

Spring 2019

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Welcome to Aberlour News



Welcome to your Spring edition of Aberlour News. Let me start by thanking you for your continued support. It's because of your support, that thousands of children across our nation are being cared for and are receiving help to thrive. Thank you.

Your support is enabling Aberlour to intervene early for more children, providing the help children need before more damage is done.

More than 1,500 children and young people are in residential care in Scotland. Not only does this cost local authorities £300 million, but research consistently shows how damaging care can be for young people.

Picking up on this theme is our new campaign to support parents with learning disabilities so that children can avoid the trauma of being separated from their families and taken into care. Read all about it and how you can get involved on the adjacent page.

Our Sustain service is another vital way in which we seek to keep families together and avoid the need for care. On page 4 you'll read about Katie and her family who've been helped significantly.

Where families are no longer able to look after their children, Aberlour provides excellent fostering services where children can find stability, love and care that helps them to flourish in life. A common question we're asked is what it's really like to foster a child. Aberlour News meets Lynda, foster mum to Dylan, who shares her experiences of fostering with Aberlour.

Meanwhile thanks to a generous gift left to Aberlour in the will of one amazing supporter, children with disabilities are enjoying a new lease of life and their families are receiving valuable respite support. We pick up on page eight with Corey who is discovering new skills, growing in confidence and having a rare old time kayaking amongst other pursuits – things he could never have dreamt about were it not for our supporters.

I hope you enjoy the read and as always, if you have any feedback or suggestions on the types of stories you'd like to read about, please don't hesitate to tell us – contact details are on the back page.

SallyAnn Kelly
Chief Executive



New campaign

No Place Like Home

Parents with a learning disability are at least twenty times more likely to have their children taken into care. With the right support in place for parents, we believe that we can reduce that figure and keep families together.

That's why Aberlour has launched a new campaign – No Place Like Home – with support from Parenting Across Scotland and the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability.

The campaign seeks to highlight the support needs of parents with learning disabilities and their children, and to promote the need for ongoing parenting and family support at the earliest opportunity to ensure families where children are at risk of being placed in care can stay together.

This campaign has been developed in partnership with parents we work with in our Family Services in Aberdeen and South Ayrshire.

People with learning disabilities face a myriad of challenges when they become parents, but we know that with the right support and a whole family approach, they can be confident parents and provide loving, safe and stable homes for their children.

“If we can get it right for parents with learning disabilities, we can prevent children from being taken into care.”

– SallyAnn Kelly,
Chief Executive

One parent, Lindsay, said of the support Aberlour has given her and her daughter:

“Aberlour has helped me to learn about routines and my baby's development, and helped me to get my confidence back. Most importantly, my baby is still with me.”

Chief Executive of Aberlour, SallyAnn Kelly said: “If we can get it right for parents with learning disabilities, we can prevent children from being taken into care. There is a huge benefit to society in providing early and ongoing support to parents with learning disabilities, such as reducing the number of children referred to children's hearing systems and the associated financial implications. When provided with the correct support, many parents with learning disabilities can improve their skills and knowledge and learn to parent more effectively.”

We'll be campaigning to ensure that services and support for parents with a learning disability are widely available throughout Scotland to make sure families can stay together.

Sign-up to receive campaign updates by email at www.aberlour.org.uk/no-place-like-home

Get involved

Could you write to your local MSP to ask what is happening in your local area to promote services for parents with learning disabilities? Full details of your MSPs can be found at www.parliament.scot/mspfinder



Early help vital in keeping families together

Numbers of children being taken into the care system are rising steadily. Aberlour believes that, with early and focused support, we can keep families together.

“Crises in families often don’t happen between nine and five”.

In the majority of cases, that’s best for the child – and the family. Thanks to your support, we’ve been able to achieve this for many children through our new Sustain services.

Aberlour Sustain services aim to keep families together where possible and appropriate, preventing children being placed unnecessarily into care.

We listen to families and respond to what they need, when they need it. Families have told us they feel Aberlour is on their side, not on their back.

Crises in families often don’t happen between nine and five, nor can they wait until Monday morning. With Aberlour Sustain, we can support the whole family when and where they need it most, seven days a week.

Support can often include help with setting routines in the morning, helping families get children up, dressed and into school; and in the evenings where again, routines, homework and behaviour start to put a strain on families.

“The support we receive as a family is unbelievable”.

We piloted our first Sustain service in Invergordon, Highlands in 2016 and worked with 14 families whose children were at risk of being taken into care. We succeeded in keeping 11 of those families together – a **79% success rate**.

One such family is Katie’s. She lives with her 10 year-old son Fergus and 6 year-old daughter Chelsea, pictured. “My son Fergus has autism and ADHD and so his behaviour can be challenging” she describes. “I suffer from fibromyalgia and depression. Before Aberlour Sustain started to help me, I struggled daily with the children and could not see the light at the end of the tunnel.

“Sustain started helping my family in December and has changed my life for the better. The support we receive as a family is unbelievable. I have never felt so happy with someone coming into the home to help my family. Both my children enjoy seeing their worker Sharon and so do I”.

Our success in Invergordon has meant that we have now launched two more Sustain services in The Borders and in Perth and Kinross. And it’s only through support from funders and donors that we can make this difference for families. Support at the earliest stage, before damage is done and families are torn apart, is at the heart of what Aberlour does; we’re delighted that our innovative new Sustain services are having such a positive effect for so many children.



Katie with daughter Chelsea.

Professionals working with Aberlour Sustain in Perth and Kinross, say...

“The Aberlour team has made a huge difference to families through their personal and focused approach. The risks to children have been significantly reduced as a result”.

- Perth & Kinross Social Work Department.

A gift of
£24

could enable two hours of intensive support for a family like Katie’s, helping to keep them together.

See back page



“We wanted to help... what better way than fostering?”

Meet Lynda. She and her husband Joe have been foster parents to Dylan*, their “loveable rogue” for three years now with Aberlour. Here Lynda describes the highs and lows of the incredible journey of fostering, urging others to do the same to meet a real need.

“My husband Joe was adopted when he was four having lived in a children’s home before that” describes Lynda. “Right from the start of our relationship, Joe had made it very clear that he’d like to have his own family but also to help another child in the way that he was helped. We’d also done our research and realised how many kids needed help and were stuck in the system and don’t get their chance. We wanted to help and what better way could we do that than foster?”

“I was really impressed with what Joe’s foster parents had done for him so for us it was about waiting until our own two kids were at a stage when they were ready to handle it and they’ve been amazing”.

Dylan had been taken into care at the age of five following some very difficult experiences. Approaching his ninth birthday, he was introduced to Lynda and Joe.

“The assessment and matching process for us was very quick” says Lynda. “As part of it, we’d made up a scrap book for Dylan for his social worker to show him who we were, pictures of our dogs and the things we liked to do as a family.

“Kerryanne from Aberlour Fostering took our sons out for an ice cream, got to know them and very informally asked the relevant questions about how they felt about fostering. The kids were never fearful or worried about it actually – they were very accepting of it all and quite matter of fact about it.

“But we have had to make adaptations as a family. We knew that going into things. Outside the home, no one would know Dylan has any needs really. He plays well with the kids in the street and he’s in mainstream primary school right now along with my youngest son Calum. Going to the same school as Calum has

worked a treat – he’s never missed a day at school except for illness.

“It’s inside the home that’s difficult – he doesn’t cope well with rules and everyday routines. He can be very angry and his outbursts can be quite extreme. We were worried how far he might go at points. But we’ve had a lot of really good support. He’s currently undergoing some mental health assessments and we’ve worked to build a structure for Dylan and for our other two sons. They’ve come a long way.

Excellent support network

“What made us decide to foster was the support package that Aberlour provides and the reassurance that you’re not doing it all yourself. They provide a lot of initial and ongoing training to help you find those strategies of helping your child. You get to meet other carers and learn from them too as to what they find helpful.

“The support network is excellent: you can phone at any time and if you need someone to come out to the house, they will. For Dylan, knowing Aberlour is there in the background is also really helpful and encouraging to him.

“One weekend a month we use Aberlour’s short break respite service. We didn’t want to use respite care at first but we discovered that whilst we coped well, our boys needed a break from time to time. We discovered actually that respite was helpful – it helped Dylan knowing he could have a break and a change of scene, as well as providing a break for us too.”

“If you’ve got an empty room, then please use it! It’s been such a rewarding thing to do.”

Asked what Lynda would say to someone considering fostering, she said unflinchingly “If you’ve got an empty room, then please use it! I would just wish more people would come forward to foster.

“It’s been such a rewarding thing to do. It’s very tiring. It’s the hardest job I’ve ever had to do but so rewarding as you see so many little changes take place and you can say, ‘I’ve helped with that’.”

*Real name changed to protect anonymity



Could you be a foster parent?

Every child has the right to live in a home where they get the care, support and encouragement they need to grow and develop. Fostering is a way of offering children like Dylan and young people a home when their own family is unable to look after them. Our foster carers come from all walks of life but they all have the determination to give love and stability to a child.

If you are over 21 and have a spare room, please get in touch. Call Aberlour Fostering on **01592 591 500** or see www.aberlour.org.uk/fostering for more information.



Children flourish thanks to gifts left in wills

Thanks to a generous gift left in the will of one of our amazing supporters, disabled children across Scotland can experience life to the full.

Aberlour Options Adventures

Aberlour Options Adventures provides a lifeline service for children experiencing a wide range of disabilities plus vital respite for their families. Funding from gifts in wills has ensured the service can continue and provide lasting memories for kids like Corey.

“I have never been bored. I don’t want to go home”

– says Corey, a 13-year old boy with autism and anxiety issues. He has just enjoyed his first weekend away with Aberlour Options Adventures.

During his weekend Adventure, Corey met new people and enjoyed himself participating in crate building, kayaking, archery, a beach barbeque, playing snooker and Giant Jenga and to finish off his weekend a game of football.

It’s a world apart from his usual routine. Struggling with anxiety and his autism, Corey doesn’t get to enjoy the experiences that other children his age do such as his support needs.

Not only does he often miss out, his parents and siblings also struggle to cope at times.

A crucial service for families

Aberlour Options Adventures provides a crucial service for families like Corey’s. It provides one day and short residential breaks for children and young people with a range of needs and disabilities. Young people can be included in activities and experiences that they would not be able to do independently, learning new skills and gaining confidence. Parents and carers meanwhile can benefit from the respite they need to support them in their caring role.

Whilst on residential Adventures, young people are in unfamiliar environments and are often meeting a new peer group for the first time. This helps them to build on their social skills and coping skills to deal with change, responsibility, independence and the transition into adulthood.

It’s a vital service that’s only been made possible thanks to generous supporters who have left gifts in their wills to Aberlour.

“We are so thankful to have received this gift from one of Aberlour’s supporters” says Jan Parker, Options Adventures Service Manager. “It’s meant our service can continue to be a lifeline for children like Corey and his family”.

“We are so thankful to have received this gift ... it’s meant our service can continue to be a lifeline for children like Corey and his family”

- Jan Parker, Aberlour Options Adventures.



Quick guide to leaving a lasting legacy

- 1 Once you’ve taken care of your loved ones, a gift in your will, big or small, will make an invaluable difference in providing love and care for vulnerable children across Scotland.
- 2 Your solicitor can help you through the process of creating or amending your will. If you don’t have a solicitor, we’ve partnered with McClure Solicitors who will create or amend a will for free in return for an optional donation to charity.
- 3 You can choose to leave a share of your estate, a fixed sum, or a specific item such as a piece of jewellery or shares.
- 4 Any gift you make is exempt from inheritance tax because of our charitable status.

To find out more, email legacy@aberlour.org.uk or phone **0800 085 6150**.

#spend an hour

Did you know there are...
8,790 hours in 2019?

Could you spend one of them helping
Scotland's vulnerable children?

9/10 Scots agree...

that there should be more emphasis placed on helping vulnerable children as soon as problems emerge, rather than waiting until families are at crisis point. With your help, we can help families before damage is done.

Here are some ideas on how
you could spend your hour:

- 1 Walk The Kiltwalk, cycle Tour de Lauder, abseil off the Forth Rail Bridge** or take part in a host of other sponsored events. See www.aberlour.org.uk/events to sign up or for more ideas.
- 2 Hold a cake bake, coffee morning, movie night or party** – visit www.aberlour.org.uk/spendanhour to download our most recent seasonal fundraising toolkit filled with fun ideas.

- 3 Get your workplace involved** by requesting a dress down day or nominating Aberlour as your charity of the year.
- 4 Invite a speaker from Aberlour** to come to your community group or church to share an update on how children and families need our help.
- 5 Start a monthly donation** to Aberlour using the response form on page 12 to enable consistent support for vulnerable children across Scotland.

We're asking our supporters to spend just one hour of their time to make a difference for Scotland's most vulnerable children.

Your support makes all the difference!

Get your kilt on for Scotland's Children

We are hugely grateful to everyone who walked the Kiltwalk last year in aid of Aberlour.

Thousands of pounds were raised to help vulnerable children across Aberlour services affected by challenges like poverty, disability, domestic abuse and mental ill health. And we're doing it all again this year so that even more children can receive help before it's too late.

Choose between a range of walking routes of 6-26 miles in length. You'll enjoy incredible scenery and be well looked after by The Kiltwalk's event staff, receiving complimentary snacks and drinks along the way. As you cross the finish line, you'll receive a meal voucher to refuel plus entertainment and family activities to enjoy.



The Kiltwalk is fun, it's inclusive, it's free to Aberlour supporters and it helps stop children suffering.

Events take place in Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen and Edinburgh during 2019.



For every **£1** you raise, the Hunter Foundation will add a generous 40% to your total making it one of the best ways to fundraise for Aberlour.

You can even take part for free

if you commit to raising at least £100 for Aberlour. This amount could help provide seven intensive sessions for parents who need support, helping to keep seven families together.

Kelly Ann, pictured third from the left, is one of our Perinatal Befrienders in Forth Valley and knows first-hand how valuable the service is. Taking part in last year's Kiltwalk with friends and fellow volunteers, Kelly Ann said,

"I can't believe how much fun that was! Hard going, but fun. I'm so happy I did this for Aberlour".

Sign up now

at www.aberlour.org.uk/events or contact Aberlour's fundraising team on **0800 085 6150**.

