

CHILDHOOD MATTERS

Together, we can protect Scotland's children.



**SCOTLAND
FACES
CHILDHOOD
EMERGENCY**

Scotland's National Children's Charity
January 2025

**CHILDREN
FIRST** Protecting
Scotland's
Children



WELCOME

Dear friends and supporters

Happy new year and welcome to Childhood Matters, our new look Supporter News. The name of your newsletter may have changed but our need for your support to help protect all Scotland's children is as urgent as ever.

We have recently refreshed our brand as part of our determination to be bolder and braver for children.

This coincided with us declaring a childhood emergency in Scotland after our research found most adults believe growing up in our country is worse than ever before.

When we think of the unprecedented challenges children are facing today, this comes as no surprise. Abuse, trauma, neglect, poverty and online harm are robbing many of their childhood years. This needs to stop.

At Children First we stand up for every child because all children should have a safe childhood.

We believe all children should have hopes, dreams and opportunities. Their future is Scotland's future.

That's why we work closely with children and families to understand their challenges and give them the support they need for as long as it takes.

We can't do that without you. Thank you so much for your vital support. Together, we can make the future safer and brighter for every child.

Mary Glasgow
Children First Chief Executive

Children First Stirling Action Group

We would like to apologise for the omission of the Stirling Action Group from the spotlight article in our last newsletter. Thank you to this amazing group who have raised thousands of pounds for Children First since 1995.

**CHILDREN
FIRST** Protecting
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Children

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



childrenfirst.org.uk/legacy



CHILDHOOD EMERGENCY

Children First declares “childhood emergency” in Scotland

New research has revealed most adults in Scotland believe growing up here is worse than ever before.

We declared a “childhood emergency” in Scotland on the back of this research and are calling for urgent action to address neglect, abuse, poverty and a mental health crisis made worse by online harm.

Mary Glasgow, Children First chief executive, explained; “We have declared a childhood emergency in Scotland. The fact that almost two-thirds of people we surveyed believe

growing up in our country is worse than ever should act as a horrifying wake-up call to everyone. We must put children first.

“Sadly, childhood is getting shorter in the fast-paced and dangerous world we now live in. More than a third of sexual crimes recorded by Police Scotland are against children. And, one in four children still live in poverty. As a society we are failing children.”

CHILDHOOD TODAY

Survey conducted by ScotPulse of 1,276 adults in Scotland (September 2024)

80%+

Over 80 percent of people were very or extremely worried about the impact of social media and harmful online content on children and young people.

72%

were very or extremely worried about the impact of smartphones.

65%

were very or extremely worried about children and young people’s mental health.

63%

of adults believe childhood is worse now, for children in Scotland, than it was in the past.

Young people shared their concerns with us about being online at a recent workshop. The group revealed worries about cyberbullying, the dark side of social media, the sharing of photos and videos without permission, the use of artificial intelligence, unwanted contact from strangers and being served dangerous and explicit content.

One young person, Chloe*, said:

“It can be really traumatising with what’s going on online. Teenagers can overthink a lot, have a lot of insecurities and can be really anxious.”

At Children First we are here to help children, their families and the people that care for them by offering emotional, practical, and financial support.

** Name changed to protect the identity of the young person quoted.*



*Anyone worried about a child in Scotland can contact our support line by calling **08000 28 22 33** for free or visiting **childrenfirst.org.uk***

A BOLD REFRESHING BRAND

Protecting Scotland's Children



To make life better for all children in Scotland, we need to be bolder and braver. As a charity we need to adapt and evolve to meet the needs of a new generation, which is why we have refreshed the Children First brand.

Children and families need our support now more than ever. Our new brand affirms that we're here to protect all of Scotland's children from harm. We believe our brand will have a positive impact on our ability to help children across Scotland.

As Scotland's national children's charity, we stand up for children, keep them safe and support them to recover from trauma and abuse through our national and local services.

We give children hope and a safer, brighter future. Our new logo includes a lowercase 'i' in the word First as a symbol of a child who is living in an adult's world, and all the pressures and challenges they face as a result.

At Children First our values are at the core of everything we do and serve as a guide for our day-to-day actions and for our long-term decision-making.

We believe that every child should have a safe and happy childhood and have hopes, dreams and opportunities. With your support we can transform children's lives together.



OUR VALUES

With **love**, we put children first.

With **purpose**, we transform children's lives together.

With **strength**, we do whatever it takes to protect Scotland's children.



TESSA'S STORY

Keeping Tessa safe

Children First started supporting Tessa when she was finishing primary school. At that time Tessa's dad had mental health problems and was misusing alcohol to cope. This led to him becoming abusive to the point where the police had to be called on several occasions.

Tessa was not feeling safe at home and was often scared to be there. Her mum was struggling to cope, and she couldn't support Tessa with the fear and anxiety she was feeling. After Tessa shared her worries at school, child protection and social work became involved and referred the family to Children First.

Sharon* from Children First worked with Tessa and her family to help keep them safe, feel calmer and build healthy relationships.

Tessa, who is now in secondary school, said: "Back then I was struggling with my anxiety and panic attacks.

"My attendance at school wasn't great and when I was at school, if something had happened the night before at home I couldn't focus".

"I had a lot of different emotions going on that were making me feel very overwhelmed. I would think about the worst things that might happen. I felt really alone".

After Tessa met Sharon she felt that she had someone to turn to. Tessa could talk to Sharon and share her feelings. Sharon helped Tessa to cope with her anxiety. Tessa said: "If something did happen at home, I knew Sharon would be there when I needed her."

Over time, Tessa's mum and dad decided the best thing for the family would be for them to separate.

Tessa said: "When my dad moved out, I was still panicking about things that might happen. It would be all I would be thinking about when I was on my own.

"He would call me, and I felt like I had to answer and would worry he'd be angry if I didn't pick up. But sometimes when he called, he might have been drinking so I didn't know if it would be a good conversation or a bad conversation. Sharon helped me understand I didn't have to speak to him, and I didn't have to answer the phone.

"Sharon helped me change my mindset. I was taking on worrying about everyone else, but she encouraged me to put myself first.

"Me and Sharon did breathing exercises which helped a lot with my panic attacks and she made me a wee kit with aromatherapy oils that helped too.

"Sharon helped us as a family with our communication. Me and mum understand each other much better now."

"Children First is such an amazing charity and they help people a lot. Everyone should know about them. Having them in my life made me feel so much better."

Reflecting on her future, Tessa added: "I really want to do social work when I'm older. If I can help other people with what I know now I think that would be a great thing to share. I want to be able to help other people feel better and not alone like Children First helped me."

**Names have been anonymised to protect the identity of the young people quoted.*

Your donations help Children First support hundreds of children like Tessa in feeling safe, recovering and enjoying a brighter future.
Donate today: childrenfirst.org.uk/donate





FUNDRAISING SUPERSTARS

April and Jessica conquer Ben Nevis

April Aitken and Jessica Williamson-Donald recently conquered the biggest mountain in the UK to raise vital funds for Children First.

The two girls aged just eight and nine, who attend Lawmuir Primary School in Bellshill, raised more than £1,240, smashing their original target of fundraising £200.

Since the spring, April and Jessica have been climbing Munros named after their schoolhouses after deciding they wanted to raise money for a charity that protects all of Scotland's children.

The girls completed their challenge at the end of September when they hiked all 4,411ft of Ben Nevis.

Their achievement was celebrated with a special presentation at their school assembly.

The two young fundraisers have also reached the summits of three other mountains - Ben Lomond, Ben Vorlich and Schiehallion – battling through all kinds of Scottish weather to achieve their goal.

April said; *“We wanted to raise money for Children First because they are there for children who need help all around Scotland. When we got to the top of Ben Nevis I felt exhausted and tired but really proud.”*

The two adventurers are now setting their sights on bagging all 282 Munros across Scotland.

Jessica said; *“Ben Nevis was hard-going and was so snowy at the top I could slide down! It was busy up there with lots of people. It felt very good when we reached the top. I want to climb all the other Munros in Scotland now.”*

April and Jessica's mums are both extremely proud of their daughters' amazing achievement, their resilience and positive attitude.

April's mum Sara said; *“The girls are superstars. Even when they got tired they never thought of turning around. They were determined to keep going and make sure they raised money for Children First.”*



We cannot thank April and Jessica enough for their fantastic fundraising efforts and we truly admire their determination to reach the top of the biggest mountain in the UK. Every penny they have raised will go towards supporting children and families when they need it most.

GET INVOLVED

Scotland's children urgently need your support. You can help by taking part in a fundraising event or getting together with friends and colleagues to raise funds.

New Year, New Possibilities: Fundraise for Children First in 2025!

Kick off the New Year with purpose and put your passion into action. Whether it's organising your own Munro challenge, hosting a quiz night, bake sale, or maybe even giving something up for a month, set yourself the challenge and our fundraising team will be on hand to support you. Together, let's make 2025 the year we put all children first.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Supernova Kelpies 5k
14 and 15 March

Glasgow Kiltwalk
26 and 27 April

Edinburgh Marathon Festival
24 and 25 May

Aberdeen Kiltwalk
1 June

READY TO SIGN UP?



Scan here to learn more or visit childrenfirst.org.uk/fundraise



CHILDREN FIRST SUPPORT LINE

Here for families when they need it most

At Children First we can only fulfil our purpose of protecting all Scotland's children if people are aware of how we help children and families in Scotland.

Linda Jardine, Children First director of children and family services said: "To help us reach a wider audience and be there for anyone worried about a child in Scotland, we are bringing together our Parentline and financial wellbeing teams to become one holistic service and promoting it as the Children First support line.

"From mental health, money worries and online harm, to struggles at school, the Children First support line offers emotional, practical and financial support to any family in Scotland.

"There is no such thing as a perfect family and whatever challenges a family faces, we can help and won't judge."

The support line also offers help to any adult who is concerned about a child's wellbeing, supporting them to do what is best for the child. Children First's priority is to protect children and help families get the support they need.

One support line caller told us; *"Your support over the most difficult year of my life was a lifeline to me. You listen when I need you to, you offer words of support and encouragement and ideas of tackling situations when I felt there was no way out. I will never forget that."*

CHARITY OF THE YEAR

Could we be your new charity for 2025?

As we welcome a new year, many workplaces will be choosing a new charity of the year. Could Children First be yours?

Last year we had incredible support from workplaces across Scotland, including Kennedys Law. Our grateful thanks go to everyone at the firm who took part in a 5k, abseiled the Falkirk Wheel or pounded the streets in a step challenge during 2024 to raise vital funds for Children First.

With Scotland facing a national childhood emergency, we need your charity of the year nominations to help all children to have a safe and happy childhood.

If chosen as your charity of the year we'll work together to create a calendar of exciting opportunities including challenge events, volunteering opportunities and pop-up events with our staff to keep you engaged. Together we can keep children safe and give them a brighter future.

Mary Glasgow, chief executive of Children First said; *"Every penny our amazing supporters raise goes towards our work to support children and families when they need it most and to give them hope for a brighter future."*



**CHILDREN
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Scotland's
Children



**SCOTLAND, WE MUST
PUT CHILDREN FIRST**

Now more than ever, Scotland's children need your support. Poverty, abuse, neglect and trauma are robbing many of their childhood years, and many more are experiencing a mental health crisis made worse by online harm. This needs to stop. Their future is in our hands. Let's make it bright for every child.

Donate today at childrenfirst.org.uk

Children First, Registered Scottish Charity Number: SC 016092



Please donate today and help protect a child.



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

🌐 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. 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:	D	D	/	M	M	/	Y	Y		

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

 £25 £50 £100 Other £_____ 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

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

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. For further details on how your data is used and stored, please see our privacy policy at childrenfirst.org.uk/privacy.

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Worried about a child?

Our support line is here to help.
Call free on **08000 28 22 33**
or visit childrenfirst.org.uk

Please donate today and help protect a child.

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

🌐 childrenfirst.org.uk/donate

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