

CHILDHOOD MATTERS

Creating a brighter future for Scotland's children.



Scotland's National Children's Charity
June 2025

CHILDREN
FIRST Protecting
Scotland's
Children

Walk with us at the Edinburgh Kiltwalk



14 SEPTEMBER 2025

Help protect Scotland's children.

From the Wee Wander to the Mighty Stride there is a walk for everyone. Find out more and sign up now.



WELCOME

Dear friends and supporters

Last year marked our 140th year as Scotland's national children's charity. As I reflect on the difference we made in 2024, I'm so proud of the life-changing impact our dedicated teams have made.

We protected thousands of children from harm, kept them safe, and supported them to recover from trauma and abuse through our national support line and in their homes, schools and communities across Scotland.

As we look ahead, we see the country is in the grip of a childhood emergency. That's why our commitment to standing up for every child is stronger than ever. Because we know we're needed more than ever.

Like you, we passionately believe all children should have a safe childhood. Every baby, child and young person should have hopes, dreams and opportunities.

That's only possible with help from you and every single person who supports us.

I'm excited – and a bit nervous – to be climbing the magnificent Kelpies on 7 June in aid of Children First. It's definitely going to be memorable!

If you feel inspired to take on a challenge to fundraise for Children First visit www.childrenfirst.org.uk to check out our upcoming events.

Together we can protect all Scotland's children and create a brighter future for the next generation. Thank you for your support.

Mary Glasgow
Children First Chief Executive

MAKING THE FUTURE BRIGHTER

For Scotland's children

In the spring we published a new report showing the positive impact we made in 2024 on the lives of thousands of children and families across the country.

Through our dedicated teams across Scotland, we worked alongside more than 8,600 children and over 8,800 parents and carers in local communities and through our national support line to give them hope for a brighter future.

2/3

of the families we supported were worried about their child's emotional wellbeing.

25%

We supported 25% more children to recover from trauma.

SUPPORT LINE

From advice on mental health, money worries and online harm, to struggles at school, Children First's support line gave expert advice to more than 9,400 people in 2024. That's more than 2,500 families.

More than 1,000 of those families received financial wellbeing support and advice from the support line team. In 2024 the team put close to £2.5 million in benefits back in family's pockets and helped make more than half a million pounds in debts manageable.

We helped put

**£2.5
MILLION**

into families' pockets.



Download our 2024 Impact Report at www.childrenfirst.org.uk

Here's what children and their families told us:



"Thank you so much for all your help. It kick-started us on a better path with each other."

Sarah, mum, Aberdeen.

"Home and school feel like a big thumbs up."

Alfie, young person, East Lothian.

"Things have really improved at home, and we are really looking forward to getting more help with talking about our emotions together."

Elaine and son Callum, Renfrewshire.

"You are the only ones who consistently connect back in with my family and are there at every turn."

Lewis, dad, East Ayrshire.

CHILD MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS



In April we warned that children trapped in a mental health crisis with nowhere to turn must not become the “new normal”. We launched an urgent appeal for support to address the growing mental health crisis engulfing children and young people across the country.

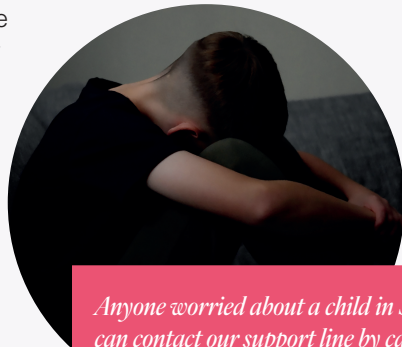
Figures from our impact report showed more than two thirds of people who contacted our national support line in 2024 were worried about a child’s emotional wellbeing.

A recent survey we commissioned showed a staggering 92% of children and young people aged between 11 and 25 in Scotland were worried about mental health.

The same survey showed only one in four children believed childhood is better now than when their parents were young.

These startling statistics came after we found 100 referrals a day were being made to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services across Scotland last year.

Children First is here for children when they need it most. Children like Orla.



*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***

ORLA’S STORY

Orla* was only 14 when she tried to end her life. Frightened and overwhelmed, she struggled to cope with being relentlessly bullied and the loss of her grandfather who had recently passed away.

Too young to understand her emotions and increasingly depressed, Orla would self-harm and lash out at her mum as she tried to make sense of a world that felt like it was crumbling around her.

In a desperate plea for help, Orla’s mum called the Children First support line. An expert adviser listened and together they created a plan to support Orla’s mental health. In time, Orla and her mum’s relationship improved.

When Orla was distressed and felt sad, her mum was able to reassure her that she was loved and not alone. Home started to feel calmer and safe.

Orla began attending sessions with Jess*, a Children First support worker, someone she could trust and confide in. Jess helped Orla understand and manage her feelings. Alongside receiving support from a mental health professional, Jess supported Orla to feel less anxious and worried.

Although Orla still has her struggles, she now feels more positive about the future thanks to Children First. This wouldn’t be possible without your continued support. Thank you.

Orla’s mum said:

“I honestly don’t know what I’d do without the support line.”

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



HOW YOU MAKE AN IMPACT

Inspirational Eric climbs Mount Kilimanjaro



An inspirational academic has raised more than £1,700 for Children First by conquering Africa's tallest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro.

Motivated by his upcoming 50th birthday, Dr Eric Baumgartner from the University of the West of Scotland was inspired to take on the epic challenge of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro for Children First after reading an interview with chief executive Mary Glasgow last year.

Mary's interview ignited a spark in Eric and compelled him to take on the challenge to support the cause of protecting Scotland's children.

Eric's commitment to Children First stemmed from his own experience as a teenager. He spent some time in a children's home in Germany, which left a lasting impact on him.

After a rigorous training regime, the gruelling climb up Kilimanjaro took around eight days, in all kinds of weather. During the climb, Eric had time to reflect on his life's journey so far, thinking about the metaphorical mountains he had overcome and the parallels between his physical climb and the challenges faced by children who suffer from abuse.

Reflecting on his journey, Eric said:

"Getting to the summit was amazing and people say: 'well done' and you think 'Wow, I really did this. I don't think the mountains that children who suffer from abuse have

to climb really end. That continues whether you are five, twenty or fifty. There was something metaphorical about my own journey. You climb on your own. There are support services out there, but the journey you have to do yourself."

We were there to support Eric every step of the way. Eric said:

"Children First reaching out and the support was great, whether that was the endorsement on LinkedIn or sending the t-shirt. I never had any contact with Children First before so for you to reach out was really great and I didn't expect it at all."

Congratulating Eric on his momentous achievement, Michelle Supple, director of fundraising, marketing and communications at Children First said:

"Everyone at Children First is amazed by Eric's dedication and determination. It is an extraordinary accomplishment and he is an inspiration to us all. Children in Scotland are facing a childhood emergency and Eric's fundraising efforts will help us protect children and keep them safe."

If you feel inspired to take on a challenge to fundraise for Children First visit **www.childrenfirst.org.uk** to check out our upcoming events.





TRANSFORMING LIVES

“Being a family again means everything.”

Things were so tough at home for the Christie family* that Sian, the eldest daughter had moved out to live with her gran.

“Working with Children First has changed our lives completely. The children have their mum back.”

Sian’s family had a history of drug use that had led to the death of close family members. Her Mum, Clare, had struggled with her mental health for years and was

using drugs because she was struggling to cope.

For Sian and her two brothers, Finn and Alfie, this meant their mum couldn’t be there for them.

Clare and their dad Simon were arguing a lot. All the children were feeling the impact of what was going on at home on their emotional wellbeing.

Finn and Alfie were both struggling to concentrate at school and Finn had run away from home several times.

Children First believes that when families do well, children do well. One of the services offered by Children First in Clare’s local

area is a peer support group for families struggling with addiction.

When it was agreed that for Alfie and Finn’s safety it was best they stayed with their dad, Clare decided she needed to get help. Clare shared:

“It was then that I realised I had hit rock-bottom. I needed to make a change. That’s when I contacted Children First through one of their peer support groups.

“I said to Laura at Children First - I don’t know how to parent any more. She helped me learn how again. But first of all, I knew I needed to stop self-medicating with drugs. Laura saved my life. She supported me to get the help I needed from the GP with my mental health.

“I was a shouty parent but I’m not now. I’ve learnt how to control my emotions and the way I respond and to be there for my kids.”

Clare’s project worker Laura provided ongoing support to Clare to become more emotionally responsive as a parent and to keep her children safe while she stopped using drugs.

Laura also worked with Clare and Simon to improve how they co-parented and to understand the impact their arguments had on the children. A Children First peer support worker who had lived experience of addiction also provided vital support to Clare.

Laura worked one on one with Alfie and Finn and with the whole family to ensure the boys’ voices were heard by their mum and

dad, so they could understand how unsafe the situation at home had made them feel. Clare said:

“Working with Children First has changed our lives completely. The children have their mum back.”

“Sian is now back living with us too and on her way to college. My sons are both doing well at school. Being a family again means everything.”

*Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the family.

“Sian is now back living with us too and on her way to college. My sons are both doing well at school. Being a family again means everything.”

SUPPORT LINE
08000 28 22 33
childrenfirst.org.uk



THEIR FUTURE, YOUR LEGACY.

Leave a gift in your Will and give the gift of childhood.

Every child deserves a safe childhood. To know happiness and freedom, care and confidence. To have hopes, dreams, and opportunities. To believe in a brighter future, free from the poverty that one in four children across Scotland currently live in. Free from the abuse, neglect and trauma that is robbing many of their childhood years. And, free from the mental health crisis our children are experiencing.

By leaving a gift in your Will to Children First, you can help us to protect children from harm, keep them safe, and support them to recover from trauma and abuse

through our national support line and in their homes, schools and communities across Scotland. Together, we can help children who are worried, scared and distressed. We can support children to believe they will survive and feel safe again.

Leaving a gift in your Will is easy. All you need to do is give your solicitor our name, address, and registered charity number.

With a gift in your Will, you can put children first. Their future can be your legacy. A gift for generations.

To request your free legacy guide visit childrenfirst.org.uk/legacy

SOCIAL MEDIA STOP-TOBER

Join the Social Media Stop-tober digital detox challenge!

READY TO
SIGN UP?

This October, take a break that makes a difference. Sign up to Social Media Stop-tober and give up social media every day in October to protect Scotland's children. If a month feels too long, simply cut down - you decide.

Do you have what it takes?

Can you free yourself from Facebook, escape from X, isolate yourself from Instagram? Whatever your favourite platform, do you have the willpower to ditch it?

We know the negative impact social media can have on our mental health. With our heads looking down we are missing out on so much. Let's hit pause, be more present and make every scroll skipped count.

Cut your screen time by half, take weekends offline or go cold turkey for the whole month! Spread the word and ask friends and family to sponsor you. It is your challenge, your way.

Why give up social media?

We wanted to create a challenge that would really test people! This is not an easy task and we know how difficult it will be.

Sadly, our research tells us that children and young people see dangerous and explicit online content as the number one threat they face today. A staggering 79 percent of young people

in Scotland said they are worried about seeing harmful online content and 78 percent are anxious about the impact of social media. Smartphone usage was also a top concern.

If we are honest, most of us are addicted to our phones. We want children to experience a childhood free from the dangers of online harm. Children can't protect themselves. Everybody needs to help keep them safe.

Together, we can increase awareness of the harmful impact social media can have on children and raise funds so we can help children to recover from online harm.

Sign up today! Visit
childrenfirst.org.uk/stoptober

We understand how overwhelming online dangers can feel for parents and carers and we are here to help. Anyone who is worried about a child can contact our support line for advice.

SUPPORT LINE
08000 28 22 33
childrenfirst.org.uk



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

**DONATE
NOW**



Please donate today and help protect a child.

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

🌐 childrenfirst.org.uk/donate



✉️ **FREEPOST** RSGE-ZGGB-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-ZGGB-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 £_____
<input type="checkbox"/> 3rd <input type="checkbox"/> 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

<input type="checkbox"/> £25	<input type="checkbox"/> £50	<input type="checkbox"/> £100	<input type="checkbox"/> Other £_____
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<input type="checkbox"/> I enclose my cheque/CAF voucher made payable to 'Children First'	OR	<input type="checkbox"/> Please debit my Mastercard / Visa Debit / Visa Credit / Charity card
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Card number:																	
Expiry:	M	M	/	Y	Y												
Signature:																	

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

<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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**. For further details on how your data is used and stored, please see our privacy policy at **childrenfirst.org.uk/privacy**.



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

FREEPOST RSGE-ZGGB-EKCJ, Children First, 83 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh, EH9 1AT

