kind of support he needs to help him thrive.

Kinship carer Alexandra said: *"We were faced with everything we could possibly be faced with. It was just so difficult for the family."*

*"The Children First West Lothian team visited us and they were just brilliant. They just came in, non-judgmental and asked 'What can I do to help you? What have you got, what do you need?'"*

*"Our worker helped us get a little cot bed for*

*Lucas which to this day he still talks about fondly. Children First were there as emotional support for me because I was absolutely traumatised."*

Lucas has been in the care of his wider family since then and Alexandra says they are now "ticking along."

She added: *"Jessica and I feel that it's our turn to pay back and add to the funds needed daily by the charity to help other children and families."*

*"When I saw the abseil challenge I thought - That's something Jessica could do."*



At first, Jessica was apprehensive, but when she heard more about it, she was determined to raise money and started asking for sponsorship.

Alexandra said: *"I am so proud of Jessica for overcoming her fears and completing the abseil, the weather was a bit windy, so it added to the tension. Jessica did so well and is a true star in my eyes."*

Jessica said: *"I am so grateful that I did it for an amazing charity, but I might wait a while before I do it again!"*

We can't thank Jessica enough for her incredible fundraising efforts.

If you are inspired by Jessica's story, check out our upcoming fundraising events below.

## GET INVOLVED

### Dates for your diary

#### Springfield Charity Golf Day

(Linlithgow Golf Club)

Saturday 4 October.

#### Social Media Stop-tober

A digital detox throughout October.

#### Port of Leith Distillery Abseil

Sunday 10 May 2026.

#### Edinburgh Marathon Festival 2026

Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 May.

Visit our website to find out about some of the exciting running challenges we have coming up!

**READY TO SIGN UP?**



Scan here to learn more or visit [childrenfirst.org.uk/fundraise](https://childrenfirst.org.uk/fundraise)

# SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S ONLINE HARM ADVICE

## to professionals goes global



New animations for social workers, teachers and police created by young people and Children First have been shared with audiences in America and Europe to inform international practice.

The animations were created by Erin and Jamie Leigh, two young people who have both been personally affected by online harm, with support from Children First. The series of animations were developed in response to Children First research showing that children in Scotland feel that professionals don't know how to respond to online harm.

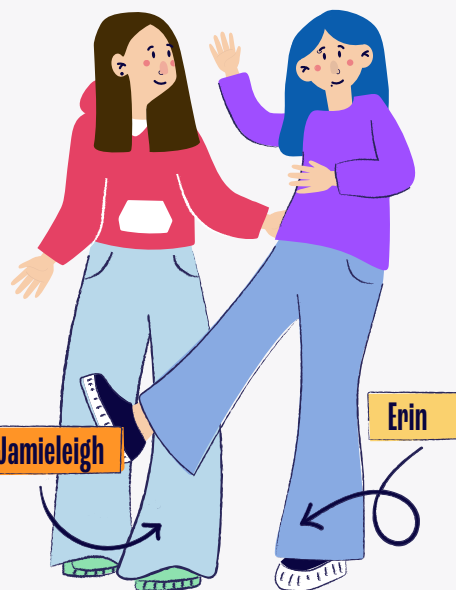
"We hope these animations will help professionals understand how to respond and the impact that online harm has on children's mental health."

Jamie Leigh

Mary Glasgow, chief executive of Children First said: *"The children we spoke to during the research talked about a range of issues from how intimidating it can feel to talk to a police officer to how stressful it can be to be pulled out of lessons without notice and with your class watching you."*

*"We are very grateful to Erin and Jamie Leigh for sharing their experiences to help other children, not just in Scotland but across the world. We hope that professionals will find the animations a useful resource for considering how to better support children and young people and share them far and wide."*

In addition to the animations for police, teachers and social workers, Jamie Leigh and Erin have also created an animation to help parents and carers understand how they can keep children safe online.



"It's clear that what children who have been harmed online want most is for professionals to build an understanding and trusting relationship with them."

Mary Glasgow

In the animation they share, *"When we report an issue, please take it seriously and respond to it in a timely manner."*

The full series of animations can be viewed at [www.childrenfirst.org.uk](http://www.childrenfirst.org.uk)



79%

of young people in Scotland are moderately to extremely worried about seeing harmful online content.



If you are worried about keeping your child safe online, call Children First support line on **08000 28 22 33**



# THE 48TH CHILDREN FIRST BANCHORY BANGLE

## The eagerly-awaited 48th draw for the Children First Banchory Bangle, titled 'Bunnies and Brambles', is now live!



Designed by renowned jeweller Malcolm Appleby, the stunning hand-engraved bangle is inspired by the vibrancy and beauty of nature, with bunnies and brambles symbolising renewal, growth and hope.

With tickets available for a suggested donation of £1 each, this year's Banchory Bangle is a stunning Scottish treasure that comes in three variations - gold-plated, silver and bronze - giving everyone a chance to win an exceptional piece of Malcolm's artistry while helping protect Scotland's children.

Each year, the draw is run by the Children First Deeside Committee. Over the last 48 years it has raised more than £200,000.

Mary Glasgow, chief executive of Children First, said: *"Malcolm Appleby's Banchory Bangle is a unique piece of Scottish treasure and this year's design is stunning. We can't thank Malcolm and the Deeside Committee enough for their tremendous support over so many years."*

Last year's winner Claire Hepburn told of her 'absolute shock' to win the bangle after taking part in the annual draw for many years. She said:

*"It was an absolute shock. You never think you might win this, so it was absolutely wonderful."*

*"I have visited Malcolm's workshop and I have another bangle from him, so this was just the icing on the cake. It's such a good feeling knowing you are giving donations to a worthy cause."*

*"Everyone's a winner! Even if you don't win the bangle you are helping to create a better world for children in Scotland and a better society for our future."*

*Dr Malcolm Appleby MBE FRSE*

Sign up today! Visit  
[childrenfirst.org.uk  
/bangle25](https://childrenfirst.org.uk/bangle25)





# Their future can be your legacy

Every child in Scotland deserves a safe childhood. To have hopes and dreams, to know happiness and freedom, to believe in a brighter future. With a gift in your Will, you can keep them safe and give them the opportunities they deserve. You can put children first.

**Leave a gift in your will at [childrenfirst.org.uk/legacy](https://childrenfirst.org.uk/legacy)**

Children First, Registered Scottish Charity Number: SC 016092

**LEAVE A GIFT  
IN YOUR WILL**



Please donate today and help protect a child.

☎ 0345 10 80 111 (Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm)

🌐 [childrenfirst.org.uk/donate](https://childrenfirst.org.uk/donate)

✉ **FREEPOST** RSGE-ZGBB-EKCJ, Children First, 83 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh, EH9 1AT



## 1. YOUR DETAILS

Make a donation at [childrenfirst.org.uk/donate](https://childrenfirst.org.uk/donate). Alternatively please fill in the form and send to: Freepost Plus RSGE-ZGBB-EKCJ, Children First, Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh, EH9 1AT

Title:	First name:	Surname:
Address:		
		Postcode:

By providing us with your telephone number and email address you are consenting to us contacting you via phone, text and email.

Email:	
Mobile:	Telephone:

## 2. I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A REGULAR MONTHLY DONATION



Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by direct debit.  
Please pay Children First a monthly donation of:

For Children First use only

Originator's ID no.: 6 0 1 2 4 0

<input type="checkbox"/> £5	<input type="checkbox"/> £8	<input type="checkbox"/> £12	<input type="checkbox"/> Other £
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☐ 3rd ☐ 15th of the month

Name(s) of account holder(s):											
Account no.:						Sort code:					
Name and address of your bank/building society:											
						Postcode:					
Account holder signature:						Date: DD / MM / YY					

**Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by direct debit:** Please pay Children First direct debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the direct debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Children First and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

**Remember to Gift Aid it.**

Make your donation worth 25% more at no cost to you.



### 3. I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION

<input type="checkbox"/> £25	<input type="checkbox"/> £50	<input type="checkbox"/> £100	<input type="checkbox"/> Other £ _____
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☐ I enclose my cheque/CAF voucher  
made payable to 'Children First'

OR

☐ Please debit my Mastercard / Visa Debit  
/ Visa Credit / Charity card

Card number:																	
Expiry:	M	M	/	Y	Y	Security code				C	V	V					
Date	D	D	/	M	M	/	Y	Y									
Signature:																	

### 4. DON'T FORGET TO TURN EVERY £1 YOU DONATE INTO £1.25 *giftaid it*

- ☐ I want to Gift Aid any donations I make in the future or have made in the past four years to Children First. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations, it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.
- ☐ I am not currently able to Gift Aid my donations.

Date:	D	D	/	M	M	/	Y	Y
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### 5. KEEPING IN TOUCH

We would like to keep in touch with you and provide you with updates on our vital work keeping children safe and how you can support us. We will contact you by post unless you tell us otherwise. We promise to respect your privacy and keep your details safe. You can update your preferences by phoning **0345 10 80 111** (Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm) or emailing **[fundraising@childrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@childrenfirst.org.uk)**. For further details on how your data is used and stored, please see our privacy policy at **[childrenfirst.org.uk/privacy](http://childrenfirst.org.uk/privacy)**.

**CHILDREN  
FIRST** Protecting  
Scotland's  
Children



## Worried about a child?

Our support line is here to help.  
Call free on **08000 28 22 33**  
or visit **[childrenfirst.org.uk](http://childrenfirst.org.uk)**

Please donate today and help protect a child.

 **0345 10 80 111** (Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm)

 **[childrenfirst.org.uk/donate](http://childrenfirst.org.uk/donate)**

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