



Aberlour Sycamore Services

Residential child
care services

Our Locations

1. Aberlour Sycamore - Bellyeoman Road
2. Aberlour Sycamore - Frankfield House
3. Aberlour Sycamore - Red Squirrel House
4. Aberlour Sycamore - Veronica Crescent
5. Aberlour Sycamore - Whytemans Brae
6. Aberlour Sycamore Highland - Lochan Cottage*
7. Aberlour Sycamore Highland - Orinsay*



*Referrals for these services are only open to Highland Council.

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Why work with Aberlour?

At Aberlour we believe all children and young people deserve the opportunity to be the best they can. We are committed to getting it right for our children by tailoring our services to help each child, young person and family achieve their own personal goals.



[click here to watch video](#)



Aberlour Sycamore Services

Our vision is that our children's houses will provide a loving home where everyone laughs, learns, grows into the future and is treasured always.

The children and young people who come to live with us are likely to have experienced significant distress and disruption in their childhoods, and many will have experienced multiple moves before coming to live with us. Our houses are situated in the heart of local communities as we believe that our children make a positive contribution to community life.

All of our children's houses provide a stable home for our children and young people as we believe that they deserve stability, safety and our understanding. We pride ourselves in the quality of accommodation we provide and that our children and young people are key to deciding what the houses should look like as well as deciding, importantly, who comes to look after and support them.

Residential childcare has been a vital component of what Aberlour believes children and young people, who cannot live at home, can benefit from to heal and recover from their distressed and disrupted childhoods.



"We are proud that our Sycamore services are firmly embedded in their local communities, united by a common focus, offering a loving home where everyone laughs, learns, grows into their future and is valued always."

John Ryan
Assistant Director

Our Fife and Tayside Houses

We currently have five children's houses across Fife and Tayside; three in Kirkcaldy, one in Dunfermline and one in Auchterhouse. Each one provides a safe, caring and stable home.

Our houses are at the heart of their communities, close to schools, parks and other amenities. The children and young people we look after are active members of their communities, encouraged to participate in local clubs and groups.



Bellyeoman Road, Dunfermline

A large house in its own grounds, providing accommodation for up to six children and young people aged between 8 and 18.



Veronica Crescent, Kirkcaldy

Situated in a residential estate, providing accommodation for up to six children and young people aged between 8 and 13. We have a family flat available to enable the families of children in our houses to stay overnight on occasion.



Whyteman's Brae, Kirkcaldy

Situated in a residential estate, providing accommodation for six children and young people aged between 12 and 18.



Frankfield House, Kirkcaldy

A large house in its own grounds, providing accommodation for up to six children and young people aged between 8 and 18.



Red Squirrel House, Auchterhouse

A large house in its own grounds, providing accommodation for up to three children and young people aged between 8 and 18.



"We truly believe in the power of residential care, and recognise it as a positive destination for many children and young people."

Andy Finlay

Admissions and Programme Manager

Our Practice Base

Children who have experienced multiple disrupted placements are often viewed as difficult or even impossible to place. In reality, their behaviour is often a response to trauma or feelings of rejection, abandonment and sadness. These painful feelings can manifest themselves in challenging behaviour and a lack of trust in the adults around them.

Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP)

The core element of our practice base is DDP – a therapeutic intervention our adults adopt whilst supporting our children and young people who have experienced significant developmental trauma.

Our Approach...

Our approach keeps children and young people at the centre at all times, supports positive risk taking and ultimately leads to positive outcomes through empowering children and young people to take responsibility for their own choices.



 [click here to watch video](#)



“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 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 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.”

Jim Wallace
Director of Children and Families



How we help children recover

As part of our commitment to providing a personalised service to all of our children and young people, they each play an active role in their own care-planning.

Children and young people are fully involved in setting their own goals as part of the care-planning process with us. This helps them to feel they are in control of their own lives and feel responsible for themselves.

We take an innovative approach in using a 'Support Plan' which has been designed to be child-friendly and completed by them. Support Plans also contain goals set by staff, which ensure that all activity is rooted in what is safe, achievable and in the best interests of the child or young person.

Our Support Plan is a living document and can be accessed by the child or young person any time they want to see it. It

belongs to them and they can update it with new goals, through conversations with their key worker.

Each personal plan is tailored to personal outcomes, as guided by Scotland's Getting it right for Every Child Policy, and we use relationships as our key method to both identify what matters to each child or young person and the best ways in which to achieve desired goals, whilst remaining safe.

The goals our children and young people choose are wide and varied: Whatever it is, it's chosen by them and we support them to realise it. Our approach keeps children and young people at the centre at all times, supports positive risk taking and ultimately leads to positive outcomes through empowering children and young people to take responsibility for their choices.

Trauma Recovery

Many of the children and young people who come to live with us have suffered complex trauma.

We recognize that trauma is very individual, and affects different people in different ways.

Our first priority in helping children and young people overcome their trauma, is to make them feel safe and secure, and to help them trust adults.

The need for trusting relationships with staff is vital in helping a child or young person get to a place where they feel able to share trauma. Our interactions, therefore, are always informed by the individual 'Support Plan'. We go at their pace, and when they are ready to share, they can trust us to help them.

Our staff draw on relevant external support Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

We have developed an assessment pathway that supports our understanding of every child and young person who comes to live with us. The assessment is undertaken within the first 12 weeks. It allows us to consider where the child is from a developmental perspective. This includes observing physical, cognitive, emotional, social and identity development. In addition to this, we

have also created a learning path that supports us to understand what obstacles to learning may be apparent within the child's development.

Understanding who our children and young people are

All behaviour has a purpose, when a child or young person displays challenging behaviour, it is a form of communication. At Aberlour Sycamore Service, staff are trained in Emotion Works, which allows us to work with a young person to understand the feelings behind their behaviour.

Staff are trained in de-escalation methods, to help defuse confrontations and challenging situations, before they develop. As with all our practice with children and young people, our approach is personalised taking into account the detail in a child's Support Plan.

We have close links to the Aberlour Fostering Team, with an identified Link Worker assigned to each house. This relationship allows us to assess and plan for children and young people, where there is an agreement that transitioning to a foster family should be considered, whether this is permanently, or to experience short break care with a family.

Supporting Family Time

For many of the children and young people who come to live with us, their relationships with their families have been disrupted or have completely broken down – some will have had no contact for a long time.

There are often good reasons for this, which must be taken into account carefully, as we consider how best to support our children and young people to establish safe relationships with family and friends. Where possible, and in the best interest of the child or young person, we will work with them to create a meaningful relationship.

Our approach to facilitate meaningful, positive, relationships with family members

is based on respect, compassion and understanding. It's not about supervising family contact – it's about supporting family visits.

Family members are encouraged to participate in their child's activities and daily lives – some parents visit and share a meal together or join in an arranged activity with their child and staff such as art or baking. Our Sycamore Service at Veronica Crescent, Kirkcaldy has two family flats designed to be used by the children and young people when they have visits from their families, which can include overnight stays.



"The staff at Whytemans took the time to get to know our family and the dynamics of it. They keep us informed of how things are with an open and honest approach, and support our family so our time together is as positive as it can be. Even though we stay far away, the staff are always just a phone call away."

Parent

Supported by Aberlour Sycamore Services



Our service is enhanced by...

The Learning Service

We offer a service that holds the child or young person at the centre, encouraging them to be actively involved with their education plan whilst supporting them to recognise their ability and fulfil their ambitions.

Our strong links with the local schools and other education professionals (such as Educational Psychologists) enable us to work closely together to create and support education plans that assist this, whilst also identifying the appropriate learning environment based on the child or young person's needs.

Our service complements the support provided within the child or young person's house, coordinating and liaising with house staff, Education Support Workers, Local Authority and their school. This creates a consistent thread of communication that is vital to assessing and reviewing the child or young person's needs.

We understand that some children and young people find the traditional education setting challenging for various reasons. Our team, in conjunction with the school, seek out alternative ways of supporting the child or young person's learning. We offer access to natural connections (Outdoor Learning), as well as access to our Nurture Hub which offers a quiet safe space to explore ideas and creativity as well as traditional curriculum-based material supported by the child or young person's school.

Our Social Pedagogical approach to learning is informed by Dyadic Developmental Practice and supports key areas such as Self-esteem, Confidence, Social, Emotional and Cognitive Development, all of which are known barriers to learning.

 [click here to watch video](#)



Marc Blyth
Lead Education Coordinator
Aberlour Sycamore



"I didn't have a great educational experience until I moved into Aberlour Sycamore Service where I was provided with a great opportunity to have an educational support worker. I couldn't see myself pursuing my education at all, but thanks to Aberlour I was awarded a place in college. When I was unsure about what I wanted to do in college, I was able to take a year's break and went to the nurture hub to develop my social skills. This helped me to make friends on my course which made it more likely for me to succeed in my studies."

Samantha
Young Person (aged 17)

Befriending

Our befrienders offer a few hours of their time a month to support our children and young people. Their time together is often spent doing activities within the community.

At Aberlour, the primary aim of befriending is to enhance the quality of a child or young person's life by offering the opportunity to form a positive and trusting relationship. These relationships are very important in helping our children and young people develop.

Our befrienders

- are subject to a robust recruitment process, background checks and a volunteer training programme.
- can enable the child or young person they are supporting to develop their self-confidence and emotional growth.
- provide stability, consistency and time, thereby providing opportunities for them to talk about their difficulties.
- Provide a positive figure for the befriender helping and encouraging them to get involved in clubs or other activities, pursue new interests and develop their social skills.
- Encourage and support involvement in activities that help the befriender develop empathy, insights and allows them to promote self-expression.

"I've been a part of my befriender's life for a long time - it's been amazing - together we've been through her highs and lows. She's taught me a lot and I love spending time with her. She knows I'll be around for her as long as she wants me to be, even when she moves on from Aberlour."

Claire

Aberlour Befriender

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"We do lots of different things together like play football and tennis, I try to encourage healthy options. He's always pleased to see me when I arrive at the house and rushes away to get his coat and shoes on. I think befriending is very rewarding."

Jakki

Aberlour Befriender

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[You can find more information about our befrienders here.](#)



"What I enjoy about my befriender is her company, I look forward to seeing her, and she's always keen to see me too. She likes to make sure that our next visit is written in my diary - I think she likes that she's in my diary."

Mary

Young person at Aberlour Sycamore



Our Specialists

[Dr Shona Quin](#) and [Dr Penny Noel](#) are clinical psychologists providing input to Aberlour's Sycamore Services who bring extensive experience of working in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and with residential childcare services.

Informed by their understanding of complex trauma, attachment and development, they offer support to the care teams in the form of training, consultations, reflective spaces and supervision for managers.

Both Shona and Penny are passionate about the importance of understanding and containing the system around children and young people in care. They recognise that when adults feel adequately supported and have spaces to think about the needs of the children and young people they look after, they are better equipped to provide the nurturing, responsive care the child or young person needs to feel safe, to build secure attachments and to feel emotionally contained. In keeping with The Promise, they help us "hold the hands of those who hold the hands" of the children and young people.

These factors enable children and young people to grow and develop while also offering the relational security that will enable them to begin to explore and process some of the difficult experiences they have been faced with prior to and through their journey in care.

A key part of our practice is that Dr Quin and Dr Noel facilitate reflective space in our teams and with all levels of the management teams.

"Reflective practice is the process of thinking about your experience either 1:1 or in groups. The reflective space provides an opportunity for people to share their experiences, reflect on these and build insight and awareness. This process can support the growth of collective wisdom and can build strength and trust across teams. Reflecting on your experiences is an essential part of growing as a practitioner and is considered particularly helpful in environments that induce high levels of stress."

 [click here to watch video](#)



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For more information about the support Dr Quin and Dr Noel provide visit:

[**SPACE - Support through Psychological Approaches in Care and Education.**](#)



Our Staff

Helping adults who work everyday with our children and young people acquire the right skills, knowledge and support, so they are fully able to meet the needs of our children and young people, is a priority for us at Aberlour.

At Aberlour we believe that children should not be restrained. This has been a focus of ours in recent years where we have delivered a programme called **Safer Places to Live, Work and Attend**. This has seen the charity focus on relationships as the critical success factor to help children and young people when they are distressed without needing to use restraint.

Our success is informed by the views of our children and young people who told us they do not like to be restrained and the opinion of our adults who do not like to restrain them – the support we receive from Dr Shona Quin and Dr Penny Noel allows us to better understand why children might find certain daily events difficult, and to help us programme our response in these situations that avoids restraint.



Training

All adults are trained in Dyadic Developmental Practice directly linked to their role with all residential workers trained to level 1 and managers all trained to level 2. In addition, all staff are trained in developmental approaches to looking after children and young people so that they can understand what impact their earlier experiences have had on them. This helps ensure that our responses take account of children and young people's trauma, distress and disruption, even when they are still experiencing distress.

All adults are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), Aberlour supports those workers who require qualifications to achieve full registration status in their learning.

Children's Rights #KeepthePromise

Our Safer Places to Live, Work and Attend Programme is a way of helping Aberlour #KeepThePromise that Scotland becomes a nation that does not restrain its children. Our values-based approach to recruiting adults is also a vital enhancement to the way we look after children and young people. We want to ensure that those individuals who come to work in Aberlour come with a set of personal and professional values that match Aberlour's values of Respect, Integrity, Challenge and Innovation.

We believe that people can learn the technical elements of working with children and young people in residential care. We believe that personal values are the bedrock for success that allow adults to build relationships with children and young people, where their family's early life experience will never be judged but understood and used as a basis to build upon, to help the child or young person heal and recover from any early life trauma that they have experienced. In all instances our approach is informed by the United Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Adults need to always respect, promote and uphold our children's rights.



"Aberlour's core purpose is supporting children, young people and their families compassionately and respectfully - working with them to bring positive change to their lives."

SallyAnn Kelly
Chief Executive

Learning and Development

Aberlour has its own learning and development department which incorporates Operational Trainers, Learning and Development Business Partners and SVQ Assessors and Verifiers. We develop and deliver a range of our own training programmes including e-learning solutions and we provide a significant SVQ programme for all registered workers.



How to Make a Referral

If you would like more information about Aberlour's Sycamore Service or to discuss referring a child, please call **01592 591 500** or email **sycamorefifereferrals@aberlour.org.uk**

Aberlour Sycamore Services

West Bridge Mill
Bridge Street
Kirkcaldy
KY1 1TE

Andy Finlay

Admissions and Programme
Manager
Tel: 01592 591500
M: 07854 958120
Email: andy.finlay@aberlour.org.uk

Aberlour - Being Brave for Children and Families

The foundation stone of our new strategy for 2025 is a commitment to being brave – for children, young people and their families. Underpinning everything we do is our ambition to ensure the children and young people we work with have an equal chance regardless of their start in life.

Aberlour's core purpose is supporting children, young people and their families compassionately and respectfully - working with them to change their lives.

We will influence policy and practice by elevating the voices of children young people and families.

We will provide platforms that enable them to share first-hand experiences and express their views.

We will seek to influence national policy on the development of holistic family support, to realise the ambition of The Promise, and continue to influence the incorporation and implementation of the UNCRC, ensuring that children and young people's rights are the foundation of what we do.

[Read more about our 2021-2025 strategy here.](#)





Aberlour Children's Charity

Registered Head Office
Kintail House
Forthside Way
Stirling
FK8 1QZ

www.aberlour.org.uk

 AberlourCC

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Scottish Charity no: SC007991
Company Reg no: SC312912


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