



Aberlour News

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A new home-from-home for Ashley

Our supporters may remember Roisin and her son, Ashley, forced to live 300 miles away from each other for four years, due to Ashley's complex needs. **In 2021, thanks to a new service provided by Aberlour, Ashley was finally able to come back to Scotland and live near his family. Here, Roisin shares her story.**

"Ashley was only 13 when he was sectioned. It was the worst day of my life."

Ashley has severe autism and can't speak. During the year before he was sectioned, he'd started self-harming out of frustration, hitting his head off objects so hard that he fractured his skull.

Aberlour supported our family at the time by providing respite breaks for us, while they cared for Ashley. Before Aberlour helped us, I didn't know where to turn, or who to ask for help.

But then Ashley's behaviour became uncontrollable, and he was eventually sectioned.

He was taken 300 miles away from home to northern England, to the nearest residential school for children with severe autism. It was hell – there's no other word for it.

Having that distance between us has been incredibly difficult, and very stressful as a parent.

The drive was so long and tiring, we were exhausted by the time we got there. My other son goes to school here in Fife, so we couldn't move. On a couple of occasions, there were medical emergencies, and I would be completely helpless – too far away to be able to do anything. I remember once, sitting up all night – staring at the phone and waiting for it to ring with news of his condition.

I felt so guilty. I was his mum and I wasn't there. But there was nothing I could do about it.

"Saying goodbye to Ashley after a visit never got any easier."

One time I cried all the way back. And recently, COVID made everything so much worse. When we visited, we weren't allowed to go in. We were driving 300 miles just to look at him from afar over a garden wall. Ashley didn't understand why we couldn't go in. Because of COVID, a lot of people now know what it's like being cut off from your loved ones, with no control over it. Having family nearby shouldn't be taken for granted.

My husband and I have been waiting for so long to have Ashley nearby, to have our family back together again, but for four long years we were told that there were no placements available in Scotland.

Aberlour was acutely aware of the effects on children like Ashley being separated from their families.

For years they worked closely with local authorities and housing associations, until finally, earlier this year, they were able to open a new service in Fife.

The service includes a three-bedroom house, a new residential short breaks house, and brand-new flats, where Ashley now lives.

It's a wonderful feeling to have Ashley back in Scotland. He is very happy in his new flat and the Aberlour staff have been wonderful. We feel so lucky after a few tough years of long travel. As a parent, I also feel relieved and empowered that I can do what I feel I am supposed to be doing; being there for Ashley whenever he needs me.

Aberlour and Jacqui (Aberlour Service Manager) never forgot about us, even when we weren't in contact. Some really good, caring people work there and it's so reassuring to be able to rely on their support; I can't imagine what would have happened if Aberlour hadn't been involved. They came to our rescue, again.

I also want to thank Aberlour's donors. A lot of families like mine across Scotland desperately need access to the charity's services, and you'll never know the difference you make to young people like Ashley by supporting Aberlour's work.

We can now be a family again, thanks to Aberlour's help. I will forever be grateful.

Support Aberlour

Some of our generous donors helped us to kit out these specialist flats. If you are able to, please donate so young people like Ashley can access life changing long term support.

[aberlour.org.uk/donate](https://www.aberlour.org.uk/donate)

Please note: donations will be used where they are needed most.

Our services run the length and breadth of Scotland

because every family has a right to access support

Help for families should be available when, where and for as long as each family needs it.

Supporting families involves working alongside them to build on their strengths and helping them to develop the tools, strategies, and skills needed to create a safe and loving family environment.

Unfortunately, due to the impact of the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns, many families have told us they are under immense stress and strain, and have been pushed over the brink, into poverty or have been dragged further into financial hardship. Some families have needed support for the first time. And some may never recover.

Demand for our services has never been greater, and despite the huge challenges presented by the pandemic, Aberlour has continued to support children and families throughout Scotland.

“We are absolutely delighted to be launching new services and to be able to help so many more children, young people and families in Scotland.”

Liz Nolan,
Depute Director of Aberlour

To reach even more families who need our help, we have launched several new services in 2021

Opened a new disability service in Aberdeen City, serving the whole of the northeast, focusing on short breaks, overnight stays and care at home.



Launched two new services in Falkirk, supporting families by providing emotional and practical support to ensure that children can remain with their families and stay out of care.



Expanded our disability services in Fife with additional purpose-built accommodation to support more children and young people with learning disabilities, autism or more complex needs. The young people are provided with 24-hour support enabling them to participate fully in activities within their communities and remain close to their families and friends.



Launched a new service in North Ayrshire, which will help families experiencing a range of challenges including poverty, isolation, mental ill-health and anxiety. Support for families is available whenever they need it, including evenings and weekends.

Opened Red Squirrel House, a unique new home in Tayside for primary school aged children who are not able to live with their own families. Red Squirrel has been designed with advice from children and young people who have been in the care system themselves.



Wondering what a modern children's house looks like?

Watch our video introducing our new house, Red Squirrel here: [aberlour.org.uk/young-people-design-new-house-for-children-in-care-in-tayside](https://www.aberlour.org.uk/young-people-design-new-house-for-children-in-care-in-tayside)

Fostering during a global pandemic



The uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic has been scary for all of us. But can you imagine becoming a foster carer for the first-time during lockdown?

That's what Laura, one of our newest foster carers decided to do. Laura shares her and Paul's journey through a global pandemic.

I have always wanted to become a foster carer because I believe that every child deserves a happy childhood. At 32 I decided it was time to start investigating and that's when I was introduced to Aberlour.

The approval process to become a foster carer took around eight months. It was very intense. You have to be very open about your life and being open to people you don't know is difficult. The team at Aberlour was really helpful and made the process easier.

Everyone is so warm and friendly, especially my contact Kerryanne. She made it really easy to open up and talk. I have built a wonderful relationship with Kerryanne, and I know the Aberlour team is always there when I need them.

I was so excited when I was approved to become a foster carer. But little did I know that I would get my first match at the beginning of a global pandemic.

"I know the Aberlour team is always there when I need them."

Before lockdown was announced I began the matching process for a nine-year-old boy called Paul. He had spent most of his life in care. Paul's parents were unable to meet his needs or provide him with a warm and stable home. Paul had experienced a number of placement breakdowns due to the fact that he hadn't properly bonded with his foster carers.

I met Kerryanne, Paul's social worker and his current carer at the outset as it was vital to make sure that I was the right carer for Paul.

"Lockdown was announced and I was in tears thinking I was going to be on my own."

Little did I know that I would be getting the most important call, telling me Paul was coming to live with me. A few days after Scotland was placed in complete lockdown he had moved in.

It was daunting as it was a rather unique situation. But it gave Paul and me time to bond. We were able to make our own memories together and got to know each other without family, schools or anyone else getting in the way. We both love arts and crafts so every week we would decorate our front window with a different theme.

We would play board games, watch films and even bake! Paul loves baking. It's not something I am good at and most of our bakes ended up in the bin, but we had fun while doing it.

We would go for lots of walks and I was able to help Paul learn all about his new neighbourhood. We were able to become our own little family unit very quickly, which might have taken longer in a non-pandemic world.

Aberlour was always there to help. Kerryanne might not have been able to come round to the house like she usually would, but we would meet twice a week online to chat and discuss any of my concerns. The team is available 24/7 so I knew if I ever needed them they were there and Kerryanne's check in messages were and always are appreciated. While Paul and I were in the house together, we knew we weren't alone.

I am so proud that we survived and celebrated our first year together in March. I am looking forward to the future.

I want Paul to know he is loved and to enjoy his childhood.

"If anyone reading this is thinking about becoming a foster carer, please do it. If you have a home and love to give, then go ahead. Being a foster carer is one of the hardest things I have ever done but it is the most rewarding. A smile on Paul's face is worth everything."

Could you change a life and become a foster carer?

Find out more by visiting [aberlour.org.uk/foster-care](https://www.aberlour.org.uk/foster-care)

Please note: this story has been anonymised and stock photo used to protect identities.

“Aberlour saved our family”

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected families in many different ways across the country. Elizabeth shares how our North Ayrshire service saved her family when things were completely out of control.

The Coronavirus pandemic was really tough for our family and it nearly broke us. Before the first lockdown Adele was shown a video at school about a killer coronavirus. And then her auntie Kathleen caught it. Everything spiralled out of control for Adele from there.

Adele suffers from grief, trauma and separation anxiety due to a traumatic start to her life. Her biological parents couldn't look after her, so she came to live with me when she was 11 weeks old. I became her mum.

The combination of the pandemic and Adele's auntie catching the virus triggered some bad memories for Adele and she couldn't cope.

Adele became violent. She trashed our house three nights in a row. She wasn't sleeping at night, sometimes she would finally crash out at 6am, and she wasn't eating. I was really struggling and I didn't know what to do so I turned to Adele's school for help.

The school Adele was attending offered her access to the nurture room online and by phone call. But this wasn't the help Adele needed. Before the second lockdown Adele moved school, and it was at this school that the head teacher made the referral to Aberlour, and we were introduced to Nikki.

Nikki has been a real-life saver for our family.

Nikki listens to Adele and understands her. She allows Adele to talk about whatever is troubling her and knows the best way to get



her to open up. Adele has even started to talk to Nikki about her birth parents.

By talking with her, Nikki is starting to help Adele understand what happened in her early life and is helping her to accept it. Adele is only eight so I know that in the future more questions will come and I know Nikki and Aberlour will always be there to help us.

For me, Nikki is always there as a sounding board. No matter the time of day, I can contact her if we are struggling. She reassures me that what I am doing is right; that I am not failing as a parent. She provides advice so I can support Adele when she can't deal with her emotions.

We have only been working with Nikki for seven months and I can see a massive positive difference, not only in Adele but in our family. Adele is much calmer and happier, and there have been no more violent outbursts. She can now process her emotions and feelings much better. I am starting to see my little girl coming back. **Our house is a happy house again.**

We are building a strong and open relationship together and I am so proud of her.

By supporting Aberlour regularly you will ensure we can be there for children and families for the long haul. Set up a Direct Debit by visiting [aberlour.org.uk/donate](https://www.aberlour.org.uk/donate) or using the donation form on the back page.

Most restrictions imposed on our lives by the pandemic may have lifted...

but many families across Scotland are still struggling practically, financially and emotionally.

Families who were in crisis before COVID-19 struck are in even greater difficulty now.

Many families who were just about managing beforehand have found they can't cope. And even families who had never needed help before, have found themselves looking for support.

In order to free children from poverty, close the attainment gap, address the mental health crisis and support children's wellbeing, we need to put families at the heart of our recovery. Not only through increasing family incomes, but by guaranteeing that all families who need extra help can get the support they need to help them thrive.

As well as campaigning to make sure the Scottish Government delivers on this, Aberlour has been on the front line, directly providing support to thousands of families trapped in poverty through our Urgent Assistance Fund.



Since the pandemic began, thanks to generous supporters like you, we have given out over £1.2 million in cash grants to 4,000 families, helping almost 9,000 children.

While we should be proud of what we have achieved together over the past 18 months, there's more work to be done. The furlough scheme comes to an end on the 30th September, and the uplift to Universal Credit is likely to be stopped. Many more people are likely to lose their jobs, be evicted from their homes, and struggle to feed their children.

We expect a surge in demand for our Urgent Assistance Fund this winter, and to make sure every family who needs our help gets it, we need you, our supporters.

You can help children and families trapped in poverty by donating to our Urgent Assistance Fund on our website at [aberlour.org.uk/uaf](https://www.aberlour.org.uk/uaf) or by calling our team on **0141 260 9190**.

Get involved!



Thank you to The Scottish Episcopal Church for your continued support!

Aberlour has longstanding links with The Scottish Episcopal Church. Indeed the charity was founded by an Episcopalian cleric, Canon Jupp. So we were delighted to learn earlier this year that the Right Reverend Kevin Pearson, Bishop of the United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, had nominated us for his Lenten Appeal.

Bishop Kevin was particularly moved to learn that many children and young people who already faced significant challenges in their everyday lives, were finding life even more difficult. As a charity dear to his heart, Bishop Kevin invited congregations across the United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway to contribute to his Lenten Appeal in aid of Aberlour.

Bishop Kevin recently visited Aberlour's Glasgow Family Support Service to see how your donations are being used. On a sunny July evening, he joined two of our Young People's Workers, Julie and Johnny, on a street shift in Govan. Bishop Kevin told us: "words can't describe how much I admire what you do at Aberlour."

The Lenten Appeal to date has raised a phenomenal £12,414.18. We'd like to say an enormous thank you to Bishop Kevin, the congregations of The United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, and everyone who has so generously donated during this challenging time.

If you would like us to give a talk at your place of worship, or if your congregation would like to raise money for Aberlour, do get in touch.

Please email hello@aberlour.org.uk or call **0141 260 9190** to find out more.

Our supporters brave the cold for Scotland's children

Our Fundraising team is always looking to develop fundraising events with a difference and this summer was no different.

Cold water therapy has grown in popularity since the start of the pandemic. So, our fundraising team developed the **aBRRRlour cold water challenge** that took place across the month of July.

Challengers were set the task of enduring cold water each day for one month.

This could be in the form of a cold shower or bath or a dip in a local loch or the sea. Cold water, approached safely, has many benefits for both physical and mental wellbeing, meaning the challengers benefited from taking part as well as raising vital funds for the children and young people we support.



Been inspired by our aBRRRlour challengers?

Visit our events page, [aberlour.org.uk/events](https://www.aberlour.org.uk/events), to see how you can get involved.

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: £5 £10 £12 £15 £20 or my choice £ ___ each month

Starting on 1st / 15th of the 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: £15 £25 £50 or my choice £ ___ made payable to Aberlour

Please debit my Mastercard / Visa / Maestro / CAFcard £15 £25 £50 or my choice £ _____

Name on card _____

Card number

Start date

Expiry date

3 Your contact details

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Tel _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email _____

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 just 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 website 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
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Autumn 2021

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