

aberlour annual review 2020 – 2021

2020-21 an extraordinary year

Incoming Chair, David Robb, on his new role with Aberlour

I'm delighted to have taken on the role as Aberlour's chair, after joining the Board in 2019. Not only is Aberlour in my blood (I was born and raised in the very Speyside town) but I recognise the value that Aberlour, as a charity, offers so many of Scotland's disadvantaged children and families.

The past year has presented us with previously unimagined challenges; I am so proud of how this organisation has risen to them.

We have remained a strong, sustainable, growing organisation which strives to reach even more children and their families from all parts of this country.

In our work, we are guided every day by our values – to challenge, to innovate, to behave with integrity and respect.

But we remain unafraid of speaking truth to power.

We have spent the last year developing our new strategy "Being Brave for Children, Young People and Families", taking Aberlour to 2025 and to 150 years of operation. Over this period, we will focus relentlessly on alleviating the causes and results of poverty and discrimination for families. I am excited to be part of this new and important phase for Aberlour.

a word from our ceo, sallyann kelly

The past year has been a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic tested us in ways we could never have imagined. But thanks to our staff's resilience, commitment, ingenuity and determination we succeeded.

Not one of our services was closed. Indeed, we opened 10 new services plus a number of temporary COVID-related services for families across Scotland.

Not one of our staff was furloughed. We enabled them to find new ways to deliver high quality support to children and families in such desperately difficult and isolating times.

We listened to families who told us their children were being left behind – facing digital exclusion from school. We delivered 175* laptops and chromebooks to children who couldn't afford to connect.

We raised more money for our Urgent Assistance Fund – £1.3 million over the year and gave cash grants to 3,346 families. These families couldn't afford to feed or clothe their children, to heat or light their homes; families who were already experiencing poverty or being pushed into it by the crippling economic effects of the pandemic.

(*150 of these were donated by the Scottish Government)

our new strategy 2021-2025

At the heart of Aberlour's 2018-2021 strategy was our ambition to support children and families earlier.

We know that support often comes too late in response to crisis. And we know that this has a negative impact on children already facing disadvantage because of poverty and discrimination.

Our new strategy, Being Brave for Children, Young People and Families 2021-2025 continues our ambition and aligns with our Vision: "Not all children are born with an equal chance. We will work together to beat poverty and discrimination". Our **Values** of "Respect, Integrity, Innovation and Challenge" remain our guiding principles, underpinning everything we do.

Read the full strategy:

[Aberlour Strategy 2021-2025](#)

Aberlour's Urgent Assistance Fund

We knew that the COVID pandemic and the impending lockdown would push families further into hardship, and we were right. We recognised that we were well placed to help these children and families, who were in desperate financial need, through our Urgent Assistance Fund.

Our emergency appeal to boost this fund was launched in just 12 hours on 16th March 2020 in anticipation of the need.

our timeline tells a stark story.

April 2020

"Thank you for getting cash out to this family so quickly! This award will make an incredible difference to them. Both parents are ill and unable to work. The cash grant from Aberlour will cover the much needed essentials like food, gas, electricity and medicine." Liz, Health Carer (Aberdeen)

Children and families experienced unprecedented levels of poverty as a result of the Coronavirus. Families who were already at breaking point struggled to meet basic and essential needs. Urgent assistance was crucial.

April 2020

Our services found new ways of communicating with the children and families we support. Zoom calls, garden visits, food deliveries and virtual cookery lessons became the norm!

May 2020

We saw an increase of 1,385% in applications to the Urgent Assistance Fund as families, left with nothing to support their children, applied for help.

We had applications from almost every Local Authority area in Scotland.

By the end of May we had given out £313K and helped **2,391** children from **1,110** families.

June 2020

Our Urgent Assistance Fund was in danger of running out by the end of June if we continued to grant funds at same rate (£28K per week). We re-launched our fundraising appeal.

Children couldn't do lessons online because they didn't have access to technology and couldn't afford the electricity in any case; those on free school meals were missing out and going hungry.

July 2020

“My dream has come true! I dreamt of having our own microwave one day.” Ryan, 7 years

We had raised **£424K** since March, received **1,782 applications** and given grants to **1,609 families in need**.

Our family support workers continued to support families.

When our Glasgow Family Support Service delivered home cooked meals to Ryan's family they couldn't accept as the family had no means of heating the food.

Our Urgent Assistance Fund enabled us to buy Ryan's family a microwave.

“My dream has come true! I dreamt of having our own microwave one day.”

Ryan, 7 years

August 2020

“My daughter is starving. I can’t get enough food for her...” Fatima, UAF applicant

Professor Morag Treanor (Institute of Social Policy, Housing and Inequality, Heriot Watt University) carried out an external evaluation of our Urgent Assistance Fund. She reported reasons why families were applying:

60% – food – they couldn’t feed their children

50% – utilities – families couldn’t afford to keep their homes warm for their children

29% – children’s clothing – children were outgrowing clothes with no chance of getting replacements

21% beds or bedding – children didn’t have a bed to sleep in

She said:-

“All of the applications made to the Urgent Assistance Fund were for basic essentials that are needed to survive. This demonstrates that there is a level of need across families in Scotland that is really quite fundamental and absolute.”

October 2020

“The pandemic has shown that anyone, no matter how well they think they are doing, can fall into poverty overnight.”

Aberlour highlighted the number of children and families trapped in poverty in Scotland in The Scottish Sun as part of Challenge Poverty Week.

Thousands of families on the brink of poverty had been tipped over the edge.

November 2020

We launched the “Surviving Winter” campaign telling the story of a real family supported by the Aberlour Urgent Assistance Fund.

View our campaign video [here](#).

January 2021

We launched a **Manifesto** and our **first Petition** urging political parties to commit to doubling the Scottish Child Payment to help alleviate the need for the Urgent Assistance Fund. Aberlour became an important voice in the Scottish child poverty debate.

March 2021

The Impact of Aberlour Urgent Assistance Fund

April 2020 – March 2021

This financial year, our Urgent Assistance Fund raised £1.3 million.

We supported 3,346 families.

An increase of 1,279% in daily amount given.

The average amount given was £295.25.

That's over £3,880 a day!

We supported families from every local authority in Scotland.

Donations to our Urgent Assistance Fund continue to directly benefit families in desperate need across Scotland.

12 months since lockdown, thanks to our supporters, Aberlour had made a significant impact to children and families trapped in poverty.

Families in desperate need received cash grants within 24 hours of application.

100% of the money raised went directly to the families.

View our thank you video [here](#).

However, Aberlour is still inundated with applications to the Urgent Assistance Fund.

This is not over for families, so we will not stop.

our response to landmarks in the child care environment

On 5th February...

We enthusiastically welcomed the publication of The Promise and the immediate steps the plan 21-24 insists Scotland now must take as a country to achieve the necessary change required for Scotland's children, young people and families.

It is clear about the need for a relentless focus and commitment to ending poverty and mitigating its impact on children, young people and families. Aberlour is committed to **#KeepThePromise** and we are incorporating the principles into our work.

On 16th March...

The Scottish Parliament unanimously voted to incorporate **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** into the law in Scotland.

Underpinning everything we do is our ambition to ensure the children we work with have an equal chance regardless of their start in life.

We will work relentlessly to ensure that the UNCRC is fully embedded in law and is visible across our organisation and obvious in what we do and how we work with children, young people and their families.

“We whole heartedly support the aims of both of these important pieces of work.”

SallyAnn Kelly

spotlight on our services

Keeping families together

Sustaining strong relationships

We know that in most cases, children thrive best within the love and support of their own family.

We also know that sometimes parents struggle with the stresses and challenges of parenthood – a struggle made worse by significant financial hardship, by being a single parent, or by coping with mental ill health.

Understanding parents' challenges, recognising that they know the most about their own situation, working alongside them without judgement, empowering them to lead positive change – **this approach has been central to our Sustain services.**

We are proud to have developed this model from our first service in the Highlands, launched in 2018, subsequently expanding to The Scottish Borders and to Perth & Kinross. This last year, we have established new Sustain services in North Ayrshire, Angus and Falkirk.

By helping families early – before problems become crises – and knowing that they need this help outside normal office hours, we have ultimately prevented many more children being taken into the care system.

We look forward to expanding our Sustain services across Scotland, keeping more children with their families where they can best thrive.

disability service in the kaimhill area of aberdeen

We wanted to support more families in the North-East so we expanded our Options – Aberdeen service by refurbishing a facility in the Kaimhill area of the city.

Here, we offer day care and overnight stays for children with a disability or other complex needs. Children can explore their interests, develop skills and have fun in a safe, loving and nurturing environment while giving their families time to recharge.

We listened to parents and families so they could have their say in designing the newly renovated building and children now have a facility bespoke to their needs. A great result for local families.

[Take a look at our new development...](#)

red squirrel house

In March 2021 we were proud to announce the opening of Red Squirrel, a warm and inviting new home in Tayside for primary school aged children who are not able to live with their own families.

Red Squirrel was designed alongside young people who had been in the care system themselves. They were involved in the design of the house's interior as well as recruitment of the staff team.

[View our virtual tour of Red Squirrel house](#)

scottish guardianship service

In September 2020 we celebrated a decade of the Scottish Guardianship Service which we run in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council.

Over the last ten years, the service has supported nearly 700 asylum-seeking and trafficked children and young people.

To raise the profile, celebrate the impact and demonstrate the value of the Scottish Guardianship Service, we produced a booklet featuring a case study of a young person from each year of the service. We also created a short animation to showcase why our service is so important to so many.

View our animation

[Imagine you arrive in Scotland, as a child, all alone...](#)

business development

Our business development team has had an outstanding year with a success rate of 92% for tenders and strategic funding applications.

We expanded our support for asylum seeking children across Scotland with the support of £2.4 million from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

We continue to develop our **Sustain intensive family support services**, with new developments in Angus and Falkirk; and additional resources for our Scottish Borders service.

We continued to support the development of key capital projects As well as opening Red Squirrel House, we secured a 25 year contract for a new-build, eight bed children's disability residential service in the Scottish Borders.

We secured £160,000 through the Scottish Government for our core Perinatal work; and £150,000 from the Corra Foundation to develop a new Perinatal service for mothers challenged by substance misuse in Falkirk.

We have continued to develop our strategic systems-change work, being successful with securing two areas of work with The Promise – reducing restraint (£190,000) and testing a poverty and hardship fund (£50,000).

speaking truth to power

2020/21 has been an important year in the development of Aberlour's policy and influencing work as we continue to highlight the societal issues that cause so many challenges for families we support.

We are clear about the actions we need to take as a country if we are serious about tackling child poverty and we believe the solution is simple – Get money into the pockets of low-income families.

We also want to make sure that families who need extra help get the support they need. 'The Promise' outlined how Scotland must support families to help them stay together:

“Scotland already has a clear commitment to early intervention and prevention. That commitment is best realised through proper, holistic support for families. There must be a significant upscale in universal family support services.”

In January 2021, ahead of the Scottish parliamentary elections, we published our own Cash Now Families Always manifesto to outline our key asks of political parties.

[Cash Now Families Always manifesto](#)

we asked you to get involved.

In January 2021 Aberlour launched its first petition. In support of our manifesto, we asked our key friends, donors and supporters to back us in

calling for doubling the Scottish Child Payment to help low-income families survive.

Not only did we receive hundreds of signatures in support, but the accompanying comments were heart-warming, encouraging, and powerful.

“We need to help families during this time. Child poverty is a national disgrace, families need help now and this is a way to help them to have access to cash and to buy essentials for their children.”

“It is morally reprehensible that child poverty exists in our country and it is the responsibility of all within our society to ensure that those elected to represent us act now to ensure that all children and families are lifted out of poverty.”

“Far too many families in Scotland can’t afford the basics like food and heat, this has to change.”

“No one should have to struggle to feed their children.”

The final word goes to one of our supporters....

“I hadn’t heard of Aberlour until this year. What an amazing supporting organisation you are.... Aberlour has been a godsend to some of our families who will benefit from additional money and help and will give them hope that there is good that can happen when the chips are down. I thank you for bringing hope and some joy to those families who have /will benefit from this kind act.”

A Dastey, Holyrood Secondary

Thanks to all our supporters,

Team Aberlour