

Supporters News

AUTUMN/WINTER 2015



Hello,

At Children 1st autumn brings a rich harvest – of annual figures that tell a powerful story about the difference we make. Last year we supported 17,000 children, parents and carers across Scotland, 1,000 more than in the year before. You can read our annual report – ‘at a glance’ and in full - at www.children1st.org.uk.

Almost 600 children and adults were supported by us to recover from abuse, neglect and other traumatic experiences in childhood. But sadly the scale of need means that many children don't get the support they should. Inside Damian Barr tells us, very powerfully, why this is so important.

We want to do more, and we know we can. So please do all you can to help make our winter fundraising appeal a success - by raising funds or giving all you can, and by raising awareness of this important issue. In return we will make sure your contribution makes the biggest possible difference. We will also be asking our politicians to play their part - by ensuring high quality recovery services are available across Scotland.

I am delighted to present this edition of Supporters News with our new look and logo, made possible with support from players of the People's Postcode Lottery. We believe this better explains who we are – Scotland's National Children's charity – and our determination that every child has reasons to smile.

Thank you for your on-going support to Scotland's children, who through your support we can give reasons to smile.

Alison Todd,
Chief Executive

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SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHARITY

Determined each child has reasons to smile



What recovery means to me

Damian Barr, writer and Children 1st Ambassador

Recovery is, literally, finding something you have lost. You can, if you're lucky, recover a pound coin from down the back of your sofa – you can dust it off and hold it in your hand and wonder if it's enough to buy a coffee. Far greater than the value of the coin is the joy at getting back something you thought was lost.

We cannot always recover all that is lost. And yet, we have a right to try: Article 39 in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover the health, dignity, self-respect and social life they once enjoyed.

Bruises heal more easily than memories, bones mend more neatly than emotions. I know this. I was twenty before I realised it wasn't normal to have nightmares every night, to lurch into frequent rages, to burst into tears and not know why. I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and went into therapy where I stayed for five years. I was lucky to have professional support, loving friends and a patient partner.

Recovery is not a place it is a process. Some days you feel further along than others. I don't feel I can ever recover completely but I have learned to manage the residual impact and limit damage in my adult life. I've learned healthy ways of coping. I am a survivor, not a victim.

Many children don't realise they've been abused until they're adults. Help can never come soon enough. I know I wish support had found me sooner.



Damian Barr



Our success in improving the emotional health of children affected by abuse or other traumatic childhood experiences

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A letter from Millie

Abuse and neglect in childhood leave lasting emotional scars. Recovery is possible, with support. But it takes time, empathy, commitment and consistency. Millie,* was abused by an adult cousin from age five. She was well into her teens before she was able to tell someone, and the police able to act. That was when we began to support Millie. Here's a letter she sent recently to her Children 1st worker.

"My cousin took advantage of me. He made me feel like it was all my fault. If I told anyone I wouldn't be his special little girl any more. He said I would go to prison. I felt scared. Lost. I didn't feel loved.

"It was getting worse as he was doing more stuff. I got even more scared and always hid away from anything. I used to throw chairs, tables and other objects around at school and at home. As I got older I started hitting my brothers which I thought helped get my anger out but it didn't, it just made me worse.

I hope you understand this took a lot of courage and inspiration. I got all my inspiration from you. I really appreciate all the help you have gave me. If it wasn't for you and Children 1st I don't think I would have been here where I am today. Thank you I really appreciate all the help, and would love it if we could carry on until you feel I don't need any more help or do.

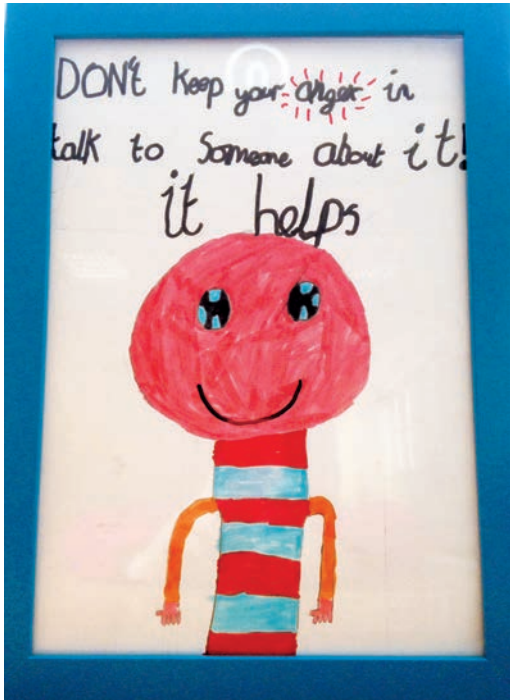
*Yours
Millie"*

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* Names and some details have been changed. The image is of a model.

Making art, changing lives



Creating art can be fun and satisfying. But for children we support it can be so much more. Through art they can express their feelings and make sense of what's happened to them. It can

help them to recover from traumatic experiences such as abuse and neglect.

These artworks have power – to move, to inspire and to bring hope. We think they're worth celebrating. That's why

this September we presented a public exhibition of them at the prestigious Glasgow Art Club. You can see more of them in our photo-album at www.facebook.com/children1st.

A kinship care book reading for author Cathy

Children's author and Children 1st ambassador Cathy MacPhail enjoyed a role reversal at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August.

After giving a talk about her latest novel she met four kinship carers from Midlothian. Myra, Angela, Helen and Susan, who are supported by Children 1st's National Kinship Care team, read her poems and stories from their new book 'Through Our Eyes'.

"It was really revealing to see exactly what these women are living with – they've had to be 'parents' again to their grandchildren," says Cathy. "Talking to them has certainly made me think about basing a future book around the issue of kinship care."

Myra said: "We are proud that we have an honest account of what it's like bringing up a child in place of a family member. It was great to meet Cathy and we got some top writing tips too!"

'Through Our Eyes' can be ordered by calling **08000 28 22 33**.



Cathy MacPhail and Angela

Fighting family poverty

Our family support workers see first-hand how poverty is blighting ever more childhoods. So in February we launched **Tackling Money Worries**, a project to boost the support we give low income families in Glasgow. In the space of a few months our workers have secured more than £130,000 these families are entitled to. Here they talk about the difference it makes.

Michelle, a Children 1st family support worker based in Glasgow Gorbals, sees evidence of poverty daily. “Children tell me they are being picked on at school because they aren’t wearing appropriate clothing. Frequently they’re hungry. And houses I go into can be cold, because the family can’t afford to heat it properly.”

She sees alarming trends. “More families are using a key-card electric metre which swallows up money. Sometimes they simply can’t afford electricity. And the Benefits Agency seems to be taking a ‘two mistakes and you’re sanctioned’ approach. But some parents find it hard to make appointments because of mental health issues, or are caring for an unwell child.”

This stresses children out, and their health can suffer. “Eating tinned and processed foods from a food bank is okay short term, but in the long run it’s never going to meet a child’s nutritional needs. We’ve seen families surviving on ‘9p a packet’ instant noodles, and some who can’t cook foodbank produce because there’s no electricity.”



Margaret and Alison

Children 1st can make a difference. “In emergencies we help families’ source food vouchers or crisis grants. We make the necessary calls where they lack know-how or confidence. Often they’ll trust us where they wouldn’t trust others,” says Michelle. “One

to make use of specialist advice agencies. Reasons why included inflexible opening hours and lack of trust. We get past such barriers by taking support out to communities and homes, and by building on the trust Children 1st has already established with families.”

“We’ve seen families surviving on ‘9p a packet’ instant noodles”

asylum-seeking family was close to becoming homeless, but by speaking to housing services I was able to get them a place – and then help them get grants for basics like beds, a kettle and a washing machine.”

Now, with Tackling Money Worries, the difference Children 1st can make is much greater. This ground-breaking project is a partnership between Children 1st and Govan Law Centre funded by the Scottish Legal Aid board. Money advice worker Alison McLaughlin says: “Our family support workers saw that families with serious money problems were often struggling

One family to benefit is Margaret Costello’s. When she separated from her husband she was left with the debt – and a growing family to feed. Some days she kept her children off school because she couldn’t pay their lunch and she’d miss out on meals because there was only enough to feed them. “Alison and Michelle just wanted to help, with smiles on their faces,” says Margaret. “I don’t need to worry, like I did before. And I have some money sometimes to be able to go places with the kids, spend time with them. That’s the most important thing.”



"I know I should feel better now that he is in jail. But I keep having flashbacks of court."

Boy, age 14

Speaking out for children and families

Children 1st listens to Scotland's children and families. And, when government or society fails to hear them or respect their rights, we speak out. Our policy team is pivotal to that work – here's a round-up of recent activities.

This September the delayed Criminal Justice Bill, first introduced in June 2013, came back to the Scottish Parliament. We've met with MSPs and produced briefings and evidence for them as they continue to debate key areas. We've called in particular for the Bill to give children who are held in custody more protection. We've also supported amendments relating to 'stop and search', children affected by parental imprisonment and the age of criminal responsibility – which we believe, at 8, is too young.

Did you know that, in Scotland, children have less legal

protection from violent assault than adults? We don't think that's right. That's why we're continuing to work with like-minded MSPs, charities, legal professionals and others to find opportunities to put forward reform proposals in a Scottish Parliamentary Bill.

"We couldn't prevent him (my abuser) from coming up to us in the court. He would laugh and stare at us." Girl, age 14

"They put me through hell for 14 months just waiting and waiting... I had got myself all prepared and then it didn't happen." Boy, age 10

"I know I should feel better now that he is in jail. But I keep having flashbacks of court." Boy, age 14

These comments show why our work to improve the experiences of child victims and witnesses is so important. Working with the Crown Office we've been training justice professionals so they can be more sensitive to the needs of child victims and witnesses. Last year we welcomed the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act which gave all under 18s an automatic right to 'special measures' to protect them court, such as screens and TV-links. We're now in discussion with the Scottish Government to make sure this rolls-out as it should, and contributing to an Evidence and Procedure Review looking at how Scotland can further improve ways in which children give evidence in Court.

Read more about our public policy and influencing work at <http://children1stblog.com>

Boomerang Bill

In 2010 we said goodbye to our chair Bill Brown. Now he's back – as our first volunteer community ambassador. He explains why.

Children 1st has a great story to tell, and I'm excited about being able to share it with my community. Many people want to make a difference for children, but aren't sure how. The difference that I can make is by being a 'catalyst' – inspiring them, and showing them how they can contribute by supporting Children 1st.

I started out with Children 1st, then the RSSPCC, in 1970 as an inspector, or 'cruelty man.' I said goodbye in 1983 when I left to become a Church of Scotland minister. But I was soon back as a board member, and later as chair. I've seen some big changes in and around the charity. Did you know that what are now our action groups started out as local volunteer committees to which inspectors were accountable? But while the role of volunteers within Children 1st has evolved, that link through volunteering with communities has been maintained.

I'm looking forward to sharing some of my stories. Such as when my wife Shirley and I lived for weeks in an old 'showman's' caravan while we set up an outdoor camp in the Borders. Shirley cooked for 30 kids from its Aga stove! That centre – no longer run by Children 1st – helped children who'd had the toughest of times. And the community in Eddleston gave us fantastic support.

Which illustrates that Children 1st has always been grounded in Scotland's communities. Always there, enabling people to do their bit for children.



Join Bill as a volunteer community ambassador

Are you passionate about putting children first? Are you a confident public speaker? Could you spare a few hours? If the answer is yes then you could be a fantastic community ambassador, giving talks to local groups about the difference we make to children's lives. Whether you're a long standing supporter or newly on-board, we'd love to hear from you. It's a great way to gain or develop skills and meet new people. Become a community ambassador and make a real difference to children across Scotland.

Call **Julie Lowe**, Community Fundraising Manager on **0131 446 3992** to find out more.

Thank you for 100 years of help

In August Chief Executive Alison Todd gave a personal 'thank you' to volunteers at our Dundee charity shop. Together they had given more than 100 years of service up to the shop's closure in May. Alison said: "Volunteers are the bedrock of Children 1st and the hard work and commitment shown by the team has been exceptional. It was a tremendously difficult decision to close the shop. Over the years it raised tens of thousands of pounds which will have made a huge difference to the lives of the children and families we support."



L to R Alison, Maureen, Gordon, Muriel, Margaret, Marcus and Margaret

Challenge yourself to put Children 1st



Lisa Jennings

Need a challenge to keep you motivated and active during the dreary days of winter? Then sign-up for a 2016 challenge event for Children 1st and help bring smiles to children's faces. We have charity places for amazing runs across the UK, from 5Ks for fun to the famous London Marathon. If two wheels is more your thing, we'll cheer you on as you zip past the finish at any one of our cycling events. Prefer an adrenaline surge and a good story to tell? We're always looking for daredevils to abseil, bungee jump or skydive for us throughout the year.

- 10 October - Glasgow Big Fun Run
- 11 October - Edinburgh Big Fun Run
- 7 November - Supernova Run, Falkirk
- 1 January 2016 - Loony Dook, South Queensferry
- 9 January - Morrison's Great Winter Run, Edinburgh
- 6 March 2016 - Meadows Marathon, Edinburgh
- 12 March 2016 - Mighty Deerstalker, Peebles
- 13 March 2016 - Inverness Half Marathon, Inverness
- 20 March 2016 - Kilomathon Scotland, Edinburgh
- 17 April 2016 - Morrisons Great Edinburgh Run, Edinburgh



in the £1 goes directly to Scotland's children and families

Find out more at www.children1st.org.uk/events

Action groups triumph

Our Perth Group in action at their pop-up shop



Well done and congratulations to our Perth action group. Its members raised a whopping £6500 with a pop-up-shop in Perth town centre. Working six days a week all of June, clocking up 600 hours between them, the volunteers made their creative venture a star attraction in the city.

The Selkirk action group held a very successful quiz night in Galashiels. And Shenagh Ellershaw and her team worked brilliantly to put on a fabulous 'Big Lunch' that was enjoyed by many in the community.

Thank you to all our action groups for everything you do year-round. Your hard work and dedication brings smiles to children's faces.



Ben & Holly with Rio & Aleisha

Rio and Aleisha met fairy princess Holly and elf Ben to launch a partnership between Children 1st and the King's Theatre and Theatre Royal in Glasgow.

Through bucket collections, ticket donations and sponsored events the staff will raise funds to help us ensure every child has reasons to smile.