

Spring 2026

aberlour
scotland's children's charity



Aberlour News

In this issue:

Raising voices
of hope

"It was more than
Urgent Assistance.
It was a lifesaver."

"Everyone is so
proud of me"

Welcome from our new CEO!



As I write this, Spring is springing and the daffodils are blooming, so it feels like a good time for my first Aberlour News introduction to you all.

I joined Aberlour as the new Chief Executive last Autumn, stepping into the very formidable shoes of SallyAnn Kelly OBE after her fantastic eleven years at the helm. I want to note my own thanks to SallyAnn for all her support and a seamless handover.

It already feels like both a long time and a short time since then, as everyone made me feel right at home straightaway, but of course there is still a lot to learn, and so many new people to get to know.

There have been plenty of highlights in my first few months, in particular getting 'oot and about' to visit our fabulous services. I am trying to do this at a steady pace rather than hurtling about, and so far have managed down as far as Dumfries and up as far as Elgin, but I'm probably not even half-way through.

I really appreciate the time everyone has taken to show me round and talk me through their work, and it has been an absolute privilege to meet the children, young people and families we support.

I am very conscious that Aberlour delivers a very broad range of services across the country, from the 'new and shiny' (much beloved of visiting politicians) to our more long-standing services, embedded in their local communities for decades. But there is an incredibly strong thread which connects all of these. Visiting our services is not just about seeing what you can see (i.e. incredibly complex and intensive work, delivered with skill, passion and pride), but also feeling what you can feel.

Love, kindness, trust and hope for the future just shine out, and I feel so privileged to now be part of the Aberlour family.

Joining in Aberlour's 150th year has particularly drawn me into its history and legacy. I had my first visit to Aberlour village before Christmas, visiting St Margaret's Church, the orphanage clock tower and memorial garden - all beautifully and lovingly maintained by the local community.

As well as very delicately leafing through the original church records there, in January I spent a fascinating morning at the Aberlour Archives at the University of Stirling, seeing original copies of this very publication, case files through the ages, and a beautifully preserved hardback book which records every child who ever lived at the orphanage.

Having marked the 150 years so fully last year, we are continuing to build on this legacy as we move through 2026 and beyond.

Tackling child poverty and the public debt crisis will remain a key focus for our work this year. Our Urgent Assistance Fund continues to put much needed cash directly into families' pockets for the essentials their children need. I wish we lived in a country where this kind of fund wasn't needed to pay for food, clothing and heating, but thanks to wonderful

supporters like you (plus a very welcome cash boost from the Scottish Government's child poverty funds in January), we have distributed over **£3.5million** to more than **11,000** families over the past five years.

When families feel they have nowhere else to turn, you enable us to be there and provide that helping hand to get back on their feet again. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I hope you enjoy this latest edition of Aberlour News and reading all about the difference your support is making for our families.

Justina Murray
Aberlour CEO

Getting
'oot and about'
to visit our
fab services...



Youthpoint, Moray



Tayside Services



Options, Fife



Options, Moray



Mother and Child Recovery House, Falkirk

Raising voices of hope



Debbie's Story

"Honestly? It felt like everything was falling apart, like my life was coming down around me. I was alone, exhausted, and terrified of losing my baby. I felt abandoned really, like everyone had turned away from me because I was still using, that I was such a bad mother, this awful person.

But I had asked for help to get clean so many times and kept getting told that I wasn't 'in the right place' but I didn't know what that place was? How was I meant to get there without being shown?

All the help seemed to come after you stopped but how could I find the strength to get off drugs when I was barely functioning? Mentally, I was in bits.

I had been using since I was 12. A lot happened to me when I was young and, for years and years, I was walking about with all this pain. I couldn't carry it by myself. I didn't know how.

Even when I did get clean, I started thinking I would be better using again because I felt so raw, all this trauma was battering me and I had nothing to numb myself.

There's so much stigma. Everyone seemed to have an opinion about me, none of them good. As if I would have chosen my life?

*Name changed to protect identity.

Who would? Who wants to use drugs or steal or sell themselves? It's survival not a choice.

Then I got a place with Aberlour and everything changed really.

I got so much staying at the Mother and Child Recovery House but the hope was the biggest thing. Feeling that things might actually get better, that it didn't have to go on like this. Honestly, I never thought I'd feel like that again.

I was treated like a human being, like someone trying to do the best for her baby, even when I was feeling like the worst mum in the world. It isn't all cuddles and fluffy blankets, there is a lot of hard truths spoken there and a lot of hard work done, but there is kindness too, and patience, respect. The mums are encouraged to talk about the pain, what led us here, not try to cover it up with tablets or anything else. We are given the time to recover at our own pace, learn to be better mums, and we stay with our children, together.

I was a grown woman but no one had ever said they were proud of me before. It lit something in me. I found a strength I didn't know I had.

I'm even stronger now, and getting stronger. Strong for me and strong for my baby."

Debbie*, mum supported by Aberlour.

Recently Debbie and 22 other mums supported by us on their recovery journey contributed to our Families Voices project.

At the launch event our mums spoke directly to the Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Maree Todd MSP, local councils and professionals from across public and third sectors about their experiences on their recovery journeys and the life-changing support they received through our services.

At Aberlour we believe families should be supported to stay together, where it is safe to do so. Our new research details how mums seeking help to address issues around alcohol, drugs and mental health are falling between the cracks of a confusing and fragmented network of services.

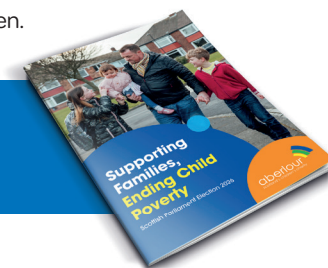
Scottish Government figures suggest up to 60,000 children may be affected by alcohol and drugs use in their families while recent research by MBRRACE-UK found most deaths of new mothers are caused by suicide with more than half dying after having children taken into care.

Together with our mums we're calling on the Scottish Government for:

- 1 More dedicated residential and community-based services for women in recovery and their children, to help **reduce drugs harm, tackle the drug deaths crisis** and help **keep families together**.
- 2 Agency for individuals to choose which **supports and services are best for them**.
- 3 Additional capacity in community services **including perinatal services** to be available until a child's second birthday.
- 4 **An end to child poverty** to reduce the likelihood of alcohol and drugs harm and related deaths amongst women.

These calls form part of our **'Supporting Families, Ending Child Poverty'** Scottish Parliament Election calls.

Find out more at aberlour.org.uk/election2026



Through our work we know that investing deeply in mums can be transformational and we know Scotland's long-term drugs crisis cannot be solved without focusing on women, like Debbie, and families.



Protecting children is always the priority but, whenever possible, that should be done while keeping families together and helping mothers recover. Wherever they live in Scotland, mothers and their children need a straightforward route to effective and non-judgemental support.

That requires more cooperation and joined-up thinking between services, rigorous assessment of the support available, and expansion of the most successful services built on secure funding."

Justina Murray,
Aberlour CEO

“It was more than Urgent Assistance It was a lifesaver”



Since April 2021 the Aberlour Urgent Assistance Fund has issued over £3.5million in emergency grants to families in desperate need. Family's just like Stephen's*. He shares how swift support helped ease the pressure at a time when his family were at crisis point.

“It might not seem a lot of money, just £300, but when you don't have it, can't get it, and really need it, it might as well be a million.

Our washing machine broke down in November. We use it all the time and it just gave up the ghost. We had no idea what to do. We have no family or friends to ask for help. No one at all. Thankfully, a neighbour allowed us to use their machine for a day or two but we're a long way from a launderette and couldn't afford buses never mind taxis. We were at our wits' end.

Aberlour have been helping our family for a year or so now and I just mentioned the washing machine was broken. I wasn't expecting them to help but couldn't have been more wrong.

They were terrific, explaining there were emergency grants, and helping us apply.

We had the money within days and a new machine the day after that. We could even afford a bigger machine, a nine kilo load instead of five, and that made such a difference too. We could not have been more grateful.

My son's seven and, with my own health problems making things harder, had been struggling a little at school. Aberlour come and take him out for the day, do things with him. He looks forward to it and he's a lot more settled now. They are such good people, easy to talk to, helpful, practical, and, when it came to the crunch, were right there beside us.

A broken washing machine might not sound like the end of the world but it can feel like it. When money is so tight and there are so many things to worry about, it can just take one small thing to bring everything down on top of you. We didn't have the money for a new one or any idea how we were going to manage without it. The stress just starts building and building. You can feel it.

The money from Aberlour was definitely urgent assistance but it felt like more. It felt like a lifesaver.”

Find out more about applying to the Urgent Assistance Fund on our website aberlour.org.uk/AUAF

*Name changed to protect identity.

“Everyone is so proud of me”



Hi, my name is Sophiah. I am 8 years old and I have been enjoying going to Aberlour's Rainbow Heart Cottage in Glenrothes since 2023.

Some of my favourite things to do are go out on the bus to Asda and buy vegetables to make soup, listen to music and hear the adults sing songs, and join in with Arts and Crafts.

I have been far and wide with the adults at Rainbow Heart Cottage. I've been to places like Deep-Sea world in North Queensferry and the Science Centre in Dundee! I have many friends when I stay for a short break or when I am out and about with the Aberlour team.

The team at Rainbow Heart Cottage have helped me to learn to brush my teeth all on my own. Everyone is so proud of me.

Check out this picture of me taken last year at a party we had to celebrate Aberlour's 150th birthday. We had a silent disco which I loved.

Thanks to the opportunities at Rainbow Heart Cottage my world is big which is great because I may be a small little girl, but I have a big personality!

You don't have to take my word for it, here's what my Gran has to say about the help we get from Aberlour...

“The support from Rainbow Heart Cottage is something you didn't know you needed until you get it, once you have it you understand how much you did need it. I just have to say the staff's name and Sophiah gets all excited. In my opinion it's perfect!”



Our disability service, Rainbow Heart Cottage, has been supporting families like Sophiah's for five years.

Our team provide a 'home from home' experience for children with a disability, providing their family with a much-needed rest from their caring role.

Updates from around Scotland!

Introducing our new Family Support Service in Inverclyde!

We're delighted to announce our new Intensive Family Support service has now opened.

Our team offers practical, relationship-based support to children and young people (aged 0 to 25) and their families across Inverclyde. This is our first service in this region.



"This is my first picture. I am proud and very happy."

Through our Guardianship Scotland service unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people find relief through art from their worries and stresses.

Our art group is a safe space for them to build trust with our team and meet other young people going through the same experience as them. This wonderful landscape was created by a young person who has never had the opportunity to draw or create before.



"Mum and Dad are really good at caring for me..."

"They listen, explain and talk things through with me. We have a lot in common. Dad and I share an interest in space and we love looking at the stars with my telescope and baking. Mum and I love chatting, chilling, we read together all the time and love doing arts & crafts together."

Recently one of our foster children shared some lovely words about the support they receive from their foster parents. If you could offer a loving home to a child who needs one, we'd love to hear from you!

Find out more at aberlour.org.uk/foster



Dundee



Inverclyde



Glasgow



A dream trip to Disneyland Paris

After Christmas Ty and Chevi, two children who live with us, had a magical dream trip to Disneyland Paris.

Despite the cold weather the girls had a wonderful time going on as many rides as possible and watching the Disney parade.

£40,000 boost from Spifox to support young people in Aberdeenshire



Aberlour was proud to be one of the principal charities showcased at the Spifox (Scottish Property Industry Festival of Christmas) lunch, held on 19th December 2025 at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre.

“Our sincere thanks to the Trustees, prize sponsors, table hosts and guests at the Spifox Charity lunch. Thanks to your kindness, we have been able to purchase a minibus that will open up new opportunities, independence and joy for children with disabilities in Aberdeenshire.”

Dawn Ward, Director of Children and Families at Aberlour Children’s Charity

“Spifox was delighted to adopt Aberlour Children’s Charity as the principal beneficiary at our Christmas fundraiser. We are so looking forward to hearing about how Aberlour’s new minibus, funded by Spifox, is making a difference to young people.”

Frances Sim, Chair of Spifox

The event brought together 1,400 people from businesses connected to construction and property for an afternoon of fundraising, laughter and reflection.

Spifox donated £40,000 to Aberlour to fund the purchase of a new, fully accessible minibus that will support 55 young people with disabilities in Aberdeenshire.

It will enable young people to attend day trips, community outings, educational visits and recreational activities that promote independence, confidence and social inclusion.



A gift in your will could transform children’s lives

Including a gift to Aberlour in your will is an opportunity to continue making a difference to children’s lives, even after you’re gone.

If you don’t have a will, we offer a free will writing service to all our supporters aged 50+ in partnership with our solicitors, Thomas Bradley & Co.

Contact them today on **0330 390 9200** or **info@thomasbradleylegal.co.uk** to write or update your will, completely free of charge.

You don’t have to include a gift in your will to Aberlour to use our will writing services, but we hope you will consider a gift once loved ones are provided for.



Including Aberlour in your will is tax efficient, and straightforward. When making or updating your will, you just need to let your solicitor know the following information:

Name of Charity:

Aberlour Child Care Trust

Scottish Charity Number:

SC007991

Address:

Aberlour Child Care Trust,
Kintail House, Forthside Way,
Stirling, FK8 1QZ

FREE Kiltwalk places!



Choose the walk that suits you best and raise vital funds to help children across Scotland:

Visit aberlour.org.uk/kiltwalk to claim your free place!



Did you know?

The Kiltwalk is a great way for co-workers to have a great time and support Aberlour’s work with children and families.

Contact us today to sign up as a team. Email **hello@aberlour.org.uk** or call **0141 260 9190**.

I'd like to make a gift to help children in Scotland



1 I would like to make a regular gift

I would like to give: £3 £5 £8 £10 or my choice £ ___ each month

Name(s) of account holder(s) _____

Bank/Building Society account number

Sort code

Instruction to your Bank/Building Society

Please pay Aberlour Child Care Trust 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 Aberlour Child Care Trust and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

2 I would like to make a one-off gift

I enclose a cheque for: £10 £25 £50 or my choice £ ___ made payable to Aberlour

Please debit my Mastercard / Visa / Maestro / CAFcard £10 £25 £50 or my choice £ _____

Name on card _____

Card number

Start date

Expiry date

You can also give children in Scotland a brighter future by remembering Aberlour in your will.

Supporters over 50 can write a will for free with our partners Thomas Bradley & Co.

Call 0330 390 9200 for more info.

3 Your contact details

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Tel _____

Address _____

Email _____ Postcode _____

We'd love to keep in touch. Please tick the box below to indicate how you prefer to receive further communication from Aberlour. by post by telephone by email

You can change your preferences at any time by contacting us at hello@aberlour.org.uk or 0141 260 9190. We store your details securely and will never share them with any third parties for the purposes of their marketing. See www.aberlour.org.uk for full privacy statement.

4 *giftaid it*

I want to make my gift worth 25% extra at no cost to me.

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.

Signature(s) of account holder(s) _____ Date _____

Thank you

Completed forms can be sent to
Aberlour, Kintail House, Forthside Way, Stirling, FK8 1QZ.

Aberlour Child Care Trust | Scottish Charity no: SC007991 | Company reg no: SC312912
Registered Head Office: Kintail House, Forthside Way | Stirling FK8 1QZ
T: 0141 260 9190 | E: hello@aberlour.org.uk | www.aberlour.org.uk



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Platinum

Spring 2026

CUT HERE