



# We must **Keep The Promise** for families in recovery to help **reduce drugs harm** for women and their children across Scotland

Aberlour is calling for further investment to expand and deliver more dedicated residential and community-based services for women in recovery and their children, to help reduce drugs harm, tackle the drugs deaths crisis and help keep families together.

Scotland has the highest rate of drug related deaths in Europe with most recent statistics showing that deaths recorded in 2024 were nearly four times higher than in 2000<sup>1</sup>. More than a quarter of drugs deaths in Scotland are women.

Scotland's drugs crisis is underpinned both by the impact of child poverty, **with around 250,000 children growing up in poverty**, and poor mental health, which affects 1 in 5 new and expectant mothers. Poverty is a key driver of drugs deaths with those from the most deprived areas **12 times more likely to die as a result of drugs**.

**If we are committed to tackling drugs deaths, then we must be relentless in our drive to combat poverty.**

Substance use is a direct risk factor in maternal deaths and women affected by substance use are at significant risk during the perinatal period, including from suicide. Every year the lives of thousands of children across Scotland are damaged by the impact of alcohol and drugs on families. Children too often end up in care due to the impact of parental substance use.

**Scotland must Keep The Promise for women in recovery and their children by keeping families together.**

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“There is so much stigma around addiction and mental health but there is a trust there and it took just one person to see a wee bit of hope and things are totally different. I'm proud of the mum I am now. My wee girl has changed my life and I am entirely there for her.”

- Parent supported by Aberlour Intensive Perinatal Service - Falkirk

<sup>1</sup> [Drug-related deaths in Scotland in 2024 - National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#)

## Key messages

- Women specific services – both community-based family support and residential rehabilitation and recovery services – are vital to reduce drugs harm affecting women and their children and to tackle the drugs deaths crisis.
- Scotland now has two dedicated Mother and Child Recovery Houses (delivered by Aberlour) for women and their babies keeping families together during their recovery journey – but more services are required to reach more women who need these services across Scotland.
- Evidence is clear that properly resourced and dedicated residential rehabilitation and recovery for women and their children does work and is playing a vital role in our drive to reduce drugs harm for women and their children in Scotland.
- Continuity of support for women and their children as they transition from residential rehabilitation and recovery services to community support is a crucial part of the recovery journey.
- [Research shows](#) that every £1 spent on intensive community-based family support services for women in recovery and their families can save £14 by keeping families together and preventing children being taken into care.
- Children have a right to grow up at home with their family and government has a duty to uphold that right by making sure families who need extra help and support get the help they need, including families affected by substance use.
- Reduction in alcohol use will reduce the number of children impacted by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- We must end the stigma around alcohol and substance use by having an approach to problem substance use that focuses on understanding, hope and kindness.

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## Actions Needed

- Keep The Promise for women in recovery and their children by prioritising women specific services that keep families together and prevent children being taken into care.
- Further investment by the Scottish Government – working in partnership with local authorities – to deliver accessible support available for all women in recovery and their children either in community settings or residential rehabilitation and recovery services.
- Increase and expand Mother and Child Recovery House capacity across Scotland.
- Promote agency for individuals to choose which supports and services are best for those that need them.
- Relentlessly focus on tackling child poverty to reduce likelihood of alcohol and drugs harm and related deaths amongst women.



**“I didn’t know if I was going to be able to take my baby home but I was referred to Aberlour and it felt like someone had got my back at last. Every woman in every area should have someone like that in their corner. Every area needs a perinatal support service like this. It is a massive support. I was no longer on my own.”**

**- Parent supported by Aberlour**

### **Aberlour Children’s Charity**

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**[www.aberlour.org.uk](http://www.aberlour.org.uk)**

Scottish Charity no: SC007991

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