

Supporters' News

AUTUMN/WINTER 2016



Hello,

In this edition you can read about our first ever digital campaign, Create a Smile, which launched in September with the aim of highlighting the unacceptable levels of child abuse in Scotland.



We also recently organised the Justice for Children conference bringing together Scotland's legal profession, child support specialists and thought leaders from Scandinavia. The conference recognised the distress that children in Scotland currently face when going through our legal system and considered how to improve it.

Child poverty has become a growing concern for the Children 1st service team with one in five children in Scotland currently experiencing poverty. For the children we support, growing up in poverty means feeling cold, going hungry and being unable to fully join in with activities. Child poverty not only blights childhoods, it is likely to result in poorer financial prospects, health and wellbeing throughout the course of a person's lifetime. The feature on page 5 explains more about how we are influencing Government policy to reduce the impact of child poverty in the future.

I cannot sign off before saying a huge thank you for your support and to wish every success to those of you who are busy organising events and supporting us throughout the coming months. Through your support Children 1st teams are out there right now supporting children and their families going through difficult times.

Alison Todd,
Chief Executive

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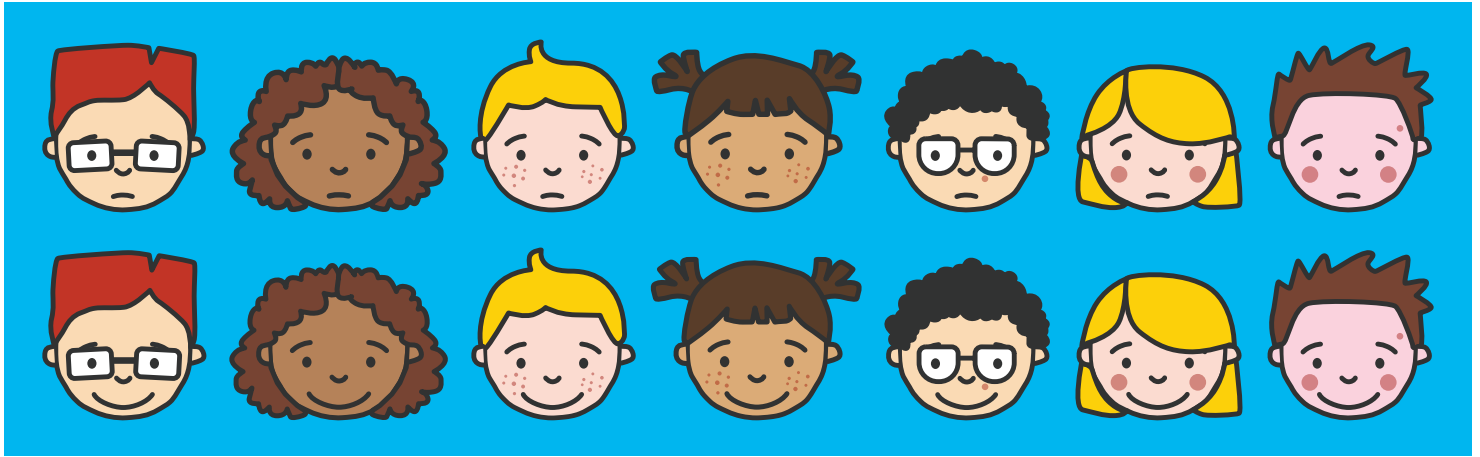
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SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHARITY

Determined each child has reasons to smile





Asking for Scotland's support to strengthen children and families

On September 5, International Day of Charity, we launched our #createasmile campaign: asking Scotland's people to show children that they deserve a life free from abuse and neglect.

If you haven't had a chance to #createasmile it's not too late and we would really appreciate your support. Just go to www.createasmile.org.uk and follow the simple instructions.

We hope that with your help we can create 5,123 smiles - as that is the number of children we know experienced acts of abuse and cruelty in Scotland last year.

We know that thousands of children in Scotland experience abuse and neglect. The reasons are wide and varied and can include: witnessing domestic abuse, living in poverty or directly being physically, sexually or emotionally abused. For many of us this is hard to imagine, but at Children 1st our staff see first-hand the impact on children and their families of

childhood trauma caused by such events.

For children this can manifest itself in them showing signs of distress as they manage their emotions and find it difficult to express how they feel. Often those who are parenting these children are themselves suffering from the impact of their own childhood abuse which has led to anxiety, depression, alcohol, drug misuse and further isolation. Our staff work with children and their families to stem any cycle of abuse, and creating a safe and secure environment to help them express and

understand their feelings.

Many children find it hard to say what is wrong, but through play, drama, art work and conversation we enable them to talk through their fears and anger. In doing so we help prevent their experience from clouding their future.

The best way to protect children is when parents, families and communities work together to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children. That's why we are asking you to #createasmile for Scotland's children and show your support of our work to strengthen Scotland's children and families.



Supporting families at Christmas



My name is Gary and I manage one of Children 1st's supporting families' services for vulnerable

children and families. We know that traditionally Christmas is seen as a happy time for families to enjoy being together but sadly for the families my team and I work with this time of year can be even harder than usual.

In my experience of working with children, their parents and wider family I'm still amazed at the way children can overcome extreme difficulties and the heartfelt desire of parents to do the best for their children. The last few years have seen some of the most drastic changes in recent times with more families forced to use food banks on top of addressing issues like mental health problems, substance

"It's hard to get involved in the lights and jingle when all you have is £25 to live on for the whole week"

misuse or helping parents and children recover from physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

All too often unsupported children go on to be risk-taking adults, with a higher likelihood of poorer health, unemployment and low self-esteem. The support we provide means we can help prevent this for the children we work with.

One family we helped was Mark's (his real name has been changed to protect his identity).

Just days after his fifth birthday, Mark was found wandering around outside on his own wearing soiled clothes and no shoes. He had been living with his dad since his parents separated and had little contact with his mum. He had witnessed things a child should never see: violence, drugs and aggression. He was severely traumatised. We gave his mum emotional and practical support so that he could move and live with her. It wasn't easy and they needed our help to bond again and to manage his difficult behaviour. But he is now safe, happy and thriving at school because he is finally getting the love, care and nurture that he needs. He is finally starting to heal.

Everyone at Children 1st works incredibly hard to make sure that families get as much support as possible. We think that the best way to support most children is to ensure that their family has the resilience, skills and confidence to provide good parenting.

Giving help early, before problems become crises maximises a child's chances in life.

Please donate £25 to support vulnerable children to a safer happier childhood.

Wishing you a peaceful Festive Season

Gary Dewar
Children 1st Service Manager



* Image posed by model

Community engagement

At Children 1st we focus on building strong relationships with the children and families we support, based on understanding, compassion, and respect. During our 132 years' experience as Scotland's National Children's Charity, we've learned that by getting alongside families, showing we care about the whole of their situation and building on their strengths we can help them provide more loving, safer care so their children can thrive. Now, through an exciting new partnership with the International Futures Foundation (IFF) we are taking the same approach into schools using kitbags.

This year we introduced the kitbag to small groups of children in the senior years of primary schools. As the children unroll the bundle of brightly coloured material, tied with ribbon, they spy a variety of objects designed to spark their interest poking out from the inner pockets of the kitbag. Within the pockets they'll find small robin

All of the materials within the kitbag are there to help the children to collectively talk about and understand each others' feelings, to recognise each others' strengths and to promote compassion and self-confidence.

redbreast and a soft wolf – two finger puppets that a child could use to feel more confident, perhaps by whispering their thoughts to the puppets, before voicing them aloud. There's calming lavender oil and a talking stick to help the children in the room remember to listen to the person whose turn it is to talk. There's also a timer, to ensure that everyone gets enough time to speak and two packs of cards. One set suggest short exercises to help calm your mind. The second set show pictures of animals with a single word describing a different attribute: awareness, joy, protection.

All of the materials within the kitbag are



there to help the children to collectively talk about and understand each others' feelings, to recognise each others' strengths and to promote compassion and self-confidence. In sessions where Children 1st have supported children to use the kitbag we've seen children use the cards to recognise another child's courage in having to deal with a difficult situation at home and to recognise how important it was that another child trusted them with a secret.

The children we introduce the kitbag to will build their confidence and self-esteem as they take on the important role of introducing it across the rest of their school. Schools in Glasgow and Fife who have used kitbag report better relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils, improved behaviour and greater engagement in learning across the wider school community. Children are encouraged to take what they learn from kitbag home, which in turn helps to develop stronger understanding and relationships within families.

Many of these outcomes match with the aims of Scottish Government as part of their drive to close the educational attainment gap. But to-date the Government's policy focus has centred on increased testing of pupils and changes to school structures and funding. Through Children 1st's work with the Scottish Government's Education and skills Committee pupils from Cowdenbeath Primary School in Fife met MSP's to highlight the difference that a simple and low cost kitbag programme can make to childrens' learning.

Poverty

Poverty is an increasing and recurring issue for children and families that we support at Children 1st. We are seeing at first hand the impact of benefit sanctions and welfare reform on children and families in Scotland. Parents regularly talk to us about being forced to make choices between their families' fundamental needs such as between heating and eating. It isn't right that families in one of the wealthiest countries in the world are



forced to make this desperate choice, a choice which becomes more detrimental to health and wellbeing in the winter months. Eradicating child poverty is therefore one of Children 1st's most urgent policy priorities.

At the start of the new parliamentary term, together with other members of End Child Poverty Scotland, we wrote to Angela Constance, Cabinet Secretary (Communities, Social Security and Equalities) to outline the need for a Child Poverty Act to ensure a duty on the Scottish Government to eradicate child poverty. Since then, we have seen rapid progress.

In July, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that a Child Poverty Bill would set out a new approach to

CASE STUDY

Margaret* couldn't open her bills because she was too scared of what was inside. Her husband had amassed huge gambling debts and had left her to pick up the pieces on her own. There were days she kept the children off school because she couldn't afford their lunch. She wasn't eating properly and was skipping her own meals because she only had enough to feed the children. The house was cold because there was no money to keep it warm. When anyone asked she pretended everything was okay but her nerves were shattered. They were months behind on bills and Margaret had started to have panic attacks. We helped her and her family get back on their feet. We supported her to access money her family was entitled to and we worked through each bill one by one. Now the children don't miss out on school, the house is warm and they all have enough to eat.

*not her real name

"I want to win the lottery to put food on the table for my family." 11 year old boy

tackling poverty and inequality. In our initial response to the Bill consultation we asked the Government to be bold. At Children 1st we believe that a Child Poverty Act must enshrine a duty, rather than an ambition to eradicate child poverty (as stated in the Bill) and that the Scottish Government and

local authorities must be held accountable for progress. We know that, for families, income maximisation is a crucial lever to getting out of poverty, so we also support the Child Poverty Action Group's call for Scotland to use its new powers to top up child benefit, as the most effective way to boost the income of families living in, or at risk of, poverty.

Over the next few months we will be keeping up the momentum to ensure the Scottish Government use all of the tools at their disposal to lift children out of poverty and prevent more families falling into the poverty trap.

Be a life changer Become a regular giver

Did you know that £2 a month for a year can help provide a therapeutic session for a child who has experienced abuse and trauma. Thank you to everyone already giving this way, it's fantastic to be able to count on your committed support.
www.children1st.org.uk/donate-now



Ambreen Malik: Family Support Volunteer

Hi, my name is Ambreen Malik and I joined Children 1st Scotland in 2014 because I wanted to make a difference for families and help those in need. When I first joined Children 1st, I engaged in a challenging training course arranged by the organisation. Though it was demanding with all the homework and assessments throughout the course, it definitely provided me with in depth and crucial knowledge that was required before liaising with families. Learning in a fun environment with the support workers and other volunteers made the training easy to get through with lots of support and collective team work.

Upon successful completion, I was soon actively involved in supporting a family, attending other training sessions, summer activities, open evening events



in nurseries and much more. Putting myself on the frontline of volunteering not only introduced me to new people and families but it really opened my eyes to the fact that there are many more families who are struggling and require help than I thought.

At times the families using the Children 1st service may not be

struggling financially, sometimes they may in fact be in desperate need of having company and friendly people to talk to who can support them in getting back up on their feet again. This may seem very trivial for some of us who converse with family and friends on a daily basis, sometimes even having large group gatherings every so often. However, even in this day and age some families may find conversing with others a luxury.

I will continue my journey with Children 1st for as long as I can, and make as many people smile as I can. We don't need to make huge gestures to help people and it doesn't always need to involve money, we should strive to do the best we can; **and who knows, that small action may have the biggest impact on a person and never leave their heart.**

Volunteers' Week

Nine year old Martha Davidson had a wonderful surprise at school on the 25th May when rugby players from Glasgow Warriors paid her a visit.

The players Alex Allan and Rory Hughes were there to present her prize for winning our Volunteers' Week competition. Martha's 'thank you' postcard design was picked by Glasgow Warriors players out of nearly 50 entries, and was sent to all Children 1st volunteers during Volunteers' Week at the start of June.

The special prize-giving ceremony at Scotstoun Primary School was also attended by Ambreen Malik who is a Family Support volunteer with Children 1st.

Last year, nearly 700 people volunteered in a variety of roles with Children 1st, including family support, fundraising and answering calls to the national helpline ParentLine.

Volunteers' Week is a national celebration of volunteering, which was extended this year in celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday.



Front: Sofia Caddis, competition runner up; Martha Davidson, competition winner; Alina Shahbaz, competition runner up.
Back: Rory Hughes, Glasgow Warriors; Ambreen Malik, Children 1st volunteer; Alex Allan, Glasgow Warriors

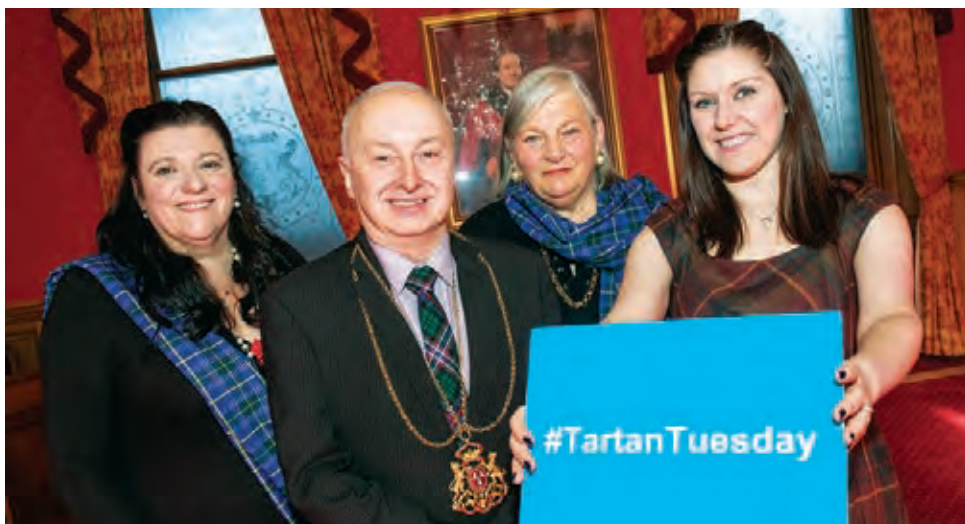
Tartan Time

Businesses across Aberdeen cast aside their usual work attire on Tuesday 1st November and donned their kilts and highland breeks to kick-start Children 1st's month of tartan-inspired activities across the North-East.

By taking part in **#TartanTuesday**, the tartan-clad participants helped raise funds for, and awareness of, the work that Children 1st do across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

#TartanTuesday was followed by Kilts for Kids, where primary and secondary school pupils put on their tartan glad rags to raise funds for the charity. The month of tartan culminated with the annual Touch of Tartan Ball on November 18.

Long standing Ball Committee members Jane Armour and Juliette Paton along with the Lord Provost of Aberdeen took to the tartan themselves to launch **#TartanTuesday** and encourage others to take part.



People's Postcode Lottery 'Dragon' breathing fire into competition



For four years People's Postcode Lottery has supported Dragons' Glen and provided a Director to mentor teams taking part in the entrepreneurial challenge. Rob Letham, Finance Director, will help his EY Edinburgh team to raise +£5k, in addition to the amazing £700k given by players this year.

Balmoral lights up to #createasmile

We're delighted to have just launched a year-long partnership with The Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh. They have lots of innovative fundraising ideas and were big supporters of our **#createasmile** campaign, turning their famous clock tower blue to show their support.

Commenting on the partnership, The Balmoral's General Manager, Richard Cooke, said:

"We're thrilled to be supporting Children 1st and their efforts to help children in Scotland. As a family run business, we know how important it is to provide a welcoming, safe environment for little ones and we have been incredibly impressed with the charity's efforts to support families in difficult times. Our iconic clock tower can be seen for miles across Edinburgh so we hope that by lighting up blue, we will attract attention and raise as much awareness as possible for this worthwhile cause."



© Real Edinburgh

'A child without a childhood is like a rainbow without colour'



John with Children 1st Chief Executive Alison Todd

Last year Glaswegian John McGurk started his journey with Children 1st, with the vision of completing a 560-mile run between Germany and Glasgow in under 5 days and with the hope of raising around £20,000. Less than ten months later, on June 3rd, John's vision

became a reality, he and his team began the incredible run from Germany to Glasgow. It was at the finish line at Glasgow Green that John surprised us all by announcing that he and his team had raised an incredible £55,000. Thanks John!



Heather Ball 2016

Our annual Heather Ball took place earlier this year at Oran Mor in Glasgow's West End, guests enjoyed a glamour filled evening with Fred MacAulay as host and the 'velvet voice', Paul Pashley as entertainment.

Around 130 guests attended the event making it another successful Heather Ball, both the silent and grand auction attracted lots of enthusiastic bidders with auction prizes such as a holiday in Dubai and lunch at the House of Lords.

Our volunteers on the evening were absolutely fantastic at encouraging people to get involved with the tombola, where again there was an array of fabulous prizes.

We would like to thank our guests for attending and supporting us to raise much needed funds for Children 1st's vital services, we hope you had an enjoyable and memorable evening.

We would also like to thank our very dedicated and enthusiastic Heather Ball Committee, Sam Fleming and Caroline Fraser for organising such an excellent night, without them the night would not have been possible. Thank you.

Challenge yourself to put Children 1st in 2017

- 1 January** – Loony Dook
- 2 January** – Lumphanan 10K, Aberdeenshire
- 6 March** – Nairn 10K, Highland
- 17 March** – Meadows Marathon, Edinburgh
- 26 March** – Run Garioch, Inverurie
- 27 March** – Elgin 10K & 3K, Moray
- 23 April** – Virgin Money London Marathon
- 23 April** – Bupa Great Edinburgh Run
- 30 April** – Kiltwalk Glasgow
- May** – Zip Slide The Clyde
- 21 May** – Stirling Marathon
- 27 & 28 May** – Edinburgh Marathon Festival
- 17 June** – Forth Bridge Abseil
- 17 & 18 June** – Tough Mudder
- 17 June** – Edinburgh Night Ride
- 17 September** – Kiltwalk Edinburgh
- 10 September** – Pedal Scotland
- 24 September** – Scottish Half Marathon & 10K
- October** – Great Scottish Run
- 17 October** – Forth Bridge Abseil



For more information please either; call 0141 419 1163, email us at fundraising@children1st.org.uk or visit our website at www.children1st.org.uk/events